

April 22, 2020

## Reducing Ageism and Understanding the Reality of Older Adult Lives *What is our “Saskatchewan Advantage”?*

All people can discover new perspectives about other groups in our society. Real-life experience with others who are different from ourselves is the best teacher. Stereotypes loosen their grip when a person talks with others, works with others, helps others and benefits from others' contributions to society. Given that we cannot always have the benefits of these experiences, stories and examples can be very effective in catching our attention and showing us reality rather than stereotype.

The last post illustrated the ageism that has resulted in horrendous conditions in some residential facilities for older people. Let's consider this: **friends and family - many, many of them older adults** have been providing valuable volunteer care as they visited residents in residential care facilities. While visiting, they provided many services that would have required a staff care worker if they had not been present.

Visitors brought treats and special items for the residents. They read stories, shared laughter, connected the person with news about other friends and life in their community – huge boosts for mental health and inclusion. They made sure that the resident had fresh water and other small necessities available and accessible to them. Some of them even ensured that the person could use their TV, phone, tablet or computer.

SSM will be posting stories on Facebook (and tweets on Twitter) about the reality of older adult contributions even in the midst of COVID-19. Some older adults have chosen to help others in spite of increasing risk to their own health. SSM is not pushing anyone to take risks. However, older adults can make choices about their own lives. Older adults are contributing towards reducing isolation, creating connections with others, helping children, young adults, parents, grandparents all while obeying the need to “stay the blazes home”.

SSM encourages you to become our Facebook Friend, to share our posts and most importantly, to post stories about older adults that you see contributing to family and community, often providing a huge benefit to the mental health for all involved. There is no doubt that age affects a person's health and well-being. Real stories will show that older people who have physical or mental challenges are still valuable, respected and contributing members of families and communities

If you post about older adults, please mention the hashtag that we are also using for our tweets: #older-adultscontributing

Let's show how Saskatchewan and Canada and the world benefits from the skills, experience, interests and caring of older adults/seniors. Given that older people make up 15% of the Saskatchewan population – adults 65+. Enjoy and respect *the Saskatchewan Advantage*

