

Bubbles & Smiles is tasty way to support local seniors

A feast for the senses will unfold at the historic Aurora Armoury on April 24 as CHATS' Community & Home Assistance to Seniors hosts its second-annual Bubbles & Smiles event.

Formally, the second-annual Bubbles & Smiles Sommelier Tutored Tasting & Culinary Experience, this year's event will feature a variety of champagnes and bubbles from around the world showcased by sommelier Ben Pilsky-Somers of Bossanova Wine & Beer and hors d'oeuvre pairings from the Armoury's Chef Soohyeong Lee.

Bubbles & Smiles is the brainchild of Colleen Jones, Past Vice Chair of CHATS' Board of Directors, who wanted to continue helping to fill in the gaps when it comes to local seniors' care.

Like most seniors, my mom did not want to move from her home, but living on her own, without help, was no longer viable, said Jones. Unfortunately, the community where she lived did not have the types of supports she needed.

In keeping with the theme, proceeds from the second-annual event will help enhance programs to address senior isolation and loneliness.

We're finding the uptake on people coming back to in-person activities has been a lot slower than we would have thought, says CHATS CEO Christina Bisanz. We're really trying to raise awareness that we have wellness programs in the community, that we have programs for diverse communities available, but that period of time where people stayed home and didn't engage, I think, is still continuing on at this time. We really want to be able to get out, perhaps offer some new programs in different communities where we haven't been present before and be able to serve our older adults with engaging activities that will get them out of isolation and address potential loneliness.

CHATS is currently exploring ways in which they can address what they describe as NORC models Naturally-Occurring Retirement Communities that have formed in other locations within Canada and the United States.

These would be programs implemented in buildings that have a significant population of seniors more than 30 per cent but are not necessarily senior-specific communities.

Many of these buildings are privately-owned, but they have common rooms, large lobbies, areas for people to congregate and be socially-involved there are different models and we're looking at NORC buildings in Aurora and Newmarket to see if there is potential for us to bring some programs into buildings and get people socially-engaged and active.

An organization like CHATS, for example, would come in and organize social wellness programs maybe a little light exercise. There could be a congregate meal that is served where people sit down and share [the experience]. In Halton, they have a PACE model Progress for All-Inclusive Care of the Elderly. Those programs are even more robust in terms of also offering healthcare services that come into the building and have somebody on site who provides care coordination helping older adults navigate care services and how to access care and understand where those services are available. Oasis, in Kingston, is a combination of social and healthcare and that is what we want to do just to start: to explore different models, understand how they are operating, what's involved.

There is also, she added, interest and support from members of the Northern York-South Simcoe Ontario Health Team to look at opportunities to partner with other groups.

It's early days, but this is an area where we really think there is tremendous potential to get something started.

And every bubble and delicacy will help CHATS move forward.

Tickets for the April 24 event are on sale now at chatsbubblesmiles.ca.

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter