

ATTRIBUTES OF AN AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY

Connie Newman, Manitoba Association of Senior Centres

In last year's Spring edition of the *Municipal Leader*, we shared information about the Manitoba Association of Senior Centres (MASC) and its province-wide leadership role in supporting the Age-Friendly Manitoba Initiative (AFMI). With funding from Manitoba Health, we have extended our reach. We have developed new resources to support municipalities across the province in their efforts to create more age-friendly communities and contribute to the health and well-being of citizens.

The age-friendly community model is unique in the way it integrates a community's social environment – the people part, with the built environment – the place part. Everyone wants fundamental outcomes from the community in which they live – healthy, active lifestyles, staying in their neighbourhood, feeling safe, and being valued and respected. To realize these outcomes is a shared responsibility. Municipal government is a key player, but success requires active engagement from others, often including businesses, non-profit groups, senior centres, schools, professional services, and older residents themselves.

While the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact how we can best connect with communities, our Age-Friendly Resource Team surveyed community leaders in June of 2020. The purpose of these consultations was to take stock of the age-friendly movement in Manitoba and determine how best the team could support communities moving forward. Of note was the consensus drawn from community leader responses regarding the attributes of an age-friendly community, which include:

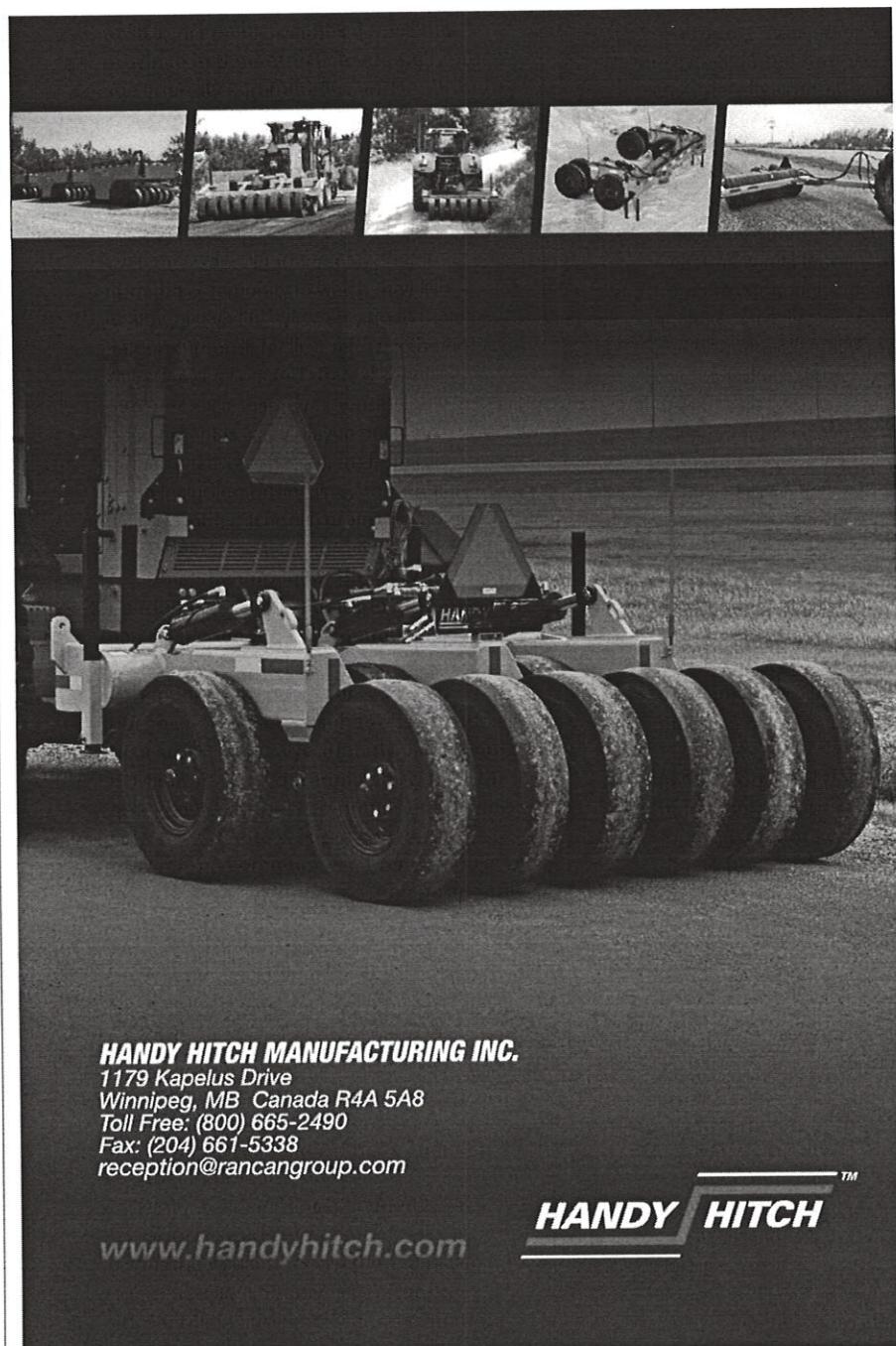
- A municipal government that views the community through an age-friendly lens
- A culture of inclusion, support, and respect for residents of all ages
- Leadership open to partnership and sharing of resources
- Community connections that bring residents together to benefit the community
- Volunteerism that is encouraged, appreciated, and recognized

From the consultations, the team also identified key initiatives to strengthen the AFMI, including closer consultation with municipal governments and local

age-friendly leadership. Central to this feedback was the encouragement to explore new mechanisms to connect communities, share information, celebrate success, and solve problems.

In response, we are happy to share with you the link to our new Age-Friendly

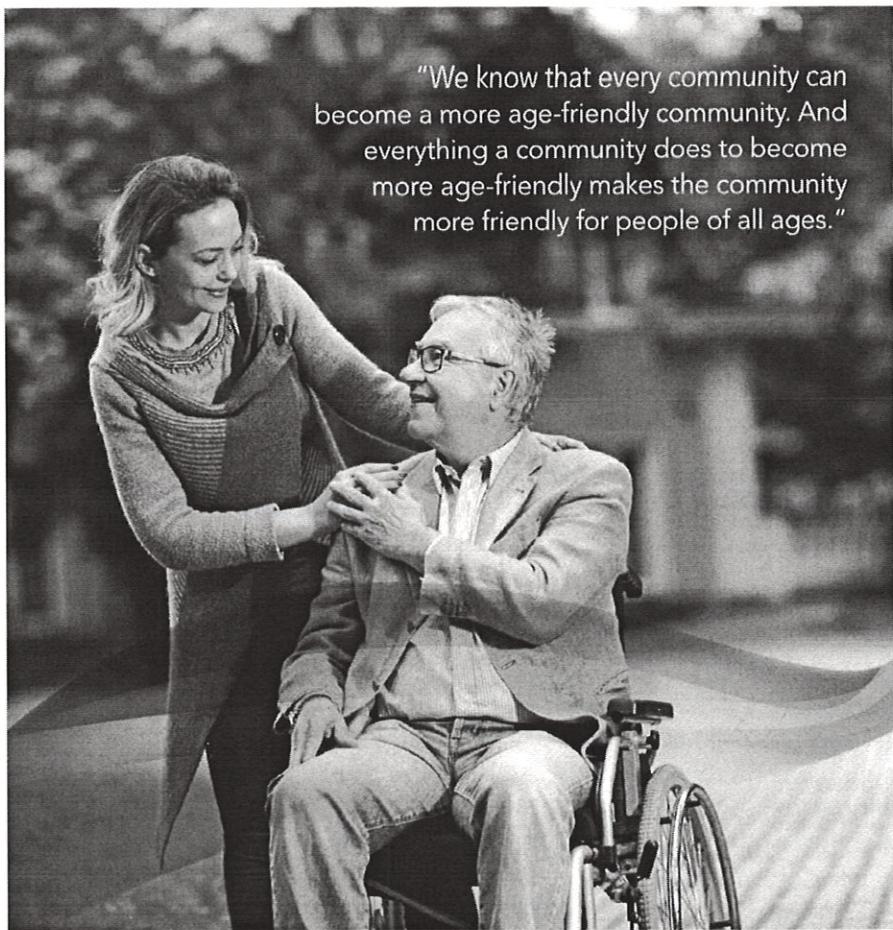
website <https://agefriendlymanitoba.com> and encourage you to share this link with others in your community and also to spend some of your own time perusing the resources on the site. There is a section on becoming more age-friendly, which includes community benefits as well as



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success stories. Another section contains a series of short videos addressing issues such as age-friendly leadership, social participation, transportation, and intergenerational activities.

Many of you will have received our new, monthly e-blast Age-Friendly newsletter, which was introduced in January of this year. It contains up-to-date information on the AFMI, a community profile component, and stories from across the province and around the world. We were also thrilled to present a webinar this past January to members of the Manitoba Municipal Administrators Association, and we thank Denys Volkov and Adrienne Bestland for their collaboration and support in creating this opportunity. We intend to further develop our working relationship with both the AMM and the MMAA over the coming years. All of this to say, we are listening to municipal leaders in our efforts to better support your community efforts.

We do want to share some of what we heard and continue to hear regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and older citizens. We know the pressures of social isolation challenge people of all ages. The pandemic has forced the closure of so many social opportunities, many of which are also fundraisers for senior serving organizations. We have also seen the need to be better prepared for emergencies. At the same time, we have seen communities respond in innovative ways to help connect residents.

In closing, we know that every community is age-friendly. Every community has resources that support older residents and residents of all ages to do the things they need to do. But, every community also has barriers that limit the ability of people to do those important things. We know that every community can become a more age-friendly community. And everything a community does to become more age-friendly makes the community more friendly for people of all ages.

We have assigned a member of the Age-Friendly Resource Team to each of the communities engaged in the initiative. They remain available to consult, provide information, and point to resources that can assist communities. We are also available to consult with communities that wish to explore the benefits of becoming more age-friendly.

To learn more about the AFMI and our resources, or to connect with the Resource Team, email us at hello@agefriendlymanitoba.com. ▶