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Ministry of Health

West Vancouver receives Age-friendly BC grant

WEST VANCOUVER – West Vancouver seniors will benefit from a \$20,000 age-friendly grant to help create programs or tools that address the needs of older residents in the district.

The District of West Vancouver is one of 27 communities receiving grants for 2013.

“This year’s grant recipients have recognized the importance of ensuring that communities and businesses meet the needs of residents of all ages,” said Minister of State for Seniors Ralph Sultan. “Successful projects like the ones in West Vancouver and on Bowen Island focus on a wide range of supports to make life easier for older residents. Many of these programs are supporting seniors to remain socially active and connected to their communities and are helping to reduce isolation, which is one of the top issues that I hear from seniors across B.C. when I meet with them.”

The District of West Vancouver will use the funding to connect frail, isolated older adults to senior volunteers and community-based leisure, social, cultural and health promotion programs and services. This will include incorporating a new referral system that involves three municipalities and Vancouver Coastal Health. The program will match a trained volunteer to work one-on-one with seniors to connect them to services, programs or resources. The volunteer will provide assistance based on the needs of the participants and supports could include: information, practical assistance in engaging in activities, caregiver support, or connection with transportation services. The program will build on the work and services of existing seniors’ volunteer agencies and will benefit seniors across the North Shore.

“It is great to see communities like Bowen Island and West Vancouver taking steps to implement programs that support the needs and health of local seniors,” said West Vancouver-Sea to Sky MLA Joan McIntyre.

The age-friendly planning and project grant program is a partnership between the government of B.C. and the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM). Grants of up to \$20,000 are provided through UBCM to help establish, or continue, a variety of projects that support healthy, active seniors.

“We have worked hard to ensure that our community represents the needs of citizens of all ages, and with this funding we hope to continue to build on our strengths as an age-friendly community,” said Michael Smith, mayor of West Vancouver. “The work we are doing in partnership with stakeholders will benefit some of the region’s frailest seniors and provide them with access to information, services and assistance.”

Applications for age-friendly planning and projects grants were reviewed by staff from UBCM and the Ministry of Health. They were scored on a variety of factors, including: goals, proposed activities, involvement of seniors and other key partners, budget, and innovation and sustainability.

Since 2007, 117 B.C. communities have received funding to support age-friendly planning and projects, examples include: age-friendly assessments, ensuring services are more accessible, supporting transportation and social connection to help prevent social isolation, and improving the community by increasing garden and green space.

In September 2012, government announced \$500,000 was available for the 2013 round of grants. Fourteen of the 27 successful applicants for 2013 have not received previous funding through the program.

The age-friendly grant program is just one aspect of Age-friendly BC, which focuses on providing communities with support, information and recognition to help meet the needs of an aging population. Local governments can achieve age-friendly recognition and officially become an Age-friendly BC community once they have completed four basic steps that focus on community engagement, commitment, assessment and action. To learn more about Age-friendly BC and the Age-friendly Planning and Project grant program, please visit:

www.gov.bc.ca/agefriendly

The age-friendly grant program reflects the goals of B.C.’s Family Agenda, which supports seniors by encouraging healthy, active aging. To learn more, visit: www.familiesfirstbc.ca

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