

JULY 2021

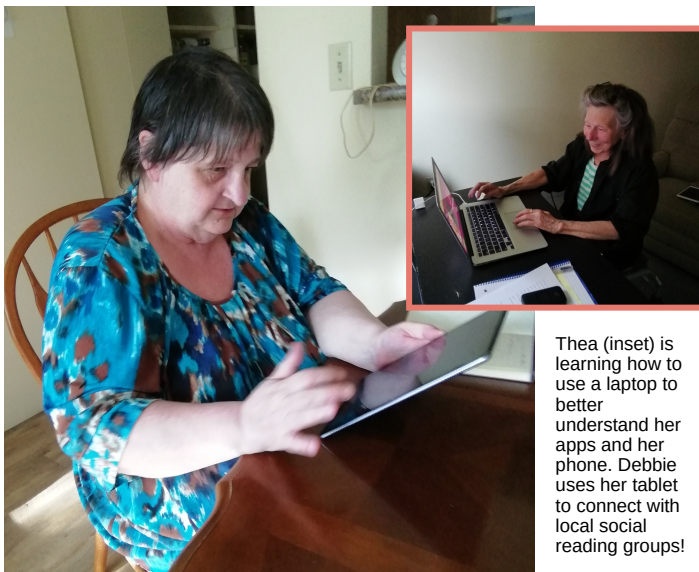
# THE BEAT

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION FOR THE  
SENIORS SERVICES SOCIETY OF BC

## LinkAGES: AN INTERGENERATIONAL DIGITAL LITERACY PROGRAM

With the help of two amazing funders—**Wheaton Precious Metals** and **New Horizons for Seniors**—we recently launched our very first digital literacy program for older adults! The LinkAGES program connects older adults living in homes provided through the Temporary Housing Program with digital devices (tablets) and digital literacy training from youth volunteers and community partners.

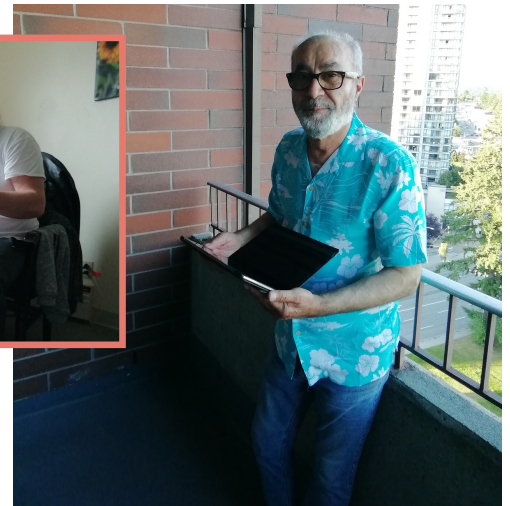
Older adults are now one step closer to vital connections to help them age in place. They can use the devices to search for topics ranging from internet use, video chat and communications software, social media, and searching for housing online. Additionally, clients who do not own their own devices will be provided with a tablet for personal use that they can take with them following their transition to permanent housing, thanks to tablet donations from the **United Way of the Lower Mainland**.



Thea (inset) is learning how to use a laptop to better understand her apps and her phone. Debbie uses her tablet to connect with local social reading groups!



Scott (inset) uses his tablet for housing searches, while Mahmoud (right) learn how to use a tablet to stay connected with friends and family around the world..



**Coast Capital Savings** also donated tablets that have training modules for budgeting and online banking. Program participants will be encouraged to use the modules to enhance their digital literacy skills. Face-to-face sessions with student volunteers from St. Thomas More Collegiate's youth leadership team will be made available when it is safe to do so, following provincial COVID-19 guidelines and regulations.

It's our hope that LinkAGES will help older adults become comfortable with digital literacy, connect with friends and family online, use social media and video chat software, understand online safety and fraud awareness, and engage in housing searches.

## COMINGS AND GOINGS

Seniors Services Society of BC is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors that provides vision and governance. We thank all of our Board members – past and present. We value each and every member of our board and benefit from your expertise, leadership, compassion and generosity. Thank you for making the lives of the people we serve matter.

We would like to thank our retiring Board members, **Sherry Baker, Betty McIntosh, Jacqui Mendes, and Michael Thompson**, for your outstanding service to our Board. You have played a major role in guiding our mission. We are grateful for your big hearts and the many combined years of service you have given to SSS.

We would like to welcome our two new board members, **Mercedes Wong** and **Melissa Chen**. We are inspired by your excitement and willingness to serve.



Melissa Chen

"I grew up with my grandparents in China and they are now at the same stage in life as many of the older adults that Seniors Services Society helps. It's this older generation who raised the current generation that I want to make sure are well cared for."

"I'm a senior and I want seniors to have a voice," she said when asked why she wanted to join the board. "I want to use my experience to help raise funds and to see the society's programs grow. Seniors today need advice, and they need people to advocate for them."



Mercedes Wong

## GROWING OUR SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE

Social media is probably the most popular way to communicate these days. Seniors Services Society has had Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn accounts for many years, but was largely inactive with little to no interaction with its followers. That's changed since Douglas College marketing student **Lucy Jakoncic** joined us first as a practicum student in January and since then as a short-term junior marketer—a position she will hold until she returns to school in September. She has been offered a position to extend her stay with us for another year.

With Lucy's guidance, Seniors Services Society is now looking at how to create partnerships with businesses and other organizations by leveraging its social media platforms. What she finds most satisfying about the work is the feedback she receives. Followers often comment on how much they love the posts and share them with others. One person was so moved by a post that she offered to donate 100 bath bombs from her small business for our clients.



"I've been working closely with staff to revamp the society's social media platforms and gain more followers on all our sites," said Lucy. "In a few short weeks we've gone from 160 to 215 followers on Instagram, and we'll soon be launching some donation campaigns."

"It's really impactful and goes beyond selling a product," she added. "I feel like I'm making a difference; helping older adults is a cause I really enjoy. I hope the work I'm doing will create more awareness about the needs of this population."



## WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY JUNE 15, 2021

June 15th was World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. Elder abuse is an injustice with many consequences for our society, affecting everything from our communities and public health to economic resources. Working together, we can build the social supports that can prevent elder abuse.

Raising awareness about the abuse and neglect of older adults is the first step in preventing elder abuse. If you know of an older adult being abused, or suspect elder abuse, please contact your local Community Response Network by visiting [bccrns.ca/adult-abuse/](http://bccrns.ca/adult-abuse/) or by contacting the Seniors Abuse and Information Line (SAIL): 604-437-1940; toll free: 1-866-437-1940.



## BC SENIORS WEEK 2021 JUNE 6 - 13TH

It was all about older adults for the month of June! B.C. Parliamentary Secretary for Seniors' Services and Long-Term care, Mable Elmore, said:

"Nearly 20 per cent of adults in B.C. are 65 years or older, and that number is increasing. We understand it is vital that older adults stay independent longer, so our government is making a series of improvements."

For Seniors Services Society of BC, this means new, improved, and expanded Better at Home services for older adults in New Westminster at Ross Towers and in Vancouver at Brightside Homes.

If you follow us on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, or Twitter, you were treated to a variety of stories about older adults. Uplifting or sad, our stories inspire you to understand what SSSBC does daily and to take action!



## SHINE EXPANSION PROJECT INTEGRATED, PRACTICAL SUPPORTS FOR SENIORS

From May 2021 to March 2023, Brightside Community Homes Foundation is partnering with Seniors Services Society of BC to offer integrated, practical supports for Lion's View I and II residents to lead happy, healthy lives and to age well in our community.

Services include:

- Light housekeeping
- Meal delivery
- Lion's View shuttle
- Choose to Move (activity coaching)
- Housing navigation services
- Friendly phone calls
- Digital literacy/support

The cost of services is on a sliding scale based on income. For more information or to register for the program, please contact Lin at [HNT@seniorsservicessociety.ca](mailto:HNT@seniorsservicessociety.ca) or visit [www.seniorsservicessociety.ca](http://www.seniorsservicessociety.ca).



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## HOUSING OUTREACH JOHN AND EDWARD

In June 2019, 65-year-old John\* was in hospital. A series of health problems, including kidney failure, had interrupted a successful career as a chef and he was no longer able to work. Similarly, in January 2021, Edward\* was living in his truck. He had worked trades his whole life, but he was not able to find a suitable living space for what he could afford. Then Edward found out he had cancer.

Unfortunately, stories like John's and Edward's are becoming increasingly common in British Columbia. Skyrocketing rental prices, limited increases in fixed income, and fragmented services and supports for seniors have resulted in increased housing insecurity and homelessness among seniors across the province.

For seniors like John and Edward, our housing services offer a critical steppingstone on the pathway to housing security. Our outreach services provide one-on-one support, and our one-of-a-kind Temporary Housing Program provides short-term emergency accommodation in fully furnished studio and one-bedroom apartments for seniors facing an immediate housing crisis.

Our outreach workers moved John into a home through the Temporary Housing Program and helped him apply for disability income assistance and federal pensions to secure his income.

Edward was connected to an outreach worker who helped him search for housing and connected him to appropriate medical supports.

So, what does the future look like? For John and Edward, it includes stable housing that meets their health needs. In December 2020, John moved into a permanent home in a subsidized housing building where he continues to thrive independently with appropriate income and health supports. Edward moved into a room-and-board home with all meals included and can now decide on a care path that is self-determined and truly his choice.

At SSSBC, we envision an age-friendly future where all seniors can live with dignity in a safe, comfortable, and healthy home.

\*Pseudonym used for purposes of anonymity



## SPECIAL THANKS

The Rotary Club of New Westminster has faithfully supported the Meals on Wheels program for many years. Due to the pandemic, SSSBC had to pause Meal on Wheels and redirect our efforts to help local seniors facing a housing or food crisis. Thanks to generous support from the Rotary Club Foundation, we were able to purchase housing supplies for the Temporary Housing Program and deliver emergency meals, groceries, prescriptions, and medical transport to vulnerable and isolated local seniors.

"The members of the Rotary Club of New Westminster are grateful for the work that the Senior Services Society provides to the seniors in our community. We are so pleased to support them with a financial donation to continue valuable programs, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic." Club President, Louise Perry (Pictured below)





## THE REALITY OF OUR WORK

Our clients, donors, and other members of the community know that Seniors Services Society of BC provides support services and housing outreach to seniors, but not many people know the reality of our hard work. At the beginning of June, we received several heartbreaking phone calls. The following three stories speak to the type of situations we see daily.

### Story 1:

An 85-year-old woman was living with her husband and paying \$1,150 a month in rent. Her husband passed suddenly in May. Her daughter took her in temporarily, but her landlord said the mother cannot stay as the daughter's rent is subsidized. Seniors Services Society provided her with numbers to call and a half-way house for woman over 55, but there is no solution. She has no other family besides her daughter.

### Story 2:

A 73-year-old woman was living in Victoria with her husband and a third roommate to split costs. Her husband has been in the hospital with a serious virus, and doctors needed to amputate his leg. Due to COVID, she was unable to visit him. The friend they were sharing rent with passed away. The caller's meagre income meant she could no longer afford the rent and her landlord would not negotiate with her. She is selling her belongings, trying to scrape by, but she doesn't know when her husband will be released. She struggles with mental health issues, and has no family to turn to for help.

### Story 3:

A 78-year-old woman was renting a house in Vancouver. She was paying \$2,000 a month in rent and receiving \$1,600 in CPP and OAS. She was subsidizing her rent with her savings but can no longer do this. The house she was renting has just been sold. She is told she needs to move by the end of the month and the only family is a 60-year-old son who cannot help her because he had a stroke and is living in a disability home.

## OUR DONORS

We cannot do this alone! A special thank you to all our donors who support our critical work. If our stories touch you or if you want to be a part of our monthly donor community, visit [www.seniorsservicessociety.ca/donate](http://www.seniorsservicessociety.ca/donate) and make a generous gift today. Our seniors will thank you!

If you want to learn more about SSSBC, please visit our website or connect with us on social media!

**April - June 2021**

**\$500+**

Kimberly C Buksa  
Watson Day  
Envision Financial  
HelpAge Canada  
May & Stanley Smith Trust Foundation  
New Horizons for Seniors  
Rotary Club of New Westminster  
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Wheaton Precious Metals Corporation

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*No duty is more urgent than giving thanks.*

—James Allen, 1864–1912