

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

The National Council on Ageing Quarterly Newsletter



Inside this issue:

From the Editor	2
It's Time to Exercise	2
Health Benefits of Watermelon	2
A 10th of September First	3
University of Belize Students hold Human Rights Forum	4
VOICE Orange Walk on the Move	4
NCA Says Farewell	5
III Follow Up Meeting To the Brasilia Declaration	6
International Day of Older Persons Celebrated at Golden Haven	6
Interns at the NCA	6
What is Dementia	7



From the Editor

A Year in Review:

2009 has proven to be a very eventful year for the National Council on Ageing. We relocated our office in January of this year and the move to a more accessible location has certainly increased public awareness and interest of the NCA.



*Ix-Chel Poot
Editor*

This year has also seen older persons honoured for their contribution to their community through our Golden Age Heroes event in February 2009 and the Outstanding Women's Award during Women's Week activities in March.

The NCA once again celebrated Earth Day with Belize Audubon Society organizing an activity involving older people on April 21st at Guanacaste Park.

However, all the attention has not been positive as in recent months reports of home invasions and the targeting of older persons has seemed to frequent our news. It is indeed a sad situation when the people who have contributed to the development of our society are preyed upon. This situation has led to the NCA establishing a better working relationship with the Community Policing Unit by requesting that officers visit older persons more often.

As you go about your daily routine here are a few safety tips to remember:

1. Make sure all your locks on windows and doors work properly
2. Don't open the door for people you don't know.
3. Ensure that your yard is clean and clear of all debris. Debris in your yard can be used as weapons against you.
4. Go shopping with a group of friends or family members.
5. Always have an up to date list of phone numbers you can call to contact friends and family members in an emergency.

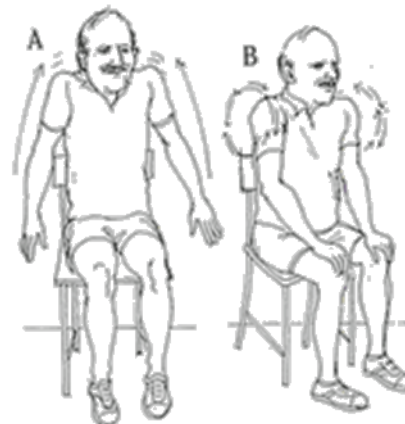
If you have any comments, questions or contributions for the NCA Newsletter please contact us at: **Unit 17, Garden City Plaza
PO Box372
Belmopan**

IT'S TIME TO EXERCISE

Shoulder raises and rotations

Aim to loosen up the shoulders and neck region.

- A** Shrug the shoulders upward toward the ears, then relax. **Repeat.**
- B** Rotate the shoulders slowly in one direction. Repeat in opposite direction.



www.cpaas.gov.au/benefits_exercise/exercise.html

4 Health Benefits of Watermelons

When you were young, eating watermelon was about taste. Now that you're older, it's more than just taste that should inspire you to eat lots of watermelon each year when the season arises. It's because watermelons have tremendous health benefits that anyone who lives a healthy lifestyle should be determined to take advantage of every year. Let's take a closer look at some of these health benefits this fruit has to offer.



Health Benefit of Watermelons #1: Lycopene

Lycopene is an antioxidant found in most red colored fruits, with the exception of a few things such as strawberries. Scientific studies have shown that Lycopene reduces the risk of prostate cancer and heart disease in people. People who eat a diet high in lycopene are much less likely to suffer a heart attack than people who don't.

Health Benefit #2: Vitamin B6

Vitamin B6 is an important attribute to have in a healthy diet because it promotes chemicals in the brain that help people to cope with anxiety and panic.

Health Benefit #3: Vitamin C

If you thought oranges were the only fruit that could provide you with Vitamin C, think again. Vitamin C is important to not only being healthy, but remaining attractive all your life. Vitamin C boosts the immune system so that you get sick less often and it also slows down aging and medical conditions such as cataract. : **Vitamin A**

Vitamin A works much like Vitamin C, in that it helps boost immunity, but it also help your body fight off infection. It also helps to prevent blindness.

As you can see, eating watermelon is almost tantamount to taking a multivitamin every morning, but with a much better taste.

When you go to purchase a watermelon you want to try and find one that is ripe and ready to eat. The best way to do this is to knock on the outside of the rind. If you hear a hollow sound then melon is ready to eat, but if you hear solid thud put it back. The fruit is over ripe and you won't be getting very good flavor from it. Buy you water melon and eat it within the first few days of getting it home. Eat up and get the extra boost that will add to your healthy lifestyle.

<http://www.articlesbase.com/health-articles/4-health-benefits-of-watermelons-141351.html>

A 10th of September First!

For all Belizeans the month of September is highly anticipated. It's the month we celebrate the birth of our Nation. The air is filled with patriotic songs and Belizean pride abounds. The September celebrations kick off on the 10th of September. Belizeans have been celebrating the 10th of September since 1898, first organized by Mr. Simon Lamb, with a grand parade through the streets of Belize City.



Mrs. Leotine Gillett

Over the years the celebration has taken on a life of its own, hosting the battle of the bands and the Queen of the Bay competition, Ms Rita Lewis being crowned the first Queen in 1947. The celebrations have also changed since the tragic events of the 1931 Belize Hurricane as the grand marshal of the parade no longer rides on horseback but in the back seat of a convertible.

2009 celebrated the 10th with the very first Lady Grand Marshall of the parade: **Mrs. Leotine Gillett**. Mrs. Leotine has been a part of the 10th celebration since her birth and, being a descendant of Simon Lamb, it was an honor for her to be given the distinction of the First Lady Grand Marshall. Mrs. Leotine serves



Mrs. Leotine Gillett
Grand Marshall of the 10th of September Parade

as a member of the St. Georges Caye Society. Mrs. Gillett turned 82 on the 21 September 2009. A true Belizean Woman!

University of Belize Students Hold Human Rights Forum

Ms. Lindy Jeffery the Executive Director at the NCA facilitates a presentation on Human Rights and Older Persons for the University of Belize's Human Rights Class each year. This year the Human Rights Class held a series of presentations entitled "Kno Yo Rights." to the entire University campus. Class members made presentations on various human rights issues and one group focused on the Rights of Older Persons. As part of their presentation they invited the NCA to highlight human rights issues affecting older persons and this was done by the Programme Officer, Ms. Ix-Chel Poot. They also dramatized a commonly seen scenario in our society in which an old woman is swindled out of her land and money by her grand nephew. The evil nephew Dusa, leaves her to die in a retirement home but ironically he loses all the money in a land scheme that falls through.

The presentation done by the students was very pertinent and we hope that everyone who was fortunate to see it will take a greater interest in the issues relating to the violation of the Rights of Older Persons.



Left to Right:
Lucio Cal, Stephanie Lara, Beverly Moguel, Aquillino Jesse, Lucas Gonzales

VOICE ORANGE WALK On The Move

VOICE Orange Walk (VOICE OW) came into being in June 2008 and since this time they have grown in strength and membership.

In October they hosted a public awareness meeting at the Orange Walk Multi-Purpose Complex and over fifty older persons attended. The meeting featured presentations from both governmental and non-governmental organizations on the services that were available to the Orange Walk community.

VOICE O.W. held their first Christmas luncheon and party on December 14th, 2008 when over 200 older persons and their family members were hosted at this event. This luncheon was made possible through the contributions of the Orange Walk Business community.

2009 for VOICE OW has seen much activity and development in raising awareness on issues facing older persons. As an advocating body VOICE's main goal is to improve the quality of life for older persons, not only in Orange Walk but countrywide. VOICE O.W. believes that in order to improve quality of life they must get to know how older people live in their community. Therefore one of their first activities was to carry out a survey to assess older persons standard of living and to also create a registry of older persons. A training workshop was held in which members and other volunteers were taught how to conduct the survey/registry. While conducting the survey volunteers met Ms. Olivia a Peace Corp Volunteer who expressed interest in becoming involved with VOICE, she has since become a member of the VOICE O.W. Team. VOICE O.W. has also developed a questioner/ observation sheet which was circulated country wide to assess the level of care given to older persons in our health facilities

During the First VOICE Annual General Meeting, Ms. Dollis Reynolds (VOICE OW Chairlady) was elected as the treasure for the

National Executive Committee. After consulting with the National VOICE Committee, the Orange Walk group acquired official VOICE t-shirts and ID cards which are used when undertaking official VOICE activities.

VOICE OW has become very prominent because of their active participation in the community that has kept people aware of their presence. They visited Orange Walk Mayor, Philip De La Fuente to keep him abreast of their activities and to solicit his support, which he has pledged.



Vicky Hernandez talking to students at the NGO Fair in Belize City

VOICE O.W members also paid a courtesy call to Deputy Prime Minister Hon. Gaspar Vega at his Orange Walk office and presented him with information on VOICE, the National Plan of Action 2009-2011 and other important VOICE documents. They discussed the VOICE organization and issues affecting older persons in O.W. District. The Deputy Prime Minister also donated food items to the 2nd Annual Christmas Luncheon for the elderly held on the 13 December 2009. The highlight of the visit was the granting of permission to use a vacant building to be used for the VOICE office.

To end a very busy year, members of VOICE O.W conducted a major fund raising drive at the toll bridge located at Tower Hill. Funds collected were used to assist with the Christmas luncheon. Members express their gratitude to all those people and to the vast number of contributors to the cause.

VOICE O.W. took part in the 16 Days of Activism and also attended the NCFC NGO Fair, at Constitution Park in Belize City on December 4th, 2009 as a means to raising awareness.

NCA says Farewell

There have been a number of changes to the membership of the NCA during 2009. As the year drew to a close we found ourselves bidding a sad farewell to three of our very committed and supportive members for a number of years.

Dr. Alfonso Ayala has severed as the Ministry of Health's representative on the NCA and a member of the Health Committee and Monitoring and Evaluation Committee. We will miss his questions and input, he has always challenged us to analyze every aspect of our plans.



Dr. Alfonso Ayala

Mrs. Patricia Robinson (Mrs. Pat) has been a very active part of the NCA as an older persons' representative on the board. Mrs. Pat is known for her thoughtfulness and has always been willing to offer her opinions and insight to discussions at Board meetings. She has made many contributions to our newsletter and was instrumental in the development of our health section. We will miss Mrs. Pat's cheerful spirit .



Min. Eden Martinez and Mrs. Pat Robinson

Major Errol Robateau is well known in Belize for his work with the Salvation Army and the NCA has been very happy to have him as a member since we could always count upon his support. He retired from The Salvation Army, along with this wife Sheila, in August and has now made way for a new member of the Salvation Army to join the Executive Board.

We would like to wish these three very special people all the best as they leave us. We will not forget them and their contributions to our work here at the NCA.

III Follow-up Meeting of the Brazil Declaration

Ix-Chel Poot, the Programme Officer of the NCA attended the III Follow-up Meeting on the Brazil Declaration, held in Santiago, Chile on October 5-6, 2009, at the ECLAC/CEPAL building.

There were more than 250 persons from Latin America and the Caribbean present at the meeting including Government & NGO representatives, older persons organizations, civil society, international organizations and special agencies.

The first day of the meeting provided background information about the Brazil Declaration and the channels that were needed to move the region towards developing a Convention on the Rights of Older Persons. At the meeting each participating country was given a copy of the proposed Convention.

The Caribbean Representatives felt that there was a need for greater inclusion of a "Caribbean Voice" in the discussion and the



Fr. Row.: Ann W., Ix-Chel P., Ann, Beverly Hall-Taylor,
Bk. Row: Clive S., Monte, Helen C., Raymond J., Clayton S.

document so that, at the end of the day, the Convention would be adaptable and functional in the entire region. It was agreed by all participating countries that the Region should move towards developing a Convention on the Rights of Older Persons.

International Day of Older Persons Celebrated at Golden Haven

International Day of Older Persons is celebrated on the 1st October each year and is a time when we recognize how much our elders mean to our society. At Golden Haven Rest Home we believe that our elderly are worthy of such recognition.

This year the residents of Golden Haven Rest Home were graced with the presence of "VOICE" members from Orange Walk, Benque and Belmopan.

The day started with praise and worship when personal testimonies were recited by various residents, while others recited their favorite Bible verse. The President of VOICE, Mrs. Linda Moran, gave the welcome address after which each VOICE member engaged in a conversation with the residents. The residents really enjoyed the visit and showed their enthusiasm by singing the happy birthday song for one of the VOICE member who was celebrating a birthday. At midday lunch was served to all the residents.

Contributed by Allison Williams, Supervisor at Golden Haven Rest Home.

Interns at the NCA

The NCA has always been fortunate to have student interns volunteer their services to us for a few short weeks every year. These students bring innovative ideas and projects providing a new dimension to the work we do here at the NCA.

During the summer months of June and July we hosted Jamilee Adams and Jeanette McNalty, two occupational therapy students, from Queens University, Canada. Their activities including interviewing older persons who had



Jamilee and Jeanette

mobility issues and completing of a Public Education project on falls prevention.

The information will be used later this year to create a public service announcement on falls prevention.

In September we were happy to see the return of Mrs. Christy Kessens to the NCA. This was Christy's second trip to Belize and her first full time placement with the NCA. In 2008 she developed 2 brochures for the NCA that outlined the issues of Alzheimer's disease. On this visit she spent her time interviewing caregivers of older people suffering from Alzheimer's disease and developing a third informational pamphlet about a condition known as Sundowning. She also organized and facilitated a one day training workshop for community responders entitled "Understanding Alzheimer's disease" to create greater sensitivity and awareness in the community to this condition.



Christy Kessens

These three young women have since completed their MSc Degree studies and we would like to wish them all the best in their future endeavors.

What is Dementia

Dementia

Dementia is described as a set of symptoms that can include memory loss, difficulty communicating, trouble performing usual tasks, disorientation to time and place, a loss of initiative, loss of problem solving skills, uncontrollable emotions, and/or a change in personality.

Dementia occurs when brain cells become damaged and are not able to be repaired. It can be caused by a brain injury, stroke, Alzheimer's disease, or a number of

other diseases. There are also conditions that cause dementia-like symptoms but if treated the condition can be reversed. Depression, thyroid problems, drug interactions, a urinary tract infection, or an excess of alcohol, when treated, may alleviate symptoms of dementia.

Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia. It is an illness that damages the brain, is irreversible with worsening symptoms, has no known cause, and has no cure. Although increasing age is the leading risk factor of Alzheimer's disease, people of any age can take preventive measures to lower their chance of getting the disease.

Since the heart is responsible for pumping blood to the brain, a healthy heart is an important factor in keeping the brain healthy. Exercise and a diet of fruits and vegetables, staying in control of diabetes, and lowering high blood pressure and high cholesterol can positively impact the heart and brain. It is also important to stay socially active, engage in mentally challenging activities, avoid tobacco and use alcohol in moderation.

Caregiving

Once it has been determined that a person has a form of dementia, the family often takes on the responsibility of caring for their loved one. They witness changes in the personality of their family member or friend, can witness unusual behaviors, and may experience challenges when communicating with their loved one or when helping them bathe, dress, or eat.

In order to help a family member or friend with dementia, it is important for the caregiver to stay healthy, get enough sleep, keep a sense of humor, allow time for oneself, and take one day at a time. Learning about Alzheimer's disease and how it affects people can help a caregiver move through the various stages of the disease.

Contributed by Christy Kessens.

Gerontologist MSc

Think about it. . . .

'SOMETIMES, PEOPLE USE AGE AS A CONVENIENT EXCUSE. 'I'M TOO OLD TO START SOMETHING NEW', OR, 'I COULDN'T LEARN THAT AT MY AGE.' OTHER PEOPLE, THOUGH, GO ON TO ACHIEVE THEIR GREATEST ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN LIFE IN LATER YEARS.'

Catherine Pulsifer, from How Old Are You

COUNTRY DELEGATES RECEIVING THE DRAFT CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF OLDER PERSONS, ECLAC HEADQUARTERS SANTIAGO CHILE



VOICE ORANGE WALK'S INFORMATION BOOTH AT THE BELIZE CITY NGO FAIR



UNDERSTANDING ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE WORKSHOP, BELMOPAN




Listen Up!!

The Golden Years Radio Program has changed time! We are now on live at 9:00am every other Sunday on Love FM! Tune IN!!!

THESE BOOKLETS ARE AVAILABLE AT THE NATIONAL COUNCIL ON AGEING FREE OF COST

Understanding Alzheimer's Disease



Definition
Risk Factors
Signs & Symptoms
Treatment
Staying Healthy
Healthy Caregiving

Warning Signs of Alzheimer's Disease



Is This Behavior A Normal Part Of Ageing Or Is It Alzheimer's Disease?

Where to find the N.C.A.
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