



Opinion

Connections: A lifeline for seniors

Stay home Avoid gatherings. Keep your social distance. These are the watchwords of the COVID-19 pandemic. Difficult to adhere to for those who are healthy – imagine how these restrictions affect our elderly? For the senior living alone whose daily or weekly highlight is going to the store, the post office, the bank, the coffee shop to meet with friends, the grocery store to pick up a few things. To take a walk to the park, sit on a bench and chat.



BE OUR GUEST
Sharlene Harrison-Hinds

These simple pleasures for those who are isolated and living alone and elderly have now been restricted and are even danger-

ous for those who are fragile health-wise. Isolation opens the door for vulnerability to neglect and abuse financially, physically, psychologically and socially. Add the latest medical guidelines and advice and you have a

case of increased isolation and vulnerability.

Most seniors live by themselves, due to children and other family members relocating, the passing of spouses, family and friends. Simple mundane and ordinary outings are what connect them to society at large. Imagine what happens when their usual social settings are shuttered – and they are sequestered at home, alone and without the beneficial interaction with friends and people in their regular spots to visit. This is one of the harshest consequences for our seniors, the majority of whom have health issues that put

them medically at risk. There is also the vulnerability that comes with isolation, becoming an easy target for financial, psychological and even physical abuse. Who can they turn to? Does anybody check on them daily – in person (with strict limitations) or for those who are technologically savvy, by phone or internet? What do they do if they are ill or injured? Who can they turn to? Many are reluctant to reach out and ask for help. Many consider needing help being weak and useless and is very frightening. That's where BC CRN and its volunteers come in.

The BC CRN (British Columbia Community Response Net-



Dorothy Dewar turned 100 on April 30, 2020. Family members came to see her at Eden Care Centre in Chilliwack where they brought balloons, a sign, and they sang Happy Birthday.

PAUL HENDERSON THE PROGRESS

works) has a mandate to ensure our most vulnerable are connected, cared for, and staying home during the coronavirus pandemic. Volunteers across the province are helping

our communities' most vulnerable populations – seniors, immune-compromised, at-risk adults, anyone who needs assistance during this unprecedented time.

over the phone – all in an effort to keep them safe, connected and less isolated.

If you would like to become part of the solution, it's not complicated to be the lifeline for someone who is isolated and vulnerable. A phone call, a wave, an offer to help with shopping or other errand. It's not hard to do while following the safety guidelines and it would mean the world to them. Even if you don't personally know someone who is alone and who could benefit from your contact or help, consider becoming a volunteer with the CRN in Hope. It's the least we can and should do.

For information about BC CRN, visit <https://bcrcns.ca/> or contact kpaalini@hopecommunityservices.com or sharrison-hinds@gmail.com.

CROSSWORD

- 50. Joint connecting two pipes at right angles
- 51. Will Ferrell film
- 52. River in NE Scotland





Some of the goodies you can grab when you colour the purple irises in this week's issue of the Hope Standard.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

Colouring for a cause, a win-win for our elders

Editor:

June 15 is World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD), as designated by the United Nations in 2006. This day is dedicated to coming together and holding events to raise awareness of worldwide elder abuse.

Today, while we are in the midst of coping with the COVID-19 pandemic, with isolation and social distancing in effect for the past few months, our elders are even more isolated and vulnerable. This year we are unable to hold the usual events held on this day – information tables set up at Buy-Low and Save-On. As an initiative of Hope CRN (Community Response Network) we are holding this first-time-ever event – a colouring contest, featuring our iconic symbol of WEAAD – the purple iris.

The contest is open to everyone. Flip to page 12, our back page, to get colouring.

Printed copies of the colouring sheets will

also be available at Hope Community Services. Entries will be accepted through June 30 and should be dropped off at Hope Community Services.

Every entry will receive their choice of reminder items when dropping off their masterpiece. Choices include a flashlight, zipper pull, mini-notebook, pen, post-it notes, iris notecards, a pillbox, lens cleaner with a pouch or a stylus.

The winning entry will receive a distinctive cotton tote bag, filled with an array of useful personal items plus a gift card.

Don't wait – start colouring now for a cause. Together, we can colour the world of our seniors brighter, happier and safer by raising awareness of elder abuse.

Call Hope Community Services 604-869-2466 or email kpaolini@hopecommunity-services.com.

Sharlene Harrison-Hinds

Happy Father's Day? Not for everyone



BE OUR GUEST Sharlene Harrison-Hinds

Consider the senior dad, living on his own – in his own home, a retirement home or other group arrangement. Chances are, statistically speaking, he is living alone, does not have much opportunity to socialize or interact

with others, especially family members. Now add in the current COVID-19 situation, which has virtually eliminated the possibility of visiting with friends and neighbours, chatting over a tea or coffee, taking grandchildren or great grandchildren to the park or for an ice cream. These dads are now isolated socially; not so much invisible but certainly forgotten for the most part.

“Oh, dad? I am sure he is all right. I haven't heard from him, so he must be okay.” Does this sound familiar? It's just part of our image of men being independent and able to take care of themselves. This cultural assumption is what makes it even harder, in fact, for them to feel comfortable with reaching out when in need – whether that need is just a little conversation, social contact, help in getting groceries or sorting out paperwork.

Isolation is the platform or foundation of vulnerability and opens the door to abuse – financial, psychological, physical – because there is no one present to witness the vulnerability, to extend a helping hand and to help the senior. Men being victimized by abuse are certainly less represented in the numbers but they do exist nonetheless – 10 to 20 per cent of all abuse is to senior men.

On this Father's Day, celebrate dads everywhere. Reach out to any senior dad you know – he doesn't have to be related to you. Have a chat, ask how they're doing, what's been going on; check if they need anything and if you can help. Let's all work together to make this a truly, richly Happy Father's Day for everyone.

Someone once shared this greeting, attributed to Indigenous culture, for when you



Harrison-Hinds' father Sydney, who is 98, pictured in his home in Israel.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

run into someone, somewhere. “Good to see you.”

And the response is, “It's good to be seen.” Let's all think about that. We hold the power to ease the isolation and vulnerability of everyone, in-

cluding senior men – whether they are dads or not.

Let's make this Father's Day happy for everyone. It all starts with us. It all starts with hello.

For more information on helping seniors in your com-

munity, contact your local members of the BC CRN (British Columbia Community Resources Network) kpaolini@hopecommunityservices.com or sharrisonhinds@gmail.com.