



**Mind:** Falling in Love with Your Community Again

**Body:** The Effects of Loneliness

**Spirit:** The Power of a Community

## Falling in Love with Your Community Again



In the last edition of Maturity Matters, we discussed the need to feel connected, engaged, and valued throughout every life stage, especially as we transition into later years.

Whether you want to be challenged, entertained, inspired, or in-service of others, most communities have a menu of options to entice and invite. We have included a sampling of some of the ways we can participate and share throughout our lifetime.

### Social Engagement

**Local Senior Centers:** For those who want to get-together, connect and have a good time. These centers offer a variety of social programs including luncheons, informal get-togethers, games and classes, as well as a variety of activities and group outings to local events and attractions.

**Community Service Clubs:** Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions, etc. are not typically age-specific, and provide an excellent opportunity to meet and affiliate with other service-minded people who are looking for fellowship while helping their community.

### Organized Sports

Be active! From tennis to hockey, softball to pickleball, there are local clubs and organizations looking for new members to join in the love of the game. Dust off your old equipment, or purchase new, you may be surprised by the age groups enjoying the love of sport again or anew.

### Community Recreation Centers

Swimming pools, outdoor courts and fields, gym classes and computer classes, there is something for everyone! Community rec centers promote active and healthy lifestyles by offering a variety of recreational, cultural, and learning programs to all age groups, with specialty programs for seniors identified. Seasonal and regular programs are promoted throughout the year.

### Cultural Activities

Join a choir, local ensemble or community drama group. If you prefer to be on the other side of the stage, look into season tickets to attend the symphony, ballet, dance, plays and concerts.

### Life-time Learning

Most universities and colleges offer free access to seniors wishing to audit academic courses. Tuition typically applies if you want to obtain course credit. Community recreation centers offer a variety of daytime and evening classes from computer and technical skills, to learning a new language, pottery,

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Jennifer Legge, Newsletter Editor for Age-Friendly Business®, [Jennifer@AgeFriendlyBusiness.com](mailto:Jennifer@AgeFriendlyBusiness.com)



painting, bridge and bee-keeping. If you have a particular skill or interest you would like to share, contact your recreation center to see about offering some sessions in the next season calendar.

### **Being In-Service**

Random acts of kindness to organized acts of giving, there are many ways to give back to your community.

Seniors Helping Seniors: Some community service and seniors' groups offer different types of Peer Support Volunteer programs. These programs usually require participation in preparatory training sessions. Intended to reach out and support those who are isolated, these programs can offer in-home visits, companionship, and telephone support. These types of peer support programs are also being established and promoted in retirement lifestyle and assisted living facilities.

Mentorship: You have expertise and experience to offer! Contact your local business schools, community colleges, and trade and alternative schools. Find out if they offer mentorship programs, and share your skills, insight and life lessons – all while enjoying inter-generational connections.

Volunteer Opportunities: Your local Hospital Foundation, Hospice, Women's Shelter, Food Bank, or Meals on Wheels need your help. Explore the opportunity to provide information at tourist centers and airports. For those who prefer fur and feathers, consider helping out at animal shelters and wildlife rescue centers.

### **Special Needs**

Most communities offer day programs for those with special health, physical, or cognitive issues. Within a safe and supportive environment, these programs offer social and recreational time together. Perhaps you are a caregiver yourself and would like seek out support and sharing from others in similar situations. Many communities offer educational and support groups with a list of respite services within the community.

### **Faith Communities**

In addition to offering spiritual services and study, fellowship, counselling and support, faith communities also encourage their members to participate in community outreach, social, and service programs.

Rhonda Latreille, MBA, CPCA  
Founder & CEO  
Age-Friendly Business

### **The Effects of Loneliness**

According to the University of Chicago National Social, Health, Life and Aging Project, seniors who feel lonely and isolated are more likely to report poor physical and cognitive issues – pointing to the need for social and community programs to connect with and engage isolated seniors.

### **The Power of a Community**

"There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about."

*Margaret J. Wheatley*