

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

The National Council on Ageing Quarterly Newsletter



Inside this issue:

From the Editor: Hurricane Tips	2
Senior Steps Project Banana Shake Recipe	2
Grandparents Day	3
Do you think Belize should Adopt a Convention on the Rights of Older Persons	4
National Forum on Situation Analysis of Older Persons in Belize	5
Mother's Day and Father's Day Celebrations	5
Belize's First Geriatric Fair (Mercy Care Center)	6
Wheelchairs for Older Women in Maya Center	7
Earth Day Celebrations	7
Senior Steps Photos	8

*Older Women
in Maya Center
receive wheel chairs
full Story on Page 7*

From the Editor

It seems that in the blinking of an eye half the year has flown past us. It is true that time waits for no man and for the population of older persons in Belize passing time brings greater challenges. Information emerging from the Country Poverty Assessment and the Situational Analysis of Older Persons have brought home the need for financial security for Belizeans as they age, not the mention accessible and affordable health care.



Ix-Chel Poot
Editor

This newsletter features a few articles on these issues as we provide updates on the Convention on the Rights of Older Persons, coverage of the first Geriatric Fair, and highlights of our Senior Steps program.

This issue would not be complete without a short little section dedicated to hurricane preparedness. The scare of tropical storm Alex simply reminds us that we must be prepared in case of an emergency. If you are an older person or if you have an older person in your care here are a few things to keep in mind:

- Have an evacuation plan, which includes the names and contact information for family members you will be travelling with, how you will be travelling and directions for where you are going to shelter.
- Prescriptions and a supply of essential medication for 1 month
- Photocopies of prescriptions
- Changes of clothing (3) and sturdy shoes
- Extra pair of glasses
- Toilet paper, tissue or paper towel
- Soap, shampoo, detergent and deodorant
- Hearing aids and batteries
- Walkers, wheel chair, walking stick if necessary
- Non-perishable foods (3 day supply)

These are just a few things to keep in mind as we prepare for the hurricane season. For more tips and information contact your local Red Cross. We encourage you to keep up with the weather forecast and take NEMO advisories and warnings seriously.

I hope that you will enjoy this issue as much as we have enjoyed putting it together and working on the projects and programs featured in our newsletter.

Ix-Chel Poot

Programme Officer

SENIOR STEPS

In each issue of our newsletter we feature an exercise tip and or article on a fruit. Our health article this issue focuses on our Senior Steps Program. Senior Steps is a six month exercise and nutrition project currently underway in Belmopan and Corozal. The project is a joint venture of the NCA and the Ministry of Health.

The project was officially launched in Belmopan on June 1, 2010 at the Hazel Hutchinson Center in Belmopan. Present at the launch was Minister. Pablo Marin, Minister of Health; Dr. Peter Allen, C.E.O, Ministry of Health; Dr. Beverly Barnett, PAHO Representative to Belize; Ms. Lorraine Thompson, PAHO Technical Advisor and prospective Senior Steppers from Belmopan and Corozal. At the launch each Senior Step club was presented with their t-shirts and banners.



L-R: Dr. Peter Allen, CEO Ministry of Health; Dr. Beverly Barnett, PAHO Representative, Hon. Pablo Marin, Minister of Health; Ms. Ix-Chel Poot, NCA; Ms. Lorraine Thompson, PAHO

The clubs meet weekly; Mondays in Belmopan and Wednesdays in Corozal. The exercise component of Senior Steps is done through dancing. Both clubs are learning to square dance and, although there is a shortage of male participants, everyone shakes a leg when the music gets started.

The Belmopan Club is facilitated by Ms. Rita Flowers and the Corozal Club by Mrs. Maria Magana. In August the clubs will be learning a new dance. And while the dancing is an excellent way to exercise the project also has a health education component. A Health Educator from HECOPAB and Ms. Robyn Daly, Nutritionist at the Ministry of Health, provide helpful information for the participants on how to stay healthy by eating right and how to better manage their medical conditions in older age. We wish them all the best and look forward to seeing a dance display at the end of the project.



*Senior Steps—Belmopan Club
See back page for more pictures*

Below we have a banana shake recipe that the Senior Steps group enjoyed at one of their sessions. Give it a try at home its delicious!

Banana Shake

- 2 Bananas
- 1/2 Cup Orange Juice
- 1/2 Cup Water
- 1/2 Cup Crushed Ice



Peel & Chop Bananas.
Place all ingredients in a container and blend until a creamy mixture is obtained. Serve with crushed ice and use immediately. (*provided by Ms. Robyn Daly, Nutritionist, Ministry of Health*)

Grandparents Day

Monday May 31, 2010 was celebrated as Grandparents Day at Garden City Primary School in Belmopan. Six brave grandparents, whose grandchildren are in Infant I, led the days assembly for the four hundred plus students.

The assembly program focused on the cultivation of patience in the lives of the children. The grandparents each participated in the days program. Mr. Luis Peraza Sr. told a story, Mrs. Linda Humphrey recited a poem and each grandparent shared a practical tip that the children could employ to help cultivate patience at school.

The assembly was the first step towards having a full days celebration next year for Grandparents Day.



L—R Mrs. Horence Ayala, Mrs. Alice Poot, Mrs. Linda Humphreys, Mrs. Delma Daly, Mrs. Delsie Nicholson, Mr. Luis Peraza, Back: Mr. Julian Cruz

***If you or someone you know would like to be a part of the National Council on Ageing programming contact us at:
822-1546 Or 822-3978***

Do you think that Belize should adopt a Convention on the Rights of Older Persons?

You may remember from a previous Newsletter that in December 2007, Ms. Kamela Palma, previous NCA Chairperson, Ms. Lindy Jeffery, NCA Executive Director and Ms. Dalila Castillo, from the Belize Social Security Board, represented Belize at the *Second Regional Intergovernmental Conference on Ageing in Brazil*. This was a very important Regional Meeting as it witnessed the development and signing of the Brasilia Declaration which stressed the need for the continued promotion and protection of the rights of older persons. It also paved the way for further discussions within the Caribbean and Latin America to move towards developing a Convention on the Rights of Older Persons.

At the present time, although many countries including Belize, have acknowledged and signed to uphold the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (2002) and the UN Principles of Older Persons (1991), these documents provide only guidelines but no legally binding obligations.

Belize has adopted many UN agreements such as:

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

However, none of these instruments refer to age and the rights of older persons are aligned with the rights of everyone else.

With the adoption of a UN Convention, aided by a Special Rapporteur, governments can have an explicit legal framework, guidelines and support that would enable them to ensure that older people's rights are realized in our increasingly ageing societies.

The Caribbean and Latin American Region is currently leading the way in this respect and pressing the United Nations to adopt a Regional Convention on the Rights of Older Persons.

National Forum on Situational Analysis of Older Persons in Belize

In November 2009, the National Council on Ageing began to conduct a Situational Analysis of Older Persons in Belize. This project was conducted over a six month period and involved interviewing 500+ older persons across the country. A Research Study questionnaire was designed and distributed to interviewers who conducted the study in their communities.

The booklets addressed major areas in the lives of older persons:

- Health
- Income Security
- Family Support
- Contribution to Community/Respect
- Housing /Living Conditions
- Social Support/Security of Person

The interviews came to a close at the end of March 2010 and the data was submitted for compilation and analysis.

On June 2, 2010 the NCA held a National Forum on the findings of the Situational



Situational Analysis of Older Persons National Forum Work group discussing Housing and Living Conditions

Analysis at the Radisson Fort George Hotel. Hon. Peter Eden Martinez, Minister of Human Development and Social Transformation and Chairperson of the NCA, provided the main address with contributions from Dr. Beverly Barnett, PAHO Country Representative; Ms. Erika Goldson, UNFPA Representative and Mr. Gustavo Perera, SUMMA Research Consultant.

Mr. Gustavo Perera presented the data, compiled by the analyst Mr. Jorge Aldana, in the form of dashboard tables that easily identified the trends emerging in each area of concern and the present conditions faced by those older persons interviewed.

The finding identified that the issues of access to medical care and medication is still a major concern, as is the need for financial stability and security. The majority of older persons do not receive a pension or benefit and an even greater number do not receive an income, which impacts greatly on other areas of older peoples lives such as not being able to afford to repair and maintain homes.



Situational Analysis of Older Persons National Forum Work group discussing Family and Social Support

The Forum not only provided the stakeholder participants with the opportunity to gain a greater insight into the reality of day to day life of older persons in Belize but also to make comments and recommendations that will be included in the final situational analysis

document.

The Situational Analysis is a vital document for the NCA as it provides us with the data needed to prioritize and address the ageing issues of Belize. The final document will be available during the month of July.

Mothers Day and Fathers Day

This issue of the newsletter would not be complete without mentioning Mothers Day and Fathers Day. I'd like to highlight the celebrations held at the Hazel Hutchinson Center in Belmopan for the older residents of the city.

Each year the members of HelpAge organize a Mothers Day program in May and a Fathers Day program in June.



Mothers day Program

These programs are designed to show appreciation to older mothers and fathers in the community and activities includes music, singing and prizes for the oldest mother and father.

Following the morning program, lunch is served and there is music and socializing. It is clear that everyone enjoys the celebrations and I am sure that Belmopan's Older Persons will be

looking forward to next year's festivities.



Fathers Day Program

Belize's First Geriatric Fair

The innovative team at Mercy Care Center organized and hosted the first Geriatric Fair on June 19, 2010. If you are wondering what a Geriatric Fair is here is a break down of the term Geriatric: *Relating to the aged or the characteristics of the aging process.* So if you have guessed that the Mercy Center Geriatric Fair was specifically for older persons you are right.

The Geriatric Fair was organized under the theme "Promoting Healthy Lifestyles for the Elderly", and offered a variety of free health services such as blood sugar testing, blood pressure tests and eye exams. In addition there were booths by Belize Social Security, Alliance Against AIDS, BCVI, the NCA and the Diabetes Association.

The day was officially opened with the cutting of ribbon by Governor General, Sir. Colville Young.



Geriatric Fair Opening Ceremony

Each older person present received free entry into a raffle and tombola that was being played throughout the day. In addition there was a free snack bag which everyone took home.



Belize Social Security Booth

which everyone took home.



Ladies getting busy on the dance floor

The Fair was also an awareness tool for the Mercy Care Center and older persons living on the South Side of Belize City were encouraged to sign up for the NHI Services currently being offered at the Center.

As the day came to a close it was obvious that the older persons had enjoyed themselves as there were a few who were still on the dance floor as the crowd began to disburse.

The NCA would like to commend the hard working staff and board of the Mercy Center who worked many long hours so that this fair could become a reality. We look forward to next years fair which I am sure will bring bigger and better things!

Wheelchairs for Older Women in Maya Centre.

The NCA is pleased to have been able to assist with a request from Mr. Daniel Bolon from the Maya Centre in Stann Creek District to obtain several wheelchairs that have enabled older women with limited mobility in this community to obtain a new lease on life. The NCA thanks Dr. Alfonso Ayala of the Rotary Club of Belize and Western Regional Hospital for their assistance in acquiring the wheelchairs.

Mrs. Magdalena Bolon (Daniel's grandmother), aged 90 years, was unable to walk without assistance and this prevented her from attending church but after receiving her wheelchair she was full of smiles and her grandchildren lined up to take turns in pushing her around.



Mrs. Apalonia Sho, aged 72 years, who spent her days confined to sitting in a hammock because she was unable to walk without assistance, is now able to join her family for meals and visit friends after receiving her wheelchair.

Another woman from the village, **Mrs. Adriana Pop**

aged 63 years, who had such difficulty walking is now able to move around the village more comfortably with her new wheelchair.

The Rotary Club of Belize has links with the Wheelchair Foundation and receives a supply of wheelchairs from them.



To know more about how to obtain one contact the NCA or any branch of the Rotary Club or log on to their website: www.rotarybelize.org

Earth Day Celebrations at Guanacaste Park

The Belize Audubon Society celebrated Earth Day on April 24th this year and once again organized their traditional clean-up campaign of the Western Highway from Belize City to Guanacaste Park outside Belmopan City. Each year more and more people volunteer their time to pick up garbage strewn along the main highway and they do so to draw attention to the problem of littering and disrespect for the environment.

This year Earth Day turned out to be an extremely hot day and volunteers from many organizations and Embassies, although starting very early in the morning, had to contend with the soaring temperature, which unfortunately was far too hot for older people to consider. However Mrs. Pat Robinson from Belmopan was determined to do her part and joined with young people and staff from the 4 H Centre to clean the Hummingbird Highway from Belmopan to Guanacaste Park.

All the other older persons who were invited out to join the Annual Earth Day Celebrations once again enjoyed the entertainment, which this year was provided by the Mexican Embassy. Ambassador Luis Manuel López Moreno was present to introduce the Folklórico Dance group from Quintana Roo, who captivated the guests with a very colourful Maya ceremonial dance. A Maya spiritual leader from Chiapas blessed the earth, especially for Earth Day.

The usual tree planting ceremony was led this year by Mayor Simeon Lopez.



Senior Steps Belmopan



Senior Steps Corozal



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