



CIRCLE OF FRIENDS

Exciting Ideas in Dementia Care Showcase

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- By 2025 - Ontario's +65 population will increase 88% from 1.6 to 3 million
- 2011 – Baby boomers – 65
 - Rapid increase in number of persons with memory loss/ significant illnesses
- Today – insufficient community health services to provide for individuals and their caregivers with the support they need to remain in their homes
- **People want to age safely at home**
 - Caring relationships are key = emotional/spiritual well-being

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- Current Friendly Visiting Programs
 - Match a person with memory loss & other significant illnesses with a volunteer based on shared interests, geographic proximity
- Limitations to current formal support programs
 - Volunteer reluctance to provide companionship – lack of knowledge of symptoms, behaviours and care recipient
 - Care recipient/caregiver reluctance – care recipient refusal; caregiver negative perceptions of who provides the services and inadequate length and timing of support
 - Only 28% of caregivers use community in-home support services (Ontario Dementia Caregiver Needs Project, 2004)

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- Informal Support:
 - Caregiver reluctance to ask family/friends for help with caregiving tasks
- Results:
 - Care recipients and their caregivers are cut off from their informal networks and from their communities in general

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- Research shows:
 - Need to stay physically, mentally and socially active
 - Need for skilled volunteers, knowledgeable in memory loss and specific needs of the care recipient
 - Need for an alternative, innovative support program, building on the expertise of the current Friendly Visiting Programs

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- Ontario Trillium Foundation Grant
 - (12/07 – 12/09)
 - To implement a new collaborative model of support across six organizations in Hamilton and Halton
 - Alzheimer Society of Hamilton and Halton
 - VON Hamilton
 - Catholic Family Services of Hamilton
 - Acclaim Health
 - Links2Care
 - Regional Geriatric Program central

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■ First Steps

- Partnering Agency Work Group
 - Mission Statement, Objectives, Goals
 - Project Design Development
 - Client selection criteria
 - Information brochures, posters
 - Confidentiality policies
 - Consent forms
 - Education curriculum
 - Assessment tools
 - Evaluation strategy
- Stakeholder Focus Group
 - Client Selection Criteria

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Goal 1 –Circle Awareness:

- Re-examine the way community perceives and supports individuals who are socially isolated due to memory loss and other significant illnesses – Social Invention (McKnight, 1993), Retribalization (Speck & Atneave, 1973)
 - Requires courage, vision, passion, principles
 - No illness precludes meaningful relationships
 - Everyone has the right to live active, enriched lives in their community-everyone has something to contribute
 - Circle members – commitment to assist in engagement, enrichment

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Goal 2 –Circle Creation:

- Create a personal circle of support around an individual and his/her caregiver, inviting committed men, women and youth from the individual's various communities – family, friends, neighbourhood, faith-based congregations, service clubs, employment, schools and recreational groups – both past and present – to assist them in whatever ways they choose in order to remain physically, mentally and socially active in their community

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Goal 2 –Circle Creation, continued:

- Small steps - start small and grow with time and comfort level/needs
- Alleviate the caregiver from the task of asking for help – program coordinator extends invitation to persons who care about the person at the centre
- Bring circle members together to consider how best to help the individual with their specific needs and preferences,
- Commitment varies from one circle member to another

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Goal 3 – Circle Education:

- Initiate first Circle Gathering of Circle members
 - Client Input – Social history, interests, activity preference; creation of a shared vision for the Circle
 - Impairment Component
 - Member Input – how each member can contribute

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■ Goal 4 – Circle Maintenance

- Establish schedule of ongoing meetings to develop the relationships and ways to support changing needs & interests
- Celebrate achievements, everyday experiences, big issues
- Newsletter, calendars, scrapbook, journal, photo collage, Circle name
- Personal Internet Website – organize, schedule, connect

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Current Status/Success Stories

- Expansion of outreach awareness program to include persons who have developed successful circles of support for a family member or friend
- Increase in local awareness through outreach to faith based organizations, caregiver support groups, health providers, students, and volunteer groups
- Establishment of Circles
- Tracking effectiveness of circles/feedback from Circle members

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Next Steps:

- Develop a guide for Partnering Agency Coordinators to use in their respite programs
- Evaluate data obtained from all established Circles.
- Provide ongoing education and support to established Circles.
- Continue meetings with Hamilton/Halton leaders of faith-based organizations/individual churches to establish Circles of Friends within their congregations
- Strengthen links with other personal network programs in Canada and United States
- Formation of Circles for persons from culturally diverse communities with emphasis on unique strategies for recruitment and education

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References:

McKnight, J. L. (1993). Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets. Skokie IL. ACTA Publications

Plan Institute: Weaving the Ties That Bind (March, 2008)

Smale, B. & Dupuis, S.L. Ontario Dementia Caregiver Needs Project, 2004.

Speck, R. & Attneave, C. (1973) Family Networks. New York: Pantheon Books