



Waterloo Wellington
Older Adult Strategy

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

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Local healthcare and community support groups launch older adult campaign to help those over 70 stay safe and well during COVID-19 and beyond

Waterloo - Wellington – Today, the first official day of Seniors month, the Waterloo Wellington Older Adult Strategy (WWOAS) partners launched the ‘Stay Safe - Lead the Way’ campaign designed to keep older adults safe, healthy and connected throughout the phases of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Although all age groups are at risk of contracting COVID-19, older people face significant risk of developing severe illness. They’re also at greater risk of social isolation and frailty. According to Canadian Census 2016, approximately one out of seven individuals in Waterloo Region and Wellington County is over 65 years of age.

“The goal of the campaign is to reach out to older adults in rural and urban communities at risk of isolation and frailty during the pandemic and beyond - especially those not currently linked to services,” said Don Wildfong, WWOAS Implementation Facilitator, Waterloo Wellington Geriatric Systems Team. “Collectively, we plan to keep older adults connected to care and support services, connected to community, and help them stay safe, healthy and positive.”

This communication initiative is receiving widespread support from community partners and members from across Waterloo Wellington and has already started in some rural communities. “Older adults need to know they’re not alone,” said Joanne Weiler, Elora Community Member, WWOAS Steering Committee. “All older adults have an important role to play, we’re here to help each other as we cope and adapt to the new normal.”

“It’s important for older adults to experience a sense of empowerment during challenging times,” said Dr. Nicole Didyk, Specialist, Geriatric Medicine. “While being worried is normal under these circumstances, being consumed by it is not.” WWOAS and its partners plan to provide information and advice to older adults for maintaining mental and physical health.

Multiple funding partners have come together to support this region-wide effort. These include, United Way Guelph Wellington Dufferin and United Way Waterloo Region

funded in part by the Government of Canada's New Horizons for Seniors Program, and several smaller agencies.

Visit the WWOAS for more information and resources <https://the-ria.ca/resources/waterloo-wellington-older-adult-strategy>

The public can find local services for older adults by visiting:
<https://www.caredove.com/wwcss>

The following WWOAS campaign spokespeople are available for interviews:

- Dr. Nicole Didyk, specialist in geriatric medicine
- Dr. Sophiya Benjamin, specialist in geriatric psychiatry
- Dr. Carrie McAiney, research specialist in aging and caregivers
- Liz McLennan, community member, provincial tables for patient and family advisors
- Josie d'Avernas, executive director, Research Institute for Aging
- Leanne Swantko, deputy chief, Guelph Wellington Paramedic Services

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