**November 30, 2019 Standing Committee Council Report**

The keynote speaker was Andrea Wilkinson PhD who spoke about Brain Health and Aging – Pathways to Aging Well. She runs a consulting business helping women in this area and has produced a Podcast. See brainshape.ca.

She explained how our mental functions change as we age, and how we could maintain them:

1. Brain games don’t work they just make you better at the game; they are not mental functions
2. To stimulate your brain learn new things
3. To maintain your brain learn a new language

**Our Brain changes with experiences**

1. Can change physically(size and thickness), functionally(quickly and efficiently) and chemically(number of neurotransmitters). It is plastic and malleable
2. Physical fitness very important
3. Socializing very important

**Everyday life contributes to cognitive decline**

. nutrition and modifications

. cognitive and social stimulation

. improved management of health

**Four Pillars of Brain Health**

Physical fitness – huge benefits to mental health - Move your body at least every 30 minutes; with walking brain shrinks less

Food -she offers nutritional counselling

Socializing -cognitive and social stimulation

Mental considerations -includes good sleep habits, stress management

**Age related muscle loss**

. over 60’s lose 3% annually

. do strength training three times a week with weights and resistant bands – helps with bones and could reverse bone density. These exercises must be kept up, or the benefits will disappear

. the hippocampus (short term memory) controls learning, spatial memory is the first to go with dementia

.neurogenesis is the growth of new brain cells and is unique to the hippocampus (700 new ones each day)

**Food and Nutrition**

.huge impact on the brain as a higher nutrient dense will result in slower cognitive decline

. eat fruit, vegetables, whole grain cereals, fish, poultry and protein, little bit of low fat dairy

. vitamin D fights infections

-fermented foods very important (yogourt, cheese)

-she praised the Mediterranean diet

**Global Diet**

**.** low consumption of dairy

. limit red meat and sweets

. no processed foods

. no chemicals and preservatives

**Sleep** – not sleeping the required number of hours will increase the plaque in your brain

-7-9 hours each night optimal

**Stress** - reduce stress

.heart beats faster

. breath speeds up

. sugar releases to increase energy

. damaging in the long term

. stops memory from functioning properly

. harder to remember

**To reduce stress**

. reduce exposure

. mental challenges or sustained mental effort impt.

-acquiring new skills will help cognitive decline, but must be consistent effort

Respectfully submitted by Mary Barr, Ruth Levkoe, Moira Forbes

**THIRD AGE LEARNING**

One afternoon session attended by Ruth Levkoe focussed on the Third Age Learning Network. It is an organization that goes beyond our childhood learning and working years to continue our lifelong learning opportunities. We are living longer and have longer retirement years and the need for mental and intellectual stimulation is strong.

The main group helps with practical issues such as publicity, financial planning, finding a location, governance, finding speakers, information sharing, and affordable insurance.

The series of lectures helps us rediscover or find new passions, get out of the house, gain a sense of accomplishment, recreate a structure in our lives, and a sense of identity.

There are several options for lifelong learning: MOOCS (massive, online ourses), Webinars, Podcasts, videos, ebooks; however third Age brings us together with like minded people and gives us an opportunity to discuss, go on field trips, attend social events, have social interaction.

Local groups decide how their group will operate. Some learn by doing (eg comedy group,) some arrange lectures, some have discussion groups, some use Zoom. Some arrange for book clubs, informal gatherings. Some have rigorous Codes of Conduct. Some use Peer Directed Learning, with local experts taking the lead each week. Some focus on life experiences and viewpoints.

Most offer friendship and community. Some travel overseas. Some groups organize social events eg trivia or game nights, outings or walks. Some have a particular focus eg Music/Art/Culture (music of Leonard Cohen, Comedy in Film, Jazz Appreciation) or History (End of Civilization, British Empire), Politics or Global issues, Literature (Shakespeare, ManBooker Prize winners, Innovation in Performing Arts), Social Issues (Everyday Ethics, Indigenous Perspectives), Religion (Future of Religion, Religion in war and peace,) Science/Technology (Real vs Fake Science news, Disruptive technologies, Robotics, Virtual Reality, Recent Advances like stem cell, robotic surgery). Some groups offer a “Just Curious” such as marijuana for Srs, Hollywood and History, Online Dating for Srs-how to enjoy and succeed.

The speaker explained how to join a group and gave us a list of all the ones currently operating in Ontario, from Aurora to Woodstock. Burlington has a group that meets twice a year at the Art Gallery of Burlington on Thursday afternoons. Hamilton also has a group that meets in the RBG auditorium on Wednesday mornings.

All are volunteer run.

**HOUSING**

This is a concept for six women 55 and over

This house is located in Rockwood Ontario. Each woman has her own room and bathroom and uses a shared kitchen and family or living room.

Each of the six private spaces features a gas fireplace a spacious room, a good sized closet, a parking space and storage. The top floor has a bedroom and ensuite for guests.

**Legal**

This is a viable alternative to living alone providing companionship and privacy and a space to host friends and family. Each shares is $265,000 and 1/6th of expenses. A lengthy legal agreement lays out the rules. Are men allowed to live there or stay overnight? Many questions to be answered re: communal living as it is not for everyone. To date there is only one woman living in the house.