

ACTIVATE AURORA: Activating older adults

By Ron Weese

'We don't really like being called 'Seniors', according to Aurora Seniors Association (ASA) Board Member Jim Abrams. 'We prefer to be called 'active agers', he said with a smile to the 15 Members of the Activate Aurora Steering Committee listening to the multiple events planned or being supported through Activate Aurora and the Aurora Seniors Association.

And he is right. The activity underway in the next two months is remarkable.

I keep hearing how Activate Aurora has children as a priority. It is true we work diligently with children groups, but the work done by Activate Aurora leaders, Clay Melnike and Diane Whittaker through the Older Adult Network in Town is moving things along at a dizzying pace.

For example, the CHATS Walk for Wellness is presented at the Leisure Complex April 8 and is supported by the Aurora Seniors' Association, their Walking Group and Activate Aurora. The ASA Walking Group has expanded significantly and 'active agers' who have had difficulty walking a single lap are now doing multiples at the walking track! Chat's Director of Development Tim Jones reported that the CHATS pledges are rolling in as are the participants.

On May 4 at Seneca King Campus, Activate Aurora will hold a Regional Summit on Physical Literacy, called 'Creating Quality Movement Experiences for Older Adults' that includes experts in the field who will be providing a unique professional development opportunity for those who work with adults. As Keynote Speaker, Dr. Liza Stathokostas of the University of Western Ontario says, 'Adults over the age of 65 years consistently remain the most inactive segment of our population. In light of the tremendous impact that physical activity can have on health and function as we get older, it is important to develop effective strategies to get seniors moving.'

June 4 will see the first-ever Open Streets event held in conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce's Annual Street Festival. Multiple interactive displays will be presented throughout the Cultural Precinct that day and our active agers will be presenting their programs to help older adults become more active. More on this unique, first-ever in Aurora event in coming weeks!

Four days later on June 8 is the Active Living Fair hosted by the Aurora Seniors' Association and sponsored by Activate Aurora where the Aurora Family Leisure Complex will welcome all citizens eager to become more active. Demonstrations and interactivity will stimulate awareness of the benefits of healthy physical activity for adults. Aurora Seniors' Association Coordinator Karie Papillon reports that the interest in this event has grown substantially and she anticipates greater participant involvement than ever. Our active agers are growing in numbers but also in activity.

Activate Aurora is also now involved in some pilot research with our Older Adults Network and will have some interesting results published this summer. The intent is to identify what programs are being offered to this age group in Aurora through residential care as well as those who assist our older adults in the Community. Once completed, we will have a much better idea of the gaps we have to fill for this important and growing group of citizens.

Activating Aurora involves activating everyone. If you have an idea to share or time to give in this rewarding project, Join NOW! at www.activateaurora.com. Visit and 'like' our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/ActivateAurora to learn how you can get and stay involved. If you are an older adult, if you advocate for or care for an older adult, or want to help create active lives for our adult citizens, please contact us. After all, it is everyone's destiny to become an older adult!