



Community Conversation on Loneliness Report

Prepared by Jeff Mills and Amanda Pulker-Mok
for the Age-Friendly Mississippi Mills Committee
February 2020

Table to Contents

Introduction	Page 2
Key Themes from Discussion	Page 4
Overall Event Analysis and Next Steps	Page 5
Follow-Up	Page 8
Appendix A: Power Point	Page 9
Appendix B: Responses from Community Conversation Questions	Page 14

Introduction

Social isolation or loneliness as it will be referred to from this point on, is a pandemic. No society or demographic is immune. With the use of technology and social media soaring, youth and young adults are feeling more alone and disconnected than ever with minimal human to human contact. Seniors, especially visible minorities, Indigenous, those with mobility challenges, and LGBTQ2 individuals are more likely to deal with loneliness than the general population¹.



Residents of Mississippi Mills (MM) are no exception. In the fall of 2018, an Age-Friendly MM Community Conversation took place. Many residents attended and two priorities were established:

- 1) Affordable Housing
- 2) Social Isolation

An Age-Friendly MM committee was then struck with local residents and stakeholders and work on the two priorities began.



¹ Prince George Daily News, 2019

Overall Event Analysis and Next Steps

What have we tried?

The event was advertised with posters, through the Millstone online newspaper, social media, and e-mailing the age-friendly contact list. We also reached out to all of the churches within Mississippi Mills with a letter and a printed poster. With 40 people in attendance we heard about how the Age-Friendly MM committee came to exist, what the global scene is around loneliness and heard from two experts about the need locally for resources. From there, a group facilitated discussion using an appreciative approach (starting from area of strength) where groups of 6 or so were asked to answer 3 questions 1) what are we currently doing? 2) what simple things could we be doing? 3) what more complex things could help? Ideas were noted on large sticky notes and placed on the wall

What have we learned?

By listening to the 2 expert nurses and those in the room, we learned that the issue is very real within the MM community however, that there is much interest in helping tackle loneliness. We learned that community members are our best resource. We learned about a full range of activities currently happening on our community from coffee shop chats, to knitting groups, to potters' lunches. The list of activities/resources is plentiful. The areas of opportunity also generated a broad range of ideas such as creating a buddy phone/home visiting network, storytelling events, and having a transportation network.

What are we pleased about?

We are pleased with the community interest and the ideas generated. We started from an area of strength (what are we currently doing) and built on that. Working with 211 to include a volunteer directory, increasing communication, and making inter-generational events a priority were all ideas generated by those in attendance.

What are we concerned about?

We are concerned with the need for increased communication with seniors, especially those in rural areas or those who do not reach out. We are also concerned about the need to have inclusive and diverse representation in the room. In the future, we will consider what strategies we could use to ensure visible minorities, Indigenous, those with mobility challenges, and LGBTQ2 individuals know about such community events and feel welcome.

What will we do next?

As for next steps, this report was reviewed by the Age-Friendly Mississippi Mills Committee. Low-hanging fruit (relatively straight forward ideas to implement) were reviewed and the following priorities were established:

1) Telephone Assurance

With an emphasis on rural isolation, priority will be given to social phone calls. Carebridge Community Support currently has a “Telephone Assurance” program in place however, more volunteers are needed to sustain it.

Action: Carebridge will advertise the need for social phone calling volunteers and recruitment will be ongoing. Interested in volunteering?

To find out about the difference you can make in the life of a shut-in senior call 613-256-4700.

Think you could benefit from a regular phone conversation? Call 613-256-4700.

2) Seniors Directory

We are fortunate to have an abundance of supports, services, activities, age-friendly businesses and volunteer opportunities for seniors in our community.

Action: Support the creation of a Mississippi Mills Seniors’ Directory of all things “senior” printed and ready for distribution at the North Lanark Seniors Expo in September 2020. The directory is Mississippi Mills specific and will function as a way of gathering all of the information not captured in Ontario 211 such as social group meetings, which stores and restaurants are accessible, which groups are doing what to assist seniors to have a healthy and active life in our community. Our interest is in providing area seniors a user-friendly printed resource while bolstering the information of local services available on 211 Ontario.

3) Monthly Free Community Meal

To help reduce social isolation in our community

Action: Create a free monthly community meal by working with the Mississippi Mills Youth Centre, local service clubs, churches, businesses and individual citizens. An emphasis will be made to be inclusive and accessible by removing all barriers to participation. Citizen support will

be key. Inter-generational volunteers will be involved from set up to meal prep to transportation and clean up.

4) **Stan Mills Centre (Seniors Active Living Centre)**

Action: Increase opportunities for seniors' activities with others using the Stan Mills Centre (375 Country St. Almonte) as a place for senior active living. An emphasis will be made on building social connections and skill sharing across generations, celebration with food, music and art, and health and wellness programs.

5) **Increase Access to Transportation**

Securing affordable and accessible transportation is a barrier to social inclusion for many seniors. Carebridge Community Support offers a range of transportation options for area seniors thanks to volunteer drivers using their own cars and Carebridge's accessible vans (small, medium and large). Often volunteers are seniors themselves leading full and busy lives in service to the community. Volunteer drivers, especially to help serve rural Mississippi Mills are always in demand. Volunteer drivers decide where and how often they will drive.

Action: Carebridge will work in the community to attract more drivers to help keep area seniors moving to medical and social appointments.

Can you help? Want to know more? Call Carebridge Community Support's Home Support Program at 613-256-4700 to learn more about their volunteer driving program.

6) **Support Age-Friendly Activities**

Action: Promote and support individual and group ownership of ideas that help bring community together. The Age-Friendly MM Committee can't do it alone and there are a lot of community members at large with great ideas. The Committee is here to help support you and your ideas!

Building an age-friendly community is not accomplished by a single group of citizens. Each of the 6 examples above will take the help of people willing to invest time working with others to make a difference. **How can YOU help?**

Follow-Up

The Age-Friendly MM Committee will hold another community conversation in the fall of 2020 to update the community on progress made and receive additional input on the plan moving forward.

For a complete list of ideas generated, please see Appendix B.

Here are the top 5 ‘low hanging fruit’ in order of priority based on number of times it came up:

Phone calls – buddy/check-in system
Increased communication (re: transportation, tenant/management, what’s available in community)
Volunteer Directory (connect people with skills, visiting volunteers, or wanting to volunteer)
Bring people together to share stories
Community Meals

Here are the top 4 ‘high hanging fruit’ in order of priority based on number of times it came up:

Accessibility to and for ALL abilities (including Mill St.)
Caregiver support
Highschool and Community working together to coordinate volunteer hours.
Transportation

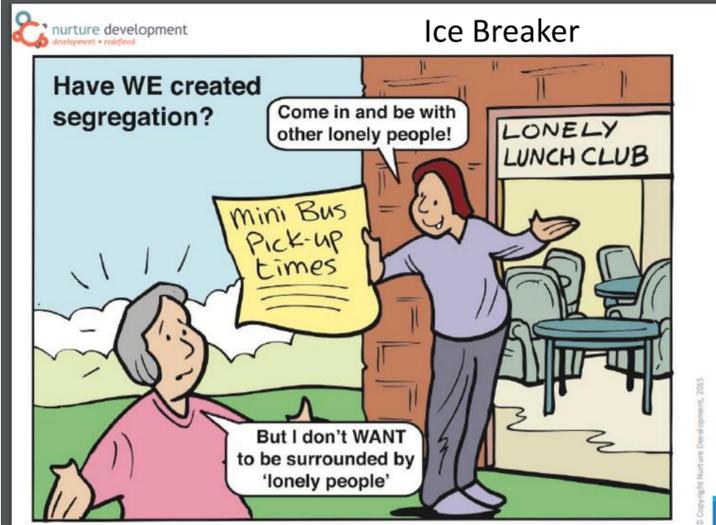
Appendix A: Power Point

Age-Friendly Mississippi Mills

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION ON LONELINESS

Agenda

- 1) Welcome - Jeff
- 2) Ice Breaker
- 3) Age-Friendly Mississippi Mills Update - Rob
Where we have come from, where we are going?
- 3) Some facts – a global perspective - Amanda
- 4) What do we hear locally? - Ann and Heather
- 5) Three conversations
- 6) Closing round
- 7) Stay for dinner!



Age-Friendly Mississippi Mills Update

Robert Eves
Chief Executive Officer
Carebridge Community Support

Facts....

- Loneliness is a global problem. In the U.K., the situation has become so pressing the government there has appointed a loneliness minister to tackle the issue. (CBC)
- Visible minorities, Indigenous Canadians, those with mobility challenges, and LGBTQ2 individuals are all noticeably more likely to deal with social isolation and loneliness than the general population average. (Prince George Daily News 2019)
- Loneliness doesn't discriminate - According to a recent poll conducted by the Angus Reid Institute, women under 35 tend to express greater feelings of loneliness than other age groups, despite having social lives. (Global News)
- Loneliness, living alone and poor social connections are as bad for your health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. (Holt-Lunstad, 2010)



Community connectedness is not just about warm fuzzy tales of civic triumph. In measurable and well-documented ways, social capital makes an enormous difference in our lives...Social capital makes us smarter, healthier, safer, richer, and better able to govern a just and stable democracy.

— Robert D. Putnam —

AZ QUOTES

What do we hear locally?

Ann Merla RN, BA, GNC(C), CPMHN(C)
Geriatric Mental Health Outreach Team
Royal Ottawa Health Care Group
(in partnership with Lanark County Mental Health)

Heather Sulliman RN, BN, MScN, CPMHN(C)
Outreach, Geriatric Psychiatry

Thanks for joining
the conversation



Conversation #1

What are we currently doing as
individuals and groups to bring people
together in Mississippi Mills?

Conversation #2

What are some simple things we could be doing, that we may not be doing now, to reduce loneliness in our community?
(low hanging fruit)

Conversation #3

Are there programs and services we should consider?
(higher hanging fruit)

Thank you for coming!

Any Questions?

Many thanks to the Mississippi Mills Youth Centre
for preparing our supper.

Age-friendly Mississippi Mills

 Join the conversation @Age-Friendly Mississippi Mills

Contact:
Jeff Mills, Community Development Coordinator
jmills@carebridge.ca
613-256-1031 ext 263

Amanda Pulker-Mok, Master's Student
apulkermok@outlook.com
613 256 2471

Appendix B: Responses to Community Conversation Questions

Question #1 - What are we currently doing in our community?

Youth Centre community dinners

Yoga group

Women's institute

Women's groups

Win Win Home Sharing

Walking the school halls

Walking groups

Walking clubs

Volunteering at the hub or rebound

Volunteer Auxiliary at Fairview Manor

Trail walkers (Monday)

The Hub

St. Paul's monthly coffee house (free)

St. Paul's monthly coffee house (free)

Sports groups

Social evening conversations

SAGE theatre

SAGE age senior's improv

Recipe sharing group

Rail Trail – Walks, Biking, Skiing, Wheel chairing + Walk, Dog Walking, Pole Walks Etc.

Potters lunch

Potlucks

Phone calls with family daily

Organized trips through Carebridge

Orchard View events

Neighbourhood block parties

Music/Choirs/Concerts

Music - open mic nights
Music - open mic nights
Music – concerts
Music - Choir/singing groups
Music - Almonte traditional singing (1st sun of month 2-4 barley mow)
Monday morning walking group
Monday morning walking group
Men's shed
Men's shed
Library visiting library services
Library travelogues
Library films
Library coffee and chats
Library book clubs
Library board game night
Library board game night
Library board game night
Legion's commercial kitchen
Legion
Lectures
Learning in Almonte
Lawn bowling
Knitting groups
Knitting groups
Hub volunteer
Getting out to community groups and getting know and connecting with people
Gardening
Exercise groups
Exercise groups
Exercise class
Euchre every 2nd Thursday
Euchre bid every Friday night
Day away through Alzheimer's Society
Crafts and art groups
Cooking groups
Community potlucks/individual too
Community potlucks
Community potlucks
Community plays
Community Lunches/Coffeehouse
Community lunches
Community gardens
Community gardens
Community dinners
Coffee shop chats
Coffee shop chats

Coffee house chats
Church groups
Church
Christmas community dinner - free
Bus trips
Book clubs
Book Clubs
Bird counting
Bingo, Euchre, Shuffleboard, Lawn Bowling, Curling
Bingo - Wednesday and Friday
Bingo - Wednesday and Friday
Bingo - Mondays on TV
Bingo - Mondays on TV
Bingo - Mondays on TV
Bike week
Bike week
Art Vernissages
Almonte lectures
Almonte Lectures
5 Wednesdays in July at Augusta Park
5 Wednesdays in July at Augusta Park
211

Question #2 - What are some simple things we could be doing?

"Human" help line

Allowing dogs/pets in lounges for tenants of building to enjoy
Beginner's lessons (photography, painting, etc.) Free
Better accessibility to recreation and businesses
Bring people together to share stories
Buddy system/network
Bus transportation
Check-in system for seniors living alone
Church
Clearly post meetings, meals, etc. to building cork board
Connect individuals (database, programs, check on a friend/neighbour)
Cooking together (monthly)
Deep roots (west Carleton) place to store/sell food.
Friendly visiting
Fundraising for all ages
Have beginner art, guitar etc. lessons (for cheap or free)
Hello Campaign (say hello to everyone, everywhere)
Help one another
Increase communication around transportation
Increase communication between residents and management
Informal community sings (hootenannies)

Invite people over for a meal
More bus trips with lunch
More community dinners (like tonight!)
Musical entertainment 2-3 times a month, esp. in winter
Personal invitation
Phone calls - buddy system
Phone calls - friendly
Phone calls - network
Phone calls
Pick up the phone and call someone
Plan events around food to bring people together
Publicity
Red tag practice
Seniors walks with or without walkers
Service directory including contact name and # (online but also in hardcopy)
Softer lighting in the Stan Mills Centre
Space for small groups to gather
Storytelling both tellers and listeners
Storytelling nights (or days)
Transportation network
Visiting each other's homes
Visiting parking - More at the Stan Mills Centre
Visiting volunteer roster
Volunteer
Volunteer directory (connect people with certain skills to those with a need)
Work with 211 to have a volunteer directory.

**Question #3 Are there programs and services we should consider?
(high hanging fruit)**

Accessibility to and for ALL abilities.
Age friendly filter with town planning
Caregiver support
Caregiving support program
Community Kitchen
Coordination of volunteers for loneliness visits.
Highschool and Community working together to coordinate volunteer hours.
Intergenerational housing
Larger community meeting room (low/no rental fee)
List of community volunteers
Mill Street Accessibility.
Mill Street winter ice problems. Needs cleaning and railings.
Minister of Loneliness for Mississippi Mills.
Real Community Centre for all ages, activities.
Residents with meals - Abbeyfield Model/Community Hub
Senior and youth relations
Smaller Houses

Soup kitchen in Mississippi Mills.

Transportation

Transportation for seniors and student to get there.

Transportation for social interactions. Examples: Cochrane Alberta, Sunshine Coach in Renfrew, Use school buses in down times.

