

## Evening in Paris offers elegance ? and chance to help local seniors

Parisian elegance will be in the air on April 23 as CHATS (Community and Home Assistance to Seniors) hosts its annual Bubbles & Smiles: An Evening in Paris event at the Aurora Armoury.

An evening of champagne and other delicacies, CHATS' premiere event will feature a sommelier-tutored tasting, which they bill as ?a light-hearted and interactive journey through the sparkling world of champagne? ? all in CHATS' ongoing efforts to ensure older adults in our community can live life on their terms with grace and dignity.

?This event is more than a celebration, it's a chance to support CHATS' social and wellness programs, dedicated to alleviating isolation among seniors in our community. Get ready for an unforgettable night filled with education, flavour, and philanthropy,? say organizers.

Just a few handfuls of tickets were still available at press time this week and CHATS CEO Christina Bisanz says it's a great way to ?dress to the nines as if you were going out for an evening in Paris just having fun and having some sips ? and a fabulous meal as well.?

?We started this almost in response to our very successful whisky tasting event that we were very fortunate to be able to partner with the Aurora Whisky Society on and for a number of years that event has been held, it's been very successful, we have people looking forward to it, but we started to get some suggestions from folks who said, ?We really like the idea, but we don't necessarily like whisky ? would you ever consider doing something with champagne,? says Bisanz.

?One of our former Board members, Colleen Jones, came up with the idea of Bubbles and Smiles and it is one where, similar to the Whisky Tasting, our participants come and have a good, enjoyable evening that is also educational because we have expert sommeliers who will talk about the champagne or sparkling wines and how the grapes are grown and how the actual champagne or sparkling wine is processed and what gives them their unique flavours and so forth. We had a very good response and decided we would include it as one of our signature fundraising events, and it has grown every year.?

While the event is a chance for CHATS to raise awareness of the programs they provide, it's a direct way to support them and those they serve as well.

One of the biggest challenges facing local seniors, says Bisanz, is social isolation and loneliness, and funds raised through Bubbles and Smiles will go towards programs helping to combat just that.

?It is not something we talk about enough in the community, yet loneliness has proven to be harmful to health as much as smoking, obesity and heart disease and other diseases,? she says. ?As people age, they can lose contact with other people, often that happens as a result of the loss of a partner or a decline in mobility or anything that moves them away from family, friends and familiar connections that they have in the community. That loss can lead to things like depression, anxiety and cognitive decline. That is why we focus at CHATS so much on our health and wellness programs that bring people together, enable them to develop new friends, or just feel that they are still contributing.

?They are still making a contribution, they still have an opportunity to have friendships and make new friends, so the Bubbles and Smiles event and the other ones we run help us to enhance the existing programs that we have to provide more variety and activity within those programs and even to initiate new ones where it is very difficult for us to get new funding from our main funder to run. We started with one program for Iranian seniors and there was such a demand for it that we were able to expand it, but any expansion like that does not always come automatically with an increase in government funding. We need to find other way to support those kinds of programs.?

To support CHATS' efforts with an evening not far removed from the Champs Elysée, secure your tickets at

[www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/chats-community-home-assistance-to-seniors/events/bubbles-smiles-an-evening-in-paris](http://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/chats-community-home-assistance-to-seniors/events/bubbles-smiles-an-evening-in-paris).

**By Brock Weir**