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Ministry of Health

Kent receives Age-friendly BC grant

AGASSIZ – Kent seniors will benefit from a \$15,000 age-friendly grant to help create programs or tools that address the needs of the district's older residents. The District of Kent is one of 27 communities receiving grants for 2013.

“One of the topics that I’ve heard in my discussion with seniors time and time again as I’ve toured the province is the importance of addressing the issue of isolation,” said Minister of State for Seniors Ralph Sultan. “I am pleased to see communities like Kent rising to the challenge and creating programs and supports that support seniors in remaining socially active and connected to their communities.”

The District of Kent will use the funds to work to reach isolated seniors and raise awareness of the risk factors of isolation. The district will also promote local senior services through a variety of means, including information boards, consolidated telephone number lists, a resource book and a communication directory.

“This region is home to many seniors and it is great news that this funding will support the health and well-being some of our most vulnerable older residents,” said Chilliwack MLA John Les.

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.

“It is estimated that approximately 10 per cent of the seniors’ population here in Kent is isolated or at risk of becoming isolated and we are pleased that this age-friendly grant will help us to address this important issue,” said Mayor of the District of Kent John Van Laerhoven.

“Through training for staff, volunteers and other agencies, we hope to raise awareness of the risk factors of isolation and ensure that local seniors have supports in place to be engaged and active members of the community.”

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 B.C. 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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