

“WORKING TO PLACE OLDER PERSONS’ CONCERN ON THE BELIZE NATIONAL AGENDA”

# The National Council on Ageing Quarterly Newsletter



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# VOICE Annual General Meeting 2011



### From the Editor

Greetings newsletter readers! 2011 has started with a flurry of activity for the NCA. The Senior Steps program continues to thrive in Belmopan with membership nearing 35 and members becoming more involved in the running of the program. The Senior Steppers have also made their presence felt in Belmopan by participating in community events.



*Ix-Chel Poot  
Editor*

The NCA staff have been busy making various community visits; participating at community fairs, meeting with groups concerned with the needs of older persons and meeting with older persons.

The NCA has also been facilitating the process of conducting the Feasibility Study for a Universal Pension for Older Persons in Belize undertaken by HelpAge International. We look forward to having the completed document in June so that the process of lobbying for the pension can begin. Making Universal Pensions a reality in Belize will not only need the cooperation and active interest of older persons but also the support of all Belizeans.

The need for social protection is further highlighted by the release of the 2010 Census findings which indicates that the number of older persons in Belize is steadily increasing. However, according to the Situational Analysis of Older Person in Belize 2010, many older people have no pensions or savings to depend on during old age.

It is important to look at ageing not as an issue affecting a few but as a stage of life that all will experience. The question we must therefore ask is: "How do I want society to view me when I am old."

*Ix-Chel Poot*

Programme Officer  
National Council on Ageing

### Older Women's Variety Show

Every year the National Council on Ageing and other sister organizations, celebrate Women's Month by participating in activities to recognize the role of women and their contribution to society.



*(left to right) Mrs. L. Paredes, Mrs. G. Aldana,  
Mrs. F. Finney, Mrs. L. Pech*

This year, the NCA teamed up with the Belmopan Senior Steppers to put on a Senior Women's Variety Show on the 27th of March 2011 at the George Price Center. The Variety Show featured twelve performances and involved over 30 performers. The seniors created their own items and practiced for two months in preparations for the nights events.

Performers ranged in age from 56 to 89. There were musical performances by the Senior Steps Singing group and two solo performances. The audience was wowed by three dance performances:

dancing in the round by ten Senior Steppers; a Salsa routine and a Mestizo cultural dance featuring four dancers in costumes they had hand paint-



*Senior Steps Dancers Performing the  
Macarena*

ed. There was also three poetry performances and the show came to an end with a short skit followed by a final dance in which all the Senior Steppers took the stage to perform



the Macarena and the Electric Slide.

The Belmopan community was astounded by the talent and energy that these older persons brought to the stage. The Senior Steppers in Belmopan have indeed become a known group in the community.

The entrance to the variety show was free but the audience was encouraged to make donations to the Senior Steps group. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who made a donation to the program. There are also DVD copies of the night's program available at the National Council on Ageing.

### VOICE Corozal Report

VOICE Corozal has been working in the Corozal district; raising awareness on the situation of older persons and lobbying for rights and services for older person in the district. The VOICE office is located at # 38 3rd Avenue, Corozal Town. Hon. Israel Alpuche, President of the Corozal branch, is always available to the public to deal with the concerns of older persons.

One concern that VOICE Corozal has been focusing on is the availability of wheelchairs to old persons in the community. Through networking with sister organizations they have been able to secure two wheel chairs. They have passed on these wheelchairs to Mr. Graciliano Castillo of Paraiso Village and Mrs. Rose Arellarano of Corozal Town.



(left to right) Mr. G. Castillo, Hon. I Alpuche, Mr. K Reyes



VOICE Corozal Christmas Party 2010

### VOICE Belmopan: Public meeting

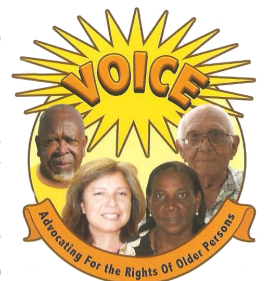
VOICE Belmopan hosted a public meeting at the George Price Center on January 19, 2011 at which older persons in the community were given the opportunity to address questions to the City Council concerning issues relating to making Belmopan more accessible to older persons.

Belmopan Mayor Simeon Lopez was present, along with two senior members of the City Council, to answer concerns and queries that older people wanted to share. Issues ranged from clean up after hurricane Richard to incidents of crime in the City.

VOICE Belmopan has consistently organized public meetings covering interesting topics that are of general concern to older members of the Belmopan area. This is their way of involving older community members in discussion and decision making.

### VOICE Annual General Meeting 2011

On March 13th, 2011 the members of VOICE Belize converged at the Hazel Hutchinson Centre in Belmopan for the VOICE Annual General meeting. VOICE members from across the country were present to listen to activities reports for the last year and elect a new National Executive Committee.



The NCA, through the SIF project, presented each VOICE group with a new computer and printer to be used for the enhancement of VOICE in each district.



*VOICE Annual General Meeting 2011  
Hazel Hutchinson Center, Belmopan*

The VOICE Corozal group received a computer at the AGM and the other district groups will be receiving their equipment as soon as VOICE offices are established in each district.

The VOICE Executive Committee for 2011 is comprised of two members from every district, one representative for the urban area (city/town) and one representative for the rural area. The newly elected members of the VOICE National Executive: 2011/12 are:

NAME	POSITION
<b>Mr. Paul McCord</b>	President
<b>Mrs. Victoria Hernandez</b>	Vice President
<b>Ms. Sylvia Naj</b>	Secretary
<b>Mr. Daniel Bolon</b>	Assistant. Secretary
<b>Mr. Rudolf Serrano</b>	Treasurer
<b>Mr. Natalio Reyes</b>	Assistant treasurer
<b>Mrs. Norma Sutherland</b>	Councilor
<b>Mr. George Mai</b>	Councilor
<b>Mr. Elias Ranguy</b>	Councilor
<b>Mrs. Jesusita Castanos</b>	Councilor
<b>Mrs. Oddette Lui</b>	Councilor
<b>Mr. Gustavo Castaneda</b>	Councilor

### WATER AND SENIOR CITIZENS

As we age, the balance between our need for water and our thirst for water shifts. In fact, the less water an older person drinks, the less thirsty they become, leaving them open to the risk of serious dehydration and other complications.



Furthermore, confusion over the difference between hunger and thirst intensifies over the years, making it all the more important to conscientiously drink adequate amounts of water throughout the day. At the very minimum, one should consume one cup of water for every 20 pounds of body weight daily, that's around 6-8 glasses for the average person.

Exercise and warm weather both call for additional water intake to replace fluids lost through excessive perspiration. So, all those senior citizens who head south for retirement will need to increase water intake! Increased fiber intake among seniors, which is usually recommended for older people to aid with constipation and other health concerns, also increases the need for water.

Aside from replenishing what is lost in order to hydrate the blood and tissues, water also lubricates joints, regulates temperature, and moistens the lungs to allow for breathing. Inadequate water intake over time prevents these processes from occurring, leading to arthritis, sore muscles, heavy breathing, and a higher body temperature. This means that not drinking enough water over time can result in more severe effects at an older age, which means preventable problems during what should be the golden years.

Senior citizens are at particular risk for dehydration because their kidney function has



diminished to some degree. Side effects for seniors who do not drink enough water, however, extend far beyond dehydration. Even short-term water deprivation has been known to cause chronic pain. Over time, lack of water causes loss of muscle tone, excess weight gain, slow metabolism, increased toxicity, and even organ failure. Other negative effects include arthritis, dry skin, migraines, hypertension, digestive complications, and persistent constipation.

Considering the abundance of water in our daily lifestyles, the fact that most senior citizens are consistently dehydrated to some degree is alarming. All foods are partly composed of water; fruits and vegetables are over 75% H<sub>2</sub>O, and even bread is more than 30% water. Yet with the abundance of water in their diet, the average senior citizen still requires over two-and-a-half quarts of pure water each and every day to maintain good health.



### **Malta Experience Social Gerontology Training Course.**

On February 11, 2011 the NCA's Programme Officer Ms. Ix-Chel Poot travelled to Sleima, Malta to attend a two week training course on Social Gerontology at the United Nations International Institute on Ageing. The program was designed to provide an up to date understanding of the far reaching consequences of mass longevity. The course brought together professionals from Malta, India, Africa, the Caribbean and Central America, who work with older persons.

The course material was presented though a combination of lectures, discussions

and site visits. Participants were asked to prepare and present a country report



*Participants of the Social Gerontology Course 2011  
Sleima, Malta*

highlighting the reality of ageing in their country and by extension their region. The central principle emerging from the course was the need to see older persons as 'people' and in doing so provide them with more than simply service but with opportunities to remain engaged and a part of the society; which in turn would improve their overall quality of life.

These discussions are important for countries in the developing world where the population is ageing at an unprecedented rate. Older persons will no longer be a minority in population but a driving force that will demand resources, and access to services that will maintain health and independence into old age.

This course has indeed broadened my perspective on ageing and ageing issues and I



*Staff of IINA and Participants of the  
Social Gerontology Course 2011*

hope to translate these new ideas and principles within the work of the NCA.

### Outstanding Woman 2011

#### Mrs. Rose Anderson

Mrs. Rose Anderson is presently employed as the HECOPAB Public Health Coordinator at the Western Regional Hospital.

A resident of Cotton Tree Village, she has been involved in several initiatives to improve the village including working with the village council

and serving as the president of the Women's group for four years. During this time the ladies ventured into pepper farming, sewing, fast food production and later established an internet café that is still in operation.

Mrs. Anderson also works with her local church encouraging and sensitizing leaders to work in areas such as HIV/AIDS, Diabetes and Elderly Care. Mrs. Anderson has a special passion when it comes to working with older persons. She is present at HelpAge meetings on Monday mornings checking glucose and blood pressures and in the evening she supports the Senior Steps: Dancing for Health Project.

During her visits to the rural areas in the Cayo District Mrs. Anderson takes special interest in older persons, scheduling time to visit them and listen to their needs and concerns. She is married to Mr. Michael Anderson and is the proud mother of five children. Although a very busy woman she is presently pursuing her Associates Degree at the University of Belize.



(left to right) Mrs. Rose Anderson and Nurse Marion Casey

On Monday March 7, 2011 the Staff of the NCA participated in the Collet Community Day. The NCA, together with local organizations, displayed information to educate people on issues affecting their community.

Ms. Lindy Jeffery, the NCA's Executive Director was asked to deliver the main address during the opening ceremony. She was also able to meet with members of the Collet Senior's Club. The NCA looks forward to participating in similar events that promote the awareness of ageing issues in Belize.



Ms. Lindy Jeffery taking with members of the Collet Senior Club

### NCA Intern: Carolyn Gilooly

The NCA is very fortunate to receive international interns who lend their expertise to assist in the area of ageing in Belize. In 2010 Ms. Carolyn Gilooly, an intern from the University of New Hampshire, completing her Master's degree in Occupational Therapy came to the NCA.



(Left) Ms. Carolyn Gilooly, Student Intern at the NCA

### Collet Community Day



While at the NCA Ms. Gilooly worked on a project that involved interviewing stroke victims and providing advice on the benefits of occupational therapy. Ms. Gilooly also designed and translated a leaflet on stroke entitled: STROKE: A Guide to Understanding, Preventing, and Recognizing Strokes. The NCA would like to thank Ms. Carolyn Gilooly for her hard work and contribution to the work of the NCA and we wish her the very best in her future career

### NCA VOLUNTEERS

#### Comprehensive High school Students

In late February 2011 the NCA was approached by Ms. Jessica Martinez, a student at Belmopan Comprehensive School, wishing to become a

volunteer with the office in order to complete her community service requirement. Jessica, a third form student, began attending Senior Steps sessions on Monday afternoons; she was later joined by Lorna Parschue and Regin Lopez, two of her classmates.



(left to right) L. Parschue, J. Martinez and R. Lopez

The girls joined in the dancing with the Senior Steppers on Monday afternoons and assisted with the preparations for the Senior Women's Variety Show. They were responsible for creating the Senor Steps donation box and display. The NCA would like to thank these girls for their service and wish them the best as they enter their fourth and final year of high school.



Volunteers taking part in Senior Steps on Monday

### Older Voices Speak -

#### What getting the NCP means to them

If you have been following the NCA newsletter you may have noticed a few articles on the topic of Universal Pensions. The NCA would like to share with its readers a little insight into what receiving even a small pension means to the survival of an older person.

" I have been receiving the pension for a little over two years. The money is good but it's not nearly enough. I have gall stones and when I receive my money I go straight to the doctor. Sometimes after I have paid the doctor I am left with \$7.00. If my medicine isn't too expensive after I leave the doctor I can buy some food. I live with my wife and we have a daughter who helps us when she can"



(Marino, 81)

" I can't remember when I started getting the NCP maybe about two years but not more than that. I like to eat so I use the money to buy food; I don't buy clothes or makeup. I live with my husband he is 72 and he can't work anymore.



We both survive off my pension. We have a son but he likes to drink and we can't depend on him for anything. When I get my money I go to a Mennonite vendor he gives us a better price on things like rice and chicken; this is how I make the money last. I am

grateful that I am getting this money; without it we would starve.

(Bascilla, 70)

# What's Happening at the NCA . . .



*Senior Steppers waiting to take the stage at the Older Women's Variety Show. March 27, 2011  
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*VOICE Corozal Reports PAGE 3*



*International Training Course February 2011  
Story on PAGE 5*



*Find out what the NCA Volunteers from Belmopan Comprehensive School are up to on PAGE 7*

**Where to find the N.C.A.**  
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