Enhancing Wellness for Older Adults through Community Networks

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# Social Determinants of Health

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## Health Outcomes
- Mortality, Morbidity, Life Expectancy, Health Care Expenditures, Health Status, Functional Limitations

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation

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# Determinants of health and well being

**Health and Well Being:**
- Genetics: 30%
- Health Care: 10%
- Social and Environmental Factors: 20%
- Individual Behavior: 40%

How do social connections benefit health?

• Behavioral
• Psychosocial
• Physiological

Influencing health habits

• Provide peer pressure for positive choices
• Provide access to information and skills
• Create community norms for health
Providing social support

- Enhance mental health
- Encourage sense of responsibility to others
- Create contagion across social networks

Impacting physiology

- Benefit immune, endocrine, and cardiovascular systems
- Reduce cardiovascular reactivity to stress
- Promote healthy development of regulatory systems
Older adults are at particular risk for social isolation

Social isolation

- Increases physical, mental, emotional health risks
- Associated with depression and later-life cognitive decline
- Increases risk of premature death from all causes by 50%
Risk factors for isolation

• Living Alone
• Loss or Reduction in Mobility
• Hearing Loss
• Poverty
• Living in Rural Environment
• Identifying as LGBTQ
• Introverted

Elder isolation facts

• 29% of Older Adults Live Alone in Minnesota
• Up to 43% of Community-Dwelling Seniors are Isolated
• Medicare Spends $6.7 Billion Annually because of Social Isolation Among Older Adults
• Socially Isolated Seniors are More Prone to Falls, Malnourishment, and Mortality from All Causes

(See Final Slide for Sources)
Little Brothers - Friends of the Elderly, Minneapolis / Saint Paul Chapter, is a member of an international network of non-profit volunteer-based organizations committed to relieving isolation and loneliness among older adults.

**Visiting & Advocacy Program**

A companionship program where trained and vetted volunteers are thoughtfully paired with older adults who are socially isolated.

Little Brothers - Friends of the Elderly offers this program free of charge to its participants.
Promoting **self-determination**, **civic engagement**, and **personal growth** for people as they age.

**Wellness**

A movement led by people 50+ to improve health and well-being for themselves and others in their community.
How it works

Wellness 50+ teams:

- Organize and lead events and activities
- Stimulate self-organized, community-member driven activities
Building Wellness 50+
Fostering Connections in Community

Wellness 50+ Initiative

Healthy Eating
Prevention, Healing, Coping
Healthy Thinking, Feeling, Being
Physical and Social Activity

Public Health
Voluntary Associations
City Services
Parks and Recreation

Resources
Community Discussions
How-tos
Events
Activities
Community Challenges

Police and EMTs
Local Businesses
Health Clubs
Local Nonprofits
Communities of Faith
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Police and EMTs

Individual

• Learn/know
• Become a “producer” of wellness rather than a “consumer”
• Make positive changes in behavior/practices
With Others

• Share our hopes/goals
• Support each other in achieving
• Celebrate successes

Community

• Build shared identity
• Engage organizations, businesses, government
• Foster community-wide change
How can we all help build social connection (social capital)?

Key resources


