

September 2, 2022

Dear SWESA Members,

The new Program Guide is here! When I read it in the August 26th SWESA Bulletin my reaction was like that of Steve Martin's when he received the new phone book in the movie *The Jerk*. Fall is my favourite time of year. Like the kids returning to school, I relish the return of a routine and reconnecting with friends. I have already registered for programs and can't wait for details of the special events. I hope you have done the same. Some programs fill up fast, so if you haven't registered yet, do it now!

The past few months have been very busy, and yes you can say, even chaotic. With the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions in March, SWESA was challenged to hire staff, re-establish programs and activities, expand operations to multiple sites, and gauge member participation levels. In addition, 2022 also marks SWESA's 10th anniversary. Thanks to a grant from New Horizons for Seniors Program, we launched the Hello Neighbour- We'd Like to Meet You! project. The goal of this project is to foster social inclusion, community engagement, and promote volunteerism. By hosting a variety of community events, organized by a volunteer organizing committee, we want to make older adults in our community aware of SWESA, the resources available to them and encourage them to join SWESA or other social organizations in southwest Edmonton neighbourhoods. To date events included a very successful Anniversary party, Family Summer Party, Seniors on the Go transit outing to Taste of Edmonton and a cultural exchange with ESL students at Norquest College. This project will conclude with a Wellness Fair on October 11th.

At the Board level, we continue to engage with the Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council to work on the collective community actions laid out in the Connect Edmonton Plan 2019-2028 Strategic Plan. This includes being part of the Network of Stakeholders as well as participating in the co-designing of a coordinated approach to the delivery of outreach services for older adults in Edmonton. In addition, the Board is taking steps to move to a governance model of operating. This action will empower staff, simplify decision-making, enhance communication, and attract individuals to serve as directors.

An exciting new change to programming is the introduction of an Activity Pass. This pass offers members affordable access to SWESA's non-instructional activities, such as cards and games, art group, book club groups and knitting. The cost of the Activity Pass is \$20 per Program Guide and allows members to participate in an unlimited number of activities. Detailed information about the Activity Pass can be found in the August 15-19 Weekly Bulletin. This pass not only supports good accounting practice, but also provides equitable access to SWESA activities for all members.

Thank you to those who completed the Membership Survey sent out in May; we had an excellent response rate. Our Program Coordinator, April, is working hard to implement programs and outings that you indicated were of interest to you. As the work force is still adjusting to post-Covid schedules, it has been challenging to get a commitment from instructors, presenters, and service providers. Participation in our self-directed activities and coffee programs has grown exponentially. This has resulted in us renewing our Yellowbird Community Centre lease to include use of the facility on Fridays and effective October 3rd, the SWESA Café fondly known as the "Coffee and Chat" program at Terwillegar Community Recreation Centre will be relocated to a larger room.

SWESA's Annual Appeal will officially launch on October 1st. This will be the third year for the campaign. Letters have already been mailed to past supporters, and thanks to our sponsor, Chartwell Retirement Residences, a Friends of SWESA recognition event will take place on September 7th. Friends of SWESA are people who have donated over \$100 every year and/or volunteer an extraordinary amount of time. If you have been missed from this list, we apologize. Please contact Alariss to be added. Thanks to several philanthropic donors, SWESA has \$20,000 in matching donations to seed the campaign. Our goal is to raise a total of \$40,000 by December 1. With your help, I think we can do it.

In conclusion, I would like to thank you, SWESA members, for your continued support and encouragement. Your emails to me with suggestions and concerns are appreciated, and steps are taken to address all issues you may have. We are all doing our best to make SWESA a warm and welcoming place for everyone. A special thanks to our staff Alariss, April and Barbara as well as our volunteers who donate countless hours of their time to ensure that SWESA continues to be the "go to place" for older adults in southwest Edmonton. A SWESA Town Hall is scheduled for September 20th. This will give members an opportunity to socialize, meet the Board of Directors and have questions answered. Details will follow and I look forward to seeing you there.

Sincerely,

J. Richardson

Josie Richardson
President