

North Shore Keep Well Society
Annual Report
2020/2021 Fiscal Year





CONTACT INFO

600 WEST QUEENS ROAD

NORTH VANCOUVER, BC.

V7N 2L3

Telephone: 604-988-7115, ext. 27

Email: keepwellsociety@telus.net

Website: www.keepwellsociety.ca

OUR SITES

NORTH SHORE NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE

DELBROOK RECREATION CENTRE

PARKGATE COMMUNITY CENTRE

WEST VANCOUVER KIWANIS

SILVER HARBOUR SENIORS' CENTRE

WEST VANCOUVER SENIORS' ACTIVITY
CENTRE

ST. STEPHEN'S PARISH

History and Introduction of Keep Well

The North Shore Keep Well Society is a community-based wellness program working with and for seniors across the three North Shore municipalities (City of North Vancouver, District of North Vancouver and District of West Vancouver). The program began thirty-four years ago as an initiative of Lions Gate Hospital and was incorporated as a society on March 14, 1991.

The goal of the Society is to help seniors to take responsibility for their own well-being by offering activities that encourage healthy living and opportunities to remain active in the community for as long as possible.

Sessions at seven sites from Parkgate to Dundarave enable seniors to participate in a variety of activities, including mild exercise, group discussions, massage, nutrition counselling, blood pressure monitoring, and socializing. With the exception of a part-time coordinator and certified fitness leaders, the programs are run by approximately 120 dedicated volunteers.

Mission Statement

We believe in Seniors.

We believe that Seniors represent a rich resource to themselves and to the Community.

We believe that when Seniors are given the opportunity to discover and develop their strengths, they can become powerful agents for change.

We believe that wellness is for everyone and that choosing to keep well is fun.

We believe that when we choose to exercise, relax, eat well, laugh, love, do the things we enjoy doing most, help and support each other and become actively involved in the community, our lives take on a special quality.

The North Shore Keep Well Program is designed to provide opportunities for seniors to choose to learn, to grow and to expand their experience of well-being.

Purpose

- To promote the health and well being of older adults living on the North Shore.
- To encourage seniors to help themselves and each other, to live in better health, to learn, and to expand their experiences of well-being.
- To increase awareness of community resources.
- To promote the Keep Well program in the community.

Message from the President

It is my pleasure to serve as President of the North Shore Keep Well Society through this unprecedented year. All seven site locations have been closed since March 2020. The Board switched from hands-on interaction at the site locations to working on how to move forward in an effort to remain connected and support North Shore seniors. This included all of us also becoming familiar with virtual platforms for contact. I am very appreciative of the collective time and effort.

Despite the challenges, we have accomplished a great deal over the year, albeit quite differently than previous years. Exercise and other videos are now available on Zoom and our website. Georgiana and Lillian have worked diligently to overhaul the Keep Well Website in a very short time. We worked with many seniors in our community who were unfamiliar with different facets of technology and now many are connected to email and website information through online services. Our website shows a 325% increase in views and we continue to connect by phone with those who do not use computer technology. Thanks to our Interim Coordinator, Coordinator and Site Coordinators for helping to facilitate this.

We attempted in-person classes at Silver Harbour in September but decided against it due to increased community COVID-19 cases at the time. With caution, we proceeded with the AGM on September 9, 2020, at that location while following the health and safety protocols. This year our AGM will be held at 1:00 pm on June 16, 2021 on Zoom, another first for us.

The Keep Well Society adapted as quickly as possible to the North Shore lockdown. Some of the developments are in the following reports from Michelle Messinger, Carole Kellough, Georgiana Forgunson, John Charles and Andy Demeule.

I want to share a few comments from some seniors: "Thank you so much for the phone calls and for the information. It really helps." (many); "I follow the exercises every day!" (many); "I am so fortunate for the chance to speak to a counsellor. I cannot say enough about the value"; "I felt sad having no contact for my friend I saw weekly, thank you for connecting us". The rewards from the funds we received are very much appreciated by all seniors, especially North Shore seniors, and most appreciated by The North Shore Keep Well Society. We continue to do our best to maintain connection and to provide more opportunities for them.

We are very grateful for the generous support of Vancouver Coastal Health, New Horizons for Seniors Program, and West Vancouver Foundation. We also want to thank PARC Living, The City of North Vancouver, District of North Vancouver, District of West Vancouver, North Shore Community Centres and St Stephens Parish, our members and participants. Without all your support we would not be able to continue keeping seniors connected and healthy. We do hope for your continued support in the future. Any donation or grant is very much appreciated and allows us to help seniors on the North Shore.



Cheryl Cowan, Board President

Coordinator's Report

In times of great stress or adversity, it's always best to keep busy, to plow your anger and your energy into something positive..... Lee Iacocca

2020/2021 has been a year unlike one many of us has seen in our lifetime. COVID-19 has changed the way we live our day to day lives for the last year and a half. The North Shore Keep Well Society, like many of our non-profit counterparts, has had to pivot in how we operate and reach out to our seniors' community. In order to protect the health and safety of our participants, volunteers and staff, our in-person programming had to be suspended and we began the process of creating new ways to deliver exercise programming and social connections to our participants and members.

Over the spring and summer of 2020, our dedicated volunteer Board members, exercise instructors and site coordinators took it upon themselves to reach out to our participants and check in to see how they were managing at home. They encouraged people to get outside and walk or get some fresh air while the weather was good. During this time, Andy Demeule also collaborated with Parkgate Community Centre to create an exercise video to help those at home continue to stay fit and active in this unique time.

September arrived and with it the North Shore Keep Well Society hosted our socially distanced AGM meeting at Silver Harbour. Joanne Waddington, who had stepped in during my time off, worked with the Keep Well Board to set up a COVID-19 safe meeting in the Silver Harbour Cafeteria. With schools back in session, I resumed my role as Coordinator for the North Shore Keep Well Society.

The Communications Committee began in earnest to revamp the Keep Well website to allow participants and members greater access to new and existing exercise videos. In addition to new video content, the Keep Well website now has updated community information found in the "news" section. The Board worked with Afsar Paidar to create exercise videos in Farsi and in English.

October brought our New Horizon's funded project to fruition. Rosa Tkacova, a certified health coach, began connecting with small groups virtually to ensure that our community continued to prioritize their health in the unique circumstances. We also partnered with Moving Forward Family Services to ensure aspects of mental health were also being addressed. This project ensured our community had services available from October until March of 2021.

November and December saw Keep Well venture into Zoom exercise classes and additional virtual social programming. Afsar began running two Zoom exercise classes per week. Our technology guru, Wallis Dixon, helped seniors who were new to online programming sign on and participate. We hosted a virtual Christmas concert in December which was a great experience for all who attended. Keep Well took the opportunity to send seasons greetings and to express our great appreciation to our committed volunteers.

In January, we began the annual granting cycle with many of our funders. We also hosted an Art Therapy program that combined art therapy and mindfulness in a virtual platform. In March, we partnered with Neighborli (a virtual intergenerational helping platform) to provide Keep Well participants with recreational and educational programming. A collaborative presentation with Capilano University students and Keep Well participants in April was very well received and delved into Flora and Fauna in local areas in Vancouver including a special virtual jaunt to Europe.

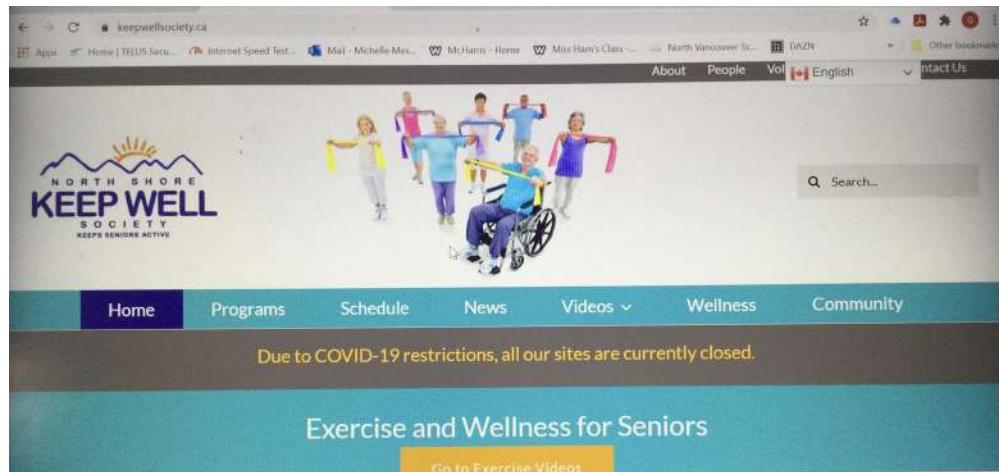
While 2020/2021 saw its share of difficult circumstances and tested our capacity to hunker down for long stretches, we all learned the value of community and the ability to challenge ourselves to venture outside of our comfort areas and try new (virtual) experiences. Thank you all for your commitment to the North Shore Keep Well Society. We look forward to a time in the not-so-distant future that we can come together in person and see all your smiling faces. Be safe and Keep Well.



Michelle Messinger, Coordinator

It doesn't matter how slow you go, as long as you don't stop Confucius

Keep Well Society Website



This past year has seen exciting changes in Keep Well communication strategies. Because of COVID-19, the North Shore Keep Well Society has had to move from primarily printed material and in-person programming to a virtual web-based platform for both information delivery and programming. Fortunately, many of our members and participants have been able to adjust to the change and join us virtually with computers, tablets, etc. We continue to develop strategies to reach out to those who are unable to use the online resources we currently operate on.

With the help of funding from the New Horizons for Seniors Program, we were able to hire a web page consultant who helped us redesign our website so it is more attractive and easier to navigate. Our board secretary, Lillian Gorrie, successfully worked with our web provider to integrate these changes into our website. During 2020/2021, the Keep Well website received much more activity. There was a 325% increase in site users. Keep Well members and participants accessed the website for new online exercise videos and updated community news and information. We have also started reaching out to our community via a direct email service called Mailerlite.

Mailerlite enables Keep Well to keep in touch with our community about important news and developments regarding virtual programming. As a result of in-person programming being suspended, Keep Well has worked with both Andy and Afsar, our fitness instructors, to create new exercise videos for those who wish to continue exercising from their home. For those seeking new exercise content and health information, we have also added videos for chair yoga, Qi Gong and blood pressure.

As our sites gradually reopen, we will continue to explore the most efficient ways of staying connected with all members and participants.

Georgiana Forgunson, Board Member & Lillian Gorrie, Board Secretary

Covid-19: Promoting Wellness for Seniors



This year, Keep Well received funding from the New Horizons for Seniors Program, to offer a COVID-19 wellness project which assisted seniors in keeping healthy and alleviating social isolation during the pandemic.

The Project started with a mail out including a summary of significant resources available to seniors in the communities. The summary provided details on food banks, low-cost meals, transportation options, library resources, and help lines.

We hired a Certified Coach, who is a retired medical doctor and a Keep Well volunteer.

We also formed a partnership with a counselling agency, Moving Forward Family Services, which provides opportunities for intern counsellors to complete their counselling practicum hours. The Coach and intern counsellors were engaged to provide check-in, coaching and counselling telephone calls to Keep Well members on a frequency agreed upon with each member.

Some members reported feeling socially isolated due to COVID-19 and found the check-in calls helpful in feeling more connected. Even members with a strong social network and family support reported looking forward to the calls and expressed their appreciation for the Project.

We also hired a computer coach to help seniors get comfortable with online tools, to expand their connection to friends and family and allow them to access online content.

Keep Well Directors worked on revamping and updating the www.keepwellsociety.ca website to make it easier to navigate, and commissioned new online videos including exercise videos in English and Farsi, and videos on chair yoga, Qi Gong and Blood Pressure.

We delivered new Zoom programming such as a live holiday concert, art therapy workshop and bi-weekly Zoom exercise classes led by Afsar Paidar.

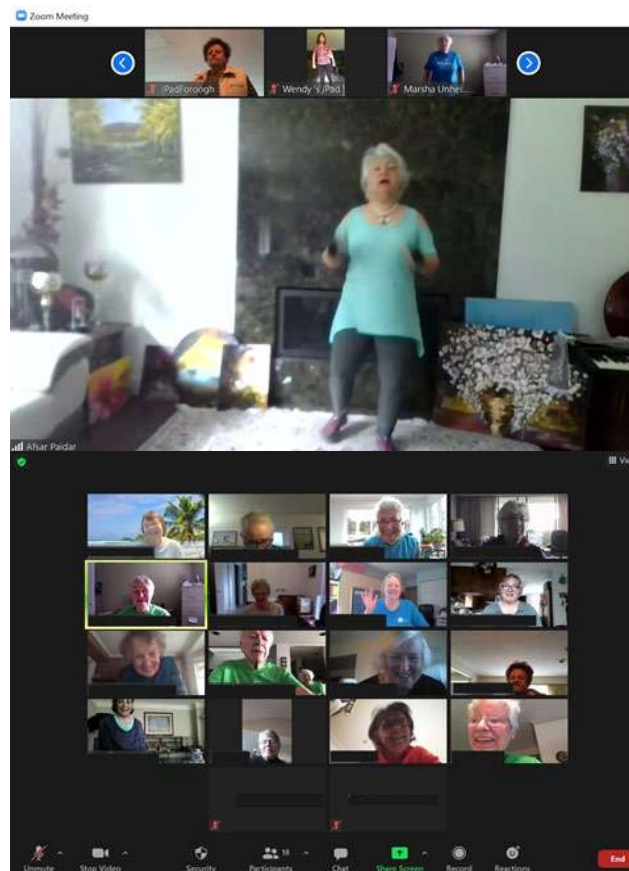
We also offered bi-weekly Zoom group conversation sessions led the Certified Coach, (including live music by Doug Muir), which enabled seniors to interact in meaningful conversations in a virtual group setting, and increase their social connection.

We partnered with Seniors' Hub of Capilano Community Services, where we made our check-in calls and other online programming available to their members, and they gave us a small number of tablets for our Keep Well Community. We pre-loaded these tablets with community related information and exercise videos and created a loan program to make these tablets available to Keep Well members.

In all, over 200 of Keep Well seniors participated in some aspect of this project, which we hope helped in alleviating the social isolation that we all felt as a result of the COVID-19 restrictions.

Thanks are due to the many dedicated Keep Well volunteers, directors and site coordinators who gave unstintingly of their time to ensure the success of this project.

Carole Kellough, Board Member



Andy Checks In



Andy Demeule, our Director of Keep Well fitness programming and long-standing fitness instructor, has not forgotten about all of our participants. Andy, our volunteer site coordinators and the Board have been reaching out to the Keep Well community for the last year and a half to provide check-ins and connect with seniors to see how they are fairing given the community changes with COVID-19.

We recently spoke with Andy and he said that over the past 14 months he has had many very interesting telephone conversations with numerous Keep Well participants. These calls were made on a monthly basis to assure our participants that we had not forgotten them and to advise them of the many programs and fitness videos now available on our website.

“I have found it very rewarding to learn about the person behind the name, such as their likes and dislikes, health issues and families, and the many funny stories along the way”, Andy shared.

Everyone has been saying that they are missing Keep Well exercises and the social interactions with their Keep Well friends. We appreciate how the Seniors community have been patiently waiting to be united with their Keep Well family once more. We look forward to sharing information in the coming year when it is safe to reopen our in-person exercise classes and programming. In the meantime, check out exercise videos by Andy and others on our Keep Well Website or sign up for one of Afsar’s Zoom video classes.

Post Pandemic Reopening Plan

To state the obvious: it has been a challenging year but one with many opportunities to learn and grow. Early in the pandemic, a Re-opening Committee was established to develop an overall plan to safely reopen Keep Well site locations in keeping with provincial guidelines. This plan was designed to be tailored to each site's unique needs and to dovetail with their own justifiable safety requirements. Several of these individual plans were completed but as the pandemic worsened, and all possibility of reopening receded, the reopening committee halted any further work.

We knew at some point the Provincial Chief Medical Officer would once again allow indoor exercise and socializing activities at our locations. We just didn't know when. Thankfully, a recent announcement of a phased reopening of the province has given us hope that the North Shore Keep Well Society will be able to re-open to in-person activities in the not-so-distant future.

The reopening committee will now be re-engaging the sites to dust off these safety plans so they're ready for the day we can once again exercise in a group and enjoy each other's company. Our intention is to start at all sites beginning September 7 as per the Provincial mandate and site availability. Stay tuned in to our website for updates on our intended re-opening plans.

John Charles, Board Member

Mental Wellness for Seniors

Keep Well has received funding from New Horizons for Seniors Program, a federal government funding agency, to offer a new program focusing on the mental wellness of seniors and caregivers of seniors. The rationale for the program is based on research that shows that improving the mental wellness of a senior leads to improved quality of life and improved physical and cognitive functioning.

The Mental Wellness for Seniors program is to be offered in a series of free workshops to be run five times.

Each workshop will run for seven weeks, and will cover the following topics: Principles of Healthy Living; Eating Well; Being Physically Active; Sleeping Well; Emotional Wellness; Social Life; Community Integration. Each weekly session will consist of a workshop presentation, group coaching and exploration. Relaxation and breathing techniques will be presented, and there will be bi-weekly exercise classes and opportunities for individual coaching.

The program was scheduled to start in June 2020, but was postponed due to COVID-19. Workshops are now being run virtually, and in-person workshops will be offered when it is safe to do so.

Carole Kellough, Board Member

Farewells

Keep Well would like to recognize and honour the passing of our valued volunteers and/or participants over the past year:

Ursula Bercic

Dr. Glen Harrison

Elena Ilagan

Margaret McEwen

Elma Moebes

Bette Rumble

George Stickney



NORTH SHORE KEEP WELL BOARD MEMBERS



Cheryl Cowan



Doug Muir



Lillian Gorrie



Laura DeGrave



John Charles



Georgiana Ferguson



Carole Kellough



Maureen Malcom



Afsar Paidar



Marsha Unheim

NORTH SHORE
KEEP WELL BOARD OF DIRECTORS
OFFICERS

Board President, Cheryl Cowan
Board Vice-President, Doug Muir
Board Secretary, Lillian Gorrie
Board Treasurer, Laura DeGrave

DIRECTORS

John Charles
Georgiana Forguson
Carole Kellough
Maureen Malcolm
Afsar Paidar
Marsha Unheim

BOARD COMMITTEES 2020/2021

Finance Committee

Laura DeGrave, Carole Kellough, Doug Muir, Georgiana Forguson

Fundraising Sub Committee

Carole Kellough, Laura DeGrave, Heather Dunsford, Georgiana Forguson, Afsar Paidar, Michelle Messinger

Health Committee

Marsha Unheim, John Charles, Cheryl Cowan

Personnel Committee

John Charles Cheryl Cowan, Carole Kellough

Communications Committee

Lillian Gorrie, Georgiana Forguson, Cheryl Cowan, Michelle Messinger, Afsar Paidar

Events Committee

Marsha Unheim, Doug Muir, Maureen Malcolm, Afsar Paidar

Programming Committee

Afsar Paidar, Michelle Messinger, Andy Demeule

Reopening Committee

John Charles, Andy Demeule, Lillian Gorrie, Doug Muir, Afsar Paidar, Marsha Unheim,

Special Projects Committee

Doug Muir, John Charles, Cheryl Cowan, Laura DeGrave, Georgiana Forguson, Maureen Malcolm, Michelle Messinger

Special Thanks To

Our 2020/21 Sponsors:

Vancouver Coastal Health

City of North Vancouver

District of North Vancouver

District of West Vancouver

Government of Canada's New Horizons for Seniors Program

PARC Retirement Living

West Vancouver Foundation

Belmont Foundation

Deep Cove Lions Club

John Hardie Mitchell Foundation

Joseph Segal Family Foundation

Lohn Foundation

Thank you to our members whose generous donations ensure that Keep Well continues. We gratefully acknowledge all who fund and donate to our program.

Thank you to our wonderful volunteers who continue to support Keep Well through their service and commitment to our organization.