

- 42 -

Point Douglas

Getting Along Swimmingly

From frightened to friendly – it doesn't take children long to warm up to seniors when there's a fun time in the swimming pool to bond them. Myfanwy Cawley, Resource Coordinator of the Point Douglas Seniors Coalition, said one of their most successful programs, funded by CDPI, has been a joint project bringing the generations together.

The Seniors Coalition teams up with five local daycares for a weekly swim. "It keeps the seniors active and is a precursor to swimming and teaches the kids not to be afraid of the water," said Cawley. Or seniors, as it turns out. "It usually starts with the kids being terrified of the seniors – they're small, here's a strange person and a big pool – but it goes from that to the kids being so excited to see their senior that they're knocking them down to give them a hug!"

CDPI funding provides swimsuits for the children and healthy snacks. It's a win-

win situation. "Everyone is benefiting. It's not a do-gooder program at all," said Cawley. Seniors not only keep fit with the swimming, but they are able to have contact with children, something that is especially important to the elderly that might not have grandkids in the area. The children get one-on-one care in the pool, which is kept warmer than most public pools for the sake of the seniors. "We're building healthy relationships," said Cawley.

Healthy relationships are also being built between the tenants of the seniors' home. CDPI funding helped to purchase kitchen equipment so people can gather for potluck lunches several times each month, improving the sense of community in the building. "That has been a huge impact for a small amount of money," said Cawley.

Another popular and successful project has been a Mass Food Handlers certification program. How do you prepare nutritious, tasty and safe food using only crock pots, can openers and cans? Together with the City of Winnipeg, the Seniors Coalition put on the course in two different locations for church groups, community centres, and school parent councils. "Food, as we all know, is one of the best community development tools there is," said Cawley. She said the course brought people together, strengthening partnerships in the community and improving relationships between ethnic groups. "We watch people go from asking 'who are those people?' to being friends and colleagues," Cawley said. "It's very exciting." The certification

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program was so successful that calls keep coming in asking them to do it again.

A children’s drop-in soccer program – “done by the seat of our pants with almost no money” – provided children with a place to play, proper footwear, and a healthy snack. It started with about 30 children and has grown to a point where the city has taken it over as a funded inner-city project.

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Take Note

Seniors and Swimming

Swimming is a perfect exercise for seniors with osteoporosis because it’s a low-impact exercise which strengthens muscles that support the joints and keep joints flexible.

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/diseases-maladies/seniors-aines-ost-art-eng.php>