New research project — “Tools for Change: Building Senior Friendly Communities”

In 2010, MAREP and a number of partner organizations launched an Age-Friendly Communities (AFC) toolkit to help communities become more livable, inclusive, and supportive of the aging population. The AFC toolkit is designed to help organizations establish a supportive and enabling environment, an informed society, and personal, social, and system connectedness.

Thanks to a grant provided by the J. P. Bickell Foundation, MAREP has recently partnered with the Region of Peel on a new research project entitled “Tools for Change: Building Senior Friendly Communities”. The purpose of the project is to use the AFC toolkit to help create an age-friendly community within two seniors’ housing facilities operated by Peel Living—the Region of Peel’s not-for-profit housing company.

The project will involve residents in all stages of planning, decision-making, and implementation. Using a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, the project will draw upon the residents’ lived experience, as well as their talents and personal skill sets. Residents from diverse backgrounds will have the opportunity to contribute to the project, including individuals who are often excluded from decision-making processes. For instance, support will be available to individuals living with dementia who may wish to have assistance participating in meetings. In addition, project materials will be translated into various languages for residents whose primary language is not English.

Over the next year, a research team led by Lisa Loiselle, Associate Director of Research at MAREP, will meet regularly at both buildings with a steering committee consisting of residents and project partners. Members of the steering committee will work together to determine what the residents of each building feel would make their community more age-friendly. The steering committee will develop and distribute a questionnaire to all residents, which will help the committee to identify common themes and opportunities in each community.

The steering committee will then create an inventory of personal skills and talents within the community that can be drawn upon to create positive change.

The research team will co-facilitate the steering committee meetings and document how residents can be meaningfully engaged in the process of creating an age-friendly community. In addition, individual interviews with members of the steering committee and focus groups with the residents will take place before and after implementation to determine perceived change and also to get a sense of their experience participating in the project.

The project is expected to generate a number of benefits for residents living in both seniors’ housing facilities. For instance, we anticipate that the process will promote the sharing of resources and personal talents, and encourage collaboration, active participation, and community engagement throughout the process. In so doing, capacity contribution among residents will be enhanced. Additionally, the process will promote the physical, mental, and social wellbeing of residents, and ultimately enhance their quality of life.

Upon completion of the project, the research team will have the knowledge to make recommendations and develop best practices for including seniors in the process of creating age-friendly communities, particularly marginalized groups who are often excluded from decision-making. Preliminary findings will be presented during a workshop at the 44th Annual Scientific and Educational Meeting of the Canadian Association on Gerontology, October 23rd – 25th.
Hack4Health provides bright ideas for individuals living with dementia and MS

More than 70 hackers gathered at the Accelerator Centre in Waterloo on September 26th and 27th for Canada's first wellness hackathon. Mentors, students and researchers collaborated over 36 hours to create hardware, software and social solutions to improve the quality of life for people living with Multiple Sclerosis or Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias.

The event began with a World Café discussion, during which participants had the opportunity to engage with others, share their ideas, and start formulating their teams. Throughout the course of the 2-day event, teams consulted with mentors, including people living with dementia or MS, to help inform their innovative solutions. Hackers showcased their ideas to a panel of judges during the pitch competition on the final day. The grand prize winners included:

- **Circle of Care** – a web app featuring cognitive, physiological, physical activity and functional summaries
- **TBS** – a TechJournal app paired with a health monitoring wristwatch to detect temperature, track symptoms, and provide real-time feedback

The judges offered Circle of Care and TBS the unique opportunity to combine their ventures presenting them jointly with the St. Paul's GreenHouse Prize (four-month stay at St. Paul's GreenHouse for one student) and the opportunity to apply for up to $15,000 in research grant funding through the MS Society of Canada.

- **Cloud9** – a novel way to prevent bedsores by producing a pressure map indicating vital pressure points and redistributing pressure as a person rests

Cloud9 won the MAREP Prize (four-month stay at St. Paul's GreenHouse donated by Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation Ken Murray Funds for Distribution) for one member and three $5,000 scholarships to Conrad Business, Entrepreneurship and Technology Centre for three group members.

- **ReMind** - an audio and timed reminder device for individuals living with dementia. A customizable feature would allow the use of the voice of a loved one or care partner.

ReMind was granted a $5,000 scholarship to Conrad Business, Entrepreneurship and Technology Centre for one member and a Pathfinder Market Validation Canvas from the Accelerator Centre.

Hack4Health was organized by Lisa Loiselle, Associate Director of Research at MAREP, and Karla Boluk, Professor in the Faculty of Applied Health Sciences at the University of Waterloo.

Thank you to the Lead Sponsors, Biogen and Ontario Brain Institute, for supporting Hack4Health!
Network for Aging Research Fall Symposium on Aging Research

The Network for Aging Research (NAR) is pleased to invite you to attend the first Fall Symposium on Aging Research.

October 27th, 2015, 11:30 am – 4:30 pm
University Club, University of Waterloo

NAR was established in 2014 with the intention of acting as a networking tool for researchers who are conducting research in aging, and fostering collaborative aging research across campus through grants programs and other initiatives.

The symposium will feature a keynote address by Donald Stuss, President & Scientific Director, Ontario Brain Institute, presentations by aging-focused research from several faculties at UWaterloo, and a graduate and undergraduate poster exhibition.

This is a free event, however, registration is required.

For more information, please contact Michele Bruch: mkbruch@uwaterloo.ca or call 519-888-4567, ext. 36880.

By Us For Us® guides now available in French!

MAREP is pleased to inform you that a number of our By Us For Us® guides are now available in French thanks to the generous support of our friends at the Alzheimer Society of Hamilton Halton. Below is a list of the guides that are now available on our website in a French accessible format and in PDF available for downloading:

- L'alimentation et l'heure des repas
- Vivre et célébrer la vie grâce aux loisirs
- Avant le diagnostic et le diagnostic précoce
- Vivre et se transformer au rythme de la perte et du deuil
- Conseils et stratégies

In the coming months, we anticipate having more of the By Us For Us® guides available in French.

Memory Boosters is looking for new members

The Memory Boosters Social Club is a peer-led social group that meets twice a month in Kitchener. The group provides a warm and supportive place for people with dementia and their care partners to socialize, relax, and have fun together.

Memory Boosters participate in a wide range of activities including bowling, line dancing, art workshops, guided tours, potlucks. Speaking of food, there are always refreshments and snacks provided.

This free program meets on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month, from 1:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. in the lower meeting room at The Villages of Winston Park in Kitchener.

To register or inquire about the group, please call 519-888-4567 ext. 35040 or e-mail Memory Boosters.
The Times They Are A-Changin’! — By ODAG

It is a very short time ago when the thought of an exclusive group made up of only people with dementia would not be considered possible. For people with dementia must have support in order to think and act.

As people with dementia, we know this to be absolutely untrue and ridiculous. This is when you sing Bob Dylan's political cry for change: "The times they are a-changing'; Come senators, congressmen; Please heed the call; Don't stand in the doorway; Don't block up the hall."

It is true – the times they are a-changin’! In the Fall of 2014 a group of people living with dementia formed the Ontario Dementia Advisory Group (ODAG). Its purpose is to influence policies, practices, and people to ensure that we, people living with dementia, are included in every decision that affects our lives.

We believe in three key principles which guide our work:

1) We are the experts
2) Working with us and not for us
3) Nothing about us without us

We have been extremely busy since its inception. Some of the projects we have been and currently are involved in include:

Development and Implementation of an Ontario Dementia Strategy

ODAG is a key stakeholder and acts in the capacity within the Dementia Advisory Group. Last month was the inaugural meeting and things are quickly ramping up this month. We consider this project to be our main priority and will be deeply involved in it for the next few years.

Support for Bill C-356 — a National Strategy for Dementia Plan

ODAG actively petitioned to have this Bill passed and made law. MPP’s were contacted, letters were written, and presentations were given to push for a national dementia strategy. Unfortunately, the Conservative government voted it down by a narrow one vote margin.

Dementia Friends Canada – Phase 2

The Alzheimer Society of Canada has been mandated directly by the Minister of Health to implement a national Dementia Friends awareness initiative. As a key stakeholder, ODAG will be part of the project design and development review.

In addition to these projects, each ODAG member also has other projects they are involved in that includes media engagement and speaking at conferences and lectures.

The current ODAG team consists of: Phyllis Fehr, Bill Heibein, Maisie Jackson, Bea Kraayenhof and Mary Beth Wighton.

We have partners who help make our work possible: ASO: Delia Sinclair Frigault, Phil Caffery, Nancy Rushford; AS Niagara: Gina Bendo; CERAH, LU: Dr. Elaine Wiersma; and MAREP, UW: Lisa Loiselle.

Perhaps the most important work ODAG does is to remind each other to "Focus on what we can do, not what we can't."