

Seniors' group gathers input for survey

By Duane Hicks

Staff writer

With an eye to launch a community survey before summer, the local Assisted Living Action Group (ALAG) gathered more than 20 stakeholders for a strategic planning meeting Monday at the Sister Kennedy Centre here.

A sub-committee of the Seniors & Law Enforcement Together (S.A.L.T.) team, ALAG held the workshop to give community partners the opportunity to provide input on the implementation of the survey, as well as determine current and future housing, safety, and service needs of seniors.

"I think this strategic planning session will help us gain some insight into how we need to move forward," said session facilitator Lori Maki, who is executive vice-president and chief nursing executive at Riverside Health Care Facilities, Inc. as well as an ALAG member.

"Essentially what we're looking to do is put out a community survey soliciting what are the needs of seniors in the Rainy River District, and I think the survey will assist us with that," she added.

"But with this group here of community partners, all of us have our own perceptions, our own takes, on what seniors in the Rainy River District need-current, future, things that may already be in place that we could be building on," noted Maki.

And the half-day session was successful, ALAG chair Erma Armit said Monday afternoon.

"The plan was to gather information from the people who attended to put together a survey that will go out to the grassroots people—what kind of questions need to be asked, what kind of input we can get to put this survey together," she explained.

Community partners represented included Fort Frances council, the town's Economic Development Advisory Committee, Sister Kennedy Centre board of directors, Riverside, OPP, Northwestern Health Unit, United Native Friendship Centre, and "Meals on Wheels."

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Seniors' group gathers input for future survey

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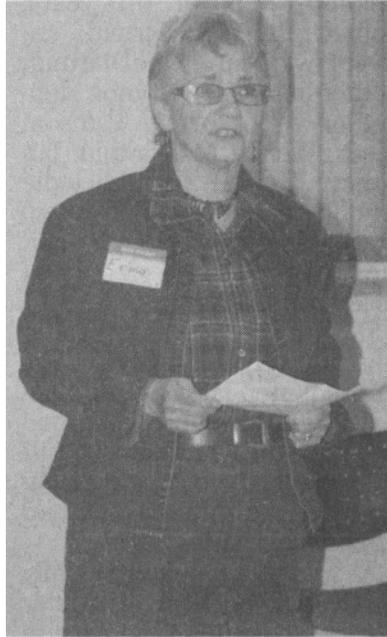
Rainy River District Victim Services, Fort Frances Community Clinic Family Health Team, Canadian Mental Health Association, Fort Frances Area Tribal Health Services, and Community Care Access Centre also were on hand.

Armit said the majority of the services that were invited sent a representative, adding, "There were some pieces of the big picture that were missing, which is unfortunate, but there was a short lead time."

Attendees worked in breakout groups to talk about the needs of seniors, including housing, transportation, leisure activities, finances, health, safety, and support services for daily living.

In addition to garnering input for the survey, Armit felt the strategic planning session was a good time for information sharing between the numerous stakeholders.

"A lot of the services there were lacking information about the other services that were there," she remarked.



ALAG chair Erma Armit welcomed community partners to Monday's strategic planning session at the Sister Kennedy Centre.

"That was a good forum for sharing information."

For example, Nell Laur shared information about the S.A.L.T. team, which only got

started in mid-2010, and "there were a lot of surprised looks around the room," said Armit.

"Everybody gets busy in their own little corner and don't take time to find out what everybody else is doing," she reasoned.

With the survey in the works, ALAG is working towards innovative community-based solutions and a 20- to 30-year plan to meet the increasing demands of the aging population, said Armit.

"We've got to be innovative in these difficult financial times," she stressed.

"It's getting more and more difficult to meet the needs of the general public, let alone our seniors, and our seniors' population is certainly going to be increasing.

"We're trying to figure out ways to get more service for less dollars, and make people happier," said Armit.

"It decreases the health costs if they're happier."

Armit thanked the Sister Kennedy Centre board for use of the facility, as well as Riverside for providing lunch.



Britanee Kellar, a geriatric mental health worker at the Canadian Mental Health Association here, helped organize notes identifying seniors' needs during the ALAG strategic planning session Monday at the Sister Kennedy Centre.

—Duane Hicks photos