



A Community for All Ages

Age-Friendly Sarasota Newsletter

Friday, December 22, 2017

“Remember there's no such thing as a small act of kindness. Every act creates a ripple with no logical end.”

- Scott Adam



HAPPY
HOLIDAYS

'TIS THE SEASON

Respect and Social Inclusion inspires feelings of trust in older adults, allows for decision-making opportunities, evokes feelings

that our voice is heard, reduces judgment, inspires kindness, and sparks respectful intergenerational relations. Intergenerational activities are a great way for young and old to learn from one another, honor what each has to offer, and at the same time feel good about themselves.

How can you become age-friendly this holiday season?

- Find ways for your children and grandchildren to listen to stories from older adults.
- Youth: volunteer at retirement communities.
- Kindness matters: make eye contact and smile at someone new every day.
- Check on your neighbors.
- You can get involved in the Age-Friendly movement by reviewing the [AGE-FRIENDLY SARASOTA ACTION PLAN](#) and filling out the feedback form.

Social Connections Combat Loneliness



Editor's Note: This article was originally published in the [Herald-Tribune](#). Stacy Prouty is an [ITN SunCoast](#) Advisory Council member. Arthur Lerman is ITN SunCoast's executive director.

As Americans, we place a high value on our independence but are nevertheless dependent on social connections for our health and

vitality. Because increasingly, families are geographically dispersed and use technology for entertainment, communication, and virtual engagement, we are physically less connected than ever.

Older adults are particularly affected by changes in social patterns. We move away from friends and family to warmer climates after retirement, our roles change, we lose loved ones, living situations change, health challenges arise, and how society perceives us as we traverse the decades marginalizes us. One or a combination of these increases the risk of becoming socially isolated and feeling lonely.

By the time we reach our 80s, half of us will live alone, mostly because of divorce or widowhood.

While there may be debate regarding the causes of our disconnectedness, the outcome is clear. Whether a person feels lonely or is isolated because of access to transportation or the lack of a social network, the negative effects on physical, mental, and emotional health are profound.

According to research by the AARP Foundation, nearly half of older adults in the U.S. experience loneliness to some degree. That means more than 8 million adults over 50 are affected by isolation. Social relationships have as much impact on physical health as blood pressure, smoking, physical activity, and obesity. Primary risk factors include: living alone, mobility or sensory impairments, transportation challenges, physical or mental-health changes, major life events, and economic instability.

* A 2012 University of California-San Francisco study found older adults who report loneliness have a 59 percent greater risk of functional decline and a 45 percent higher risk of death than those who do not report feeling lonely.

* Researchers from the UCLA School of Medicine found recently that social isolation turned up activity of genes responsible for inflammation and turned down activity of genes that produce infection-fighting antibodies.

Quality of life deteriorates as a person's world becomes smaller and society pays the price in medical costs associated with consequent physical, mental, and emotional problems. Fortunately, the issue is in the spotlight and communities, foundations, and global organizations are pursuing innovative initiatives to address it.

Loneliness does not have to be a normal part of the aging process.

With greater awareness, we can take steps to maintain ties to

family and friends, expand social circles and become more involved in community. Consider reaching out to a neighbor this holiday season if you are feeling isolated or suspect a neighbor might be. Share a meal with others whenever possible; join a church group or the Friendship Center, or sit at the counter at a local diner. Try a new method of transportation if you don't drive or seek out an adaptive aid, such as a walker or hearing aid if you are having trouble getting around or communicating.



Happy
Holidays

Whatever is beautiful, meaningful, and brings you happiness, may it be yours this holiday season and throughout the coming new year ♥

To share news or information, contact the editor
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