

MEDIA RELEASE

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Almonte Wellness Trail Fosters Community and Collaboration

"Meet you on the Alameda Tai-Chi Spinner and we'll take a ride!"

"Let's go to the labyrinth."

"It's time to get outside and go for a trail walk."

"It's time to feed our spirit at The Seven Gifts."

"Want to work out on the Wellness Trail?"

Get ready to hear comments like these around town as neighbours and visitors begin to use the new Almonte Wellness Trail. It's an interactive and educational walk, designed to bring people together and build a stronger, and more vibrant community – plus have some fun at the same time!

In 2022, Carebridge Community Support received funding through the [Canada Community Revitalization Fund](#), a Government of Canada program delivered in southern Ontario by the [Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario](#) (FedDev Ontario). Through the program, \$87,047 was invested to help build the Wellness Trail, as well as collaborate with Indigenous and faith communities to create the Seven Gifts installation.

"Bringing people outdoors for experiences like the Almonte Wellness Trail are so beneficial to our communities. They provide fun, interactive activities that promote physical activity and well-being," said the Honorable Filomena Tassi, Minister responsible for FedDev Ontario. "The Government of Canada, through the Canada Community Revitalization fund, supports the enhancement of locations just like this which improve Canadian's quality of life through access to inclusive and educational community spaces. We encourage everyone to visit the Almonte Wellness Trail and experience their wide range of outdoor activities."

The Wellness Trail is the result of many organizations coming together, led by Carebridge Community Support and Age-Friendly North Lanark. Other collaborators include Mississippi Mills All My Relations (MMAMR), St. Paul's Anglican Church, and the Town of Mississippi Mills.

"The Wellness Trail has been developed to enhance the wellness of mind, body and spirit," explains Jeff Mills from Carebridge Community Support. "The goal is to introduce seniors, persons with disabilities and others to accessible community outdoor spaces, in a post-pandemic world. But the good news is that everyone can join in!"

The trail begins at a sit-up bench on the Ottawa Valley Recreational Trail (OVRT) Alameda at John Street and leads to two more physical activity features found on the OVRT Alameda diagonally across from the Old Town Hall.

Participants follow Mill Street through downtown Almonte and on to Coleman Island to find two more physical activity stations. The trail exits the park and climbs up the Millworkers Staircase then back along the OVRT to the Labyrinth at St. Paul's Anglican Church. From the church, the trail follows the river past Mark's Outlook at Martin Street and St. Paul Street enroute to Riverfront Park and The Seven Gifts installation.

The Wellness Trail features multiple elements:

- The fitness portion includes five separate exercise stations including a tai chi spinner, sit up and multi-function benches, and a stationary bike - each with instructions for use. “The stations are designed for various abilities and capabilities,” notes Barbara Sheldrick, Chair, Age-Friendly North Lanark. “The suggested exercises range from easy to more difficult, for all levels.”
- The labyrinth on the beautiful St. Paul’s Anglican Church property along the Mississippi River has been a priority for some time. Now it is part of the Wellness Trail. “A labyrinth is not a maze,” explains Reverend Jonathon Kouri. “The point of a maze is to find its centre. The point of a labyrinth is to find *your* centre. The practice of labyrinth walking has ancient roots dating back thousands of years and promotes relaxation, calming or clarifying of the mind.”
- The Seven Gifts is an accessible, educational art installation in Riverfront Park on the Mississippi River. “It celebrates the cultural and spiritual beliefs and practices of the Algonquin Anishinaabe People and was created collaboratively by stone carver Deborah Arnold and wood carver Nish Nabbie, supported by MMAMR and Elder Larry McDermott, an Algonquin of the Shabot Obaadijwan First Nation,” explains Bev Hunter from MMAMR. Seven marble standing stones in a 25-foot-wide circle complement seven bronze totems representing the seven teachings. The bronze totems are copied from original wood carvings. Interpretive signs and QR codes provide more information.
- The Wellness Trail also incorporates existing landmarks such as the Millworkers Staircase and Mark’s Outlook.

“People jumped in to take part, putting their heart and soul into the plan,” sums up Jeff Mills. “The trail offers many options and visitors are encouraged to enjoy what appeals to them. It’s a new kind of urban travel.”

The Wellness Trail is one of 37 projects across Kingston, Frontenac, Lanark, Lennox and Addington through the Canada Community Revitalization Fund that was announced on November 24, 2022. Additional support was provided by the Lions Club, Sage Age Theatre, the Anglican Archdiocese and individual community members. Gifts in kind were also gratefully received.

And more good news. Age Friendly North Lanark is working with the municipality of Mississippi Mills to identify possible future elements of the Wellness Trail.

The official grand opening is planned for the Spring of 2023.



Cutline: Barbara Sheldrick, Chair, Age-Friendly North Lanark, checks out the tai chi spinner on the Wellness Trail.

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