

Alliance for
Healthier Communities
Alliance pour des
communautés en santé

OACAO

The Voice of Older Adult Centres
La voix des centres pour aînés



Social Prescribing Community Quilt



Links2Wellbeing
social prescribing for older adults


This virtual quilt shares the **personal stories** of health care providers, staff, volunteers, and clients participating in the [Links2Wellbeing: Social Prescribing for Older Adults](#) project in Ontario.






What is Social Prescribing?

Social prescribing is a holistic approach to healthcare that **brings together the social and medical models** of health and wellness. It allows health providers to address the diverse determinants of health using the familiar and trusted process of writing a prescription.



Social prescribing moves away
from asking people,
“What’s the matter with you?”
to asking ...
“What matters *to you?*”



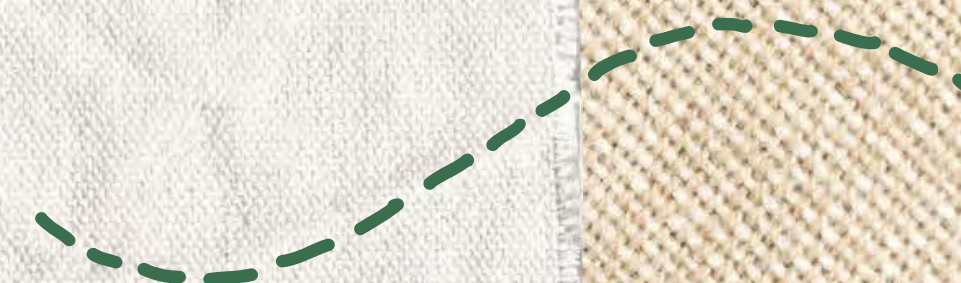
Through formal referrals to
community supports, the model
empowers clients to improve
their health by developing new
skills, participating in meaningful
activities, and becoming more
connected to their communities.





A Quilt of Community Stories

The following stories **illustrate the impacts** of social prescribing. All names and identifying details have been changed to maintain participants' privacy.



NICOLE

REGISTERED NURSE



Enhancing Social Skills

Nicole is a registered nurse working at a rural Family Health Team.

She is passionate about helping seniors in the community and found that social prescribing helped **reduce the impacts of social isolation** and improve the quality of life for her clients.

NICOLE, Registered Nurse

Nicole also noted that social prescribing **created a sense of community** and **enhanced her clients' social skills**, as they met others who shared similar life experiences.





Social prescribing makes a big difference for patients ... who live alone, [are] unable to participate in social activities, and home-bound, especially with their isolation and loneliness, giving them **something to look forward to!**

Clients who participate see the most benefit, but even clients who decline a social prescription appreciate the conversation and seem more open to such discussions in the future.



In Nicole's words...

Why is a “social prescription” meaningful for your clients?



SANDY

CLIENT





SANDY, Client

Rekindling Social Connections

After her husband passed away and she retired, Sandy faced mental and physical health challenges that resulted in a heart attack. She began to open up to her doctor about her **difficulty coping with stress and losing her sense of purpose.**

With the help of a Volunteer Link Ambassador (VLA), Sandy was connected with a telephone assurance program.



Within six months of participating in the program, Sandy drastically improved her well-being and attributes her success to these friendly phone calls.

She is again **expressing herself creatively** by painting, sewing, and crocheting as well as rekindling her social connections.



These women told me, 'You were strong before.' And I hear that in them. The strength that they've received when they reached out. And they're doing the same thing that I want to do now, to be able to pass this on.

If I don't have a purpose or a function on a given day, I get dressed and walk out the door. **I was afraid to do that before. I'm not afraid anymore.**



In Sandy's words...

How has social prescribing impacted your life?



GEORGE

SENIORS ACTIVE LIVING CENTRE STAFF





GEORGE, Staff

Connecting With Health Providers

George valued the connections made with healthcare providers and other partners in broader community support service agencies, knowing they were **all working together to advance client wellness.**

He said that promoting such connections in rural areas was a substantial factor in making community-based supports accessible to socially isolated clients.



George notes that social prescribing has helped the Seniors Active Living Centre to form new partnerships with health teams in the community and to build stronger collaborations with existing partners.

This work, he says, “helps to **bring the connection between health care and community care a little closer together.**”





Social prescribing is creating awareness among health professionals who are working closer with us, have now started talking to their co-workers, and then their co-workers are calling us to find out more...

We now connect with health providers on a regular basis, so we're getting a **better understanding of each other's perspective** and what each other does... This is helping overall to build stronger collaborations and connections in our community.



In George's words...

How does social prescribing build community?



TERRY

ALLIED HEALTH PROVIDER





TERRY, Allied Health Provider

Reducing Primary Care Visits

Terry is an Allied Health Provider at a Community Health Centre. They note many positive impacts of social prescribing.

In addition to the health benefits for their clients, they observed a **reduction in the number and frequency of repeat visits and phone calls** by clients, helping to reduce strain on the healthcare system.

“ The ability to offer social prescriptions has decreased my visits. It has alleviated stressors for my clients. I have seen positive turn-arounds in clients’ overall mood.

Social prescribing also **helps ease the strain on our health system**, while giving clients a sense of community and belonging that COVID-19 restraints eroded. ”

In Terry’s words...

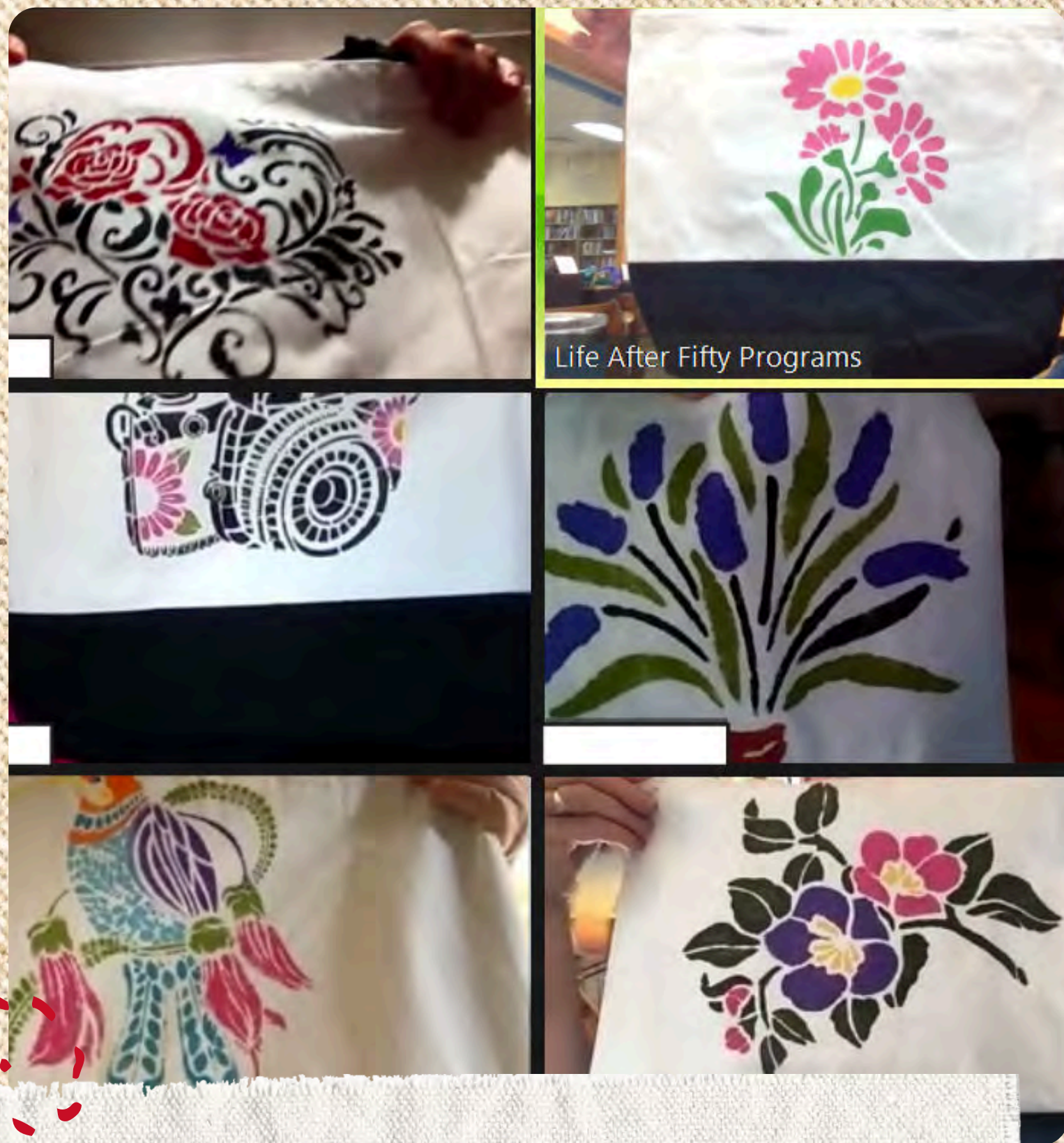
Why is a “social prescription” meaningful for your clients?



LINDA

CLIENT






LINDA, Client

Increasing a Sense of Purpose

After retiring, Linda was having trouble managing her mobility and mental health concerns due to social isolation. During the pandemic, she **felt increasingly disconnected** and struggled with COVID restrictions.

With some encouragement and information from her doctor, Linda was introduced to community-based programs at Life After Fifty Seniors Active Living Centre in Windsor.



Participating in programs at Life After Fifty
reinvigorated Linda's sense of purpose. She now
encourages her friends to sign-up for social supports,
and she participates in knitting baby hats and dishcloths
to donate to community charity events.



I appreciated the kindness of people, and realizing that there are nice people in this world. It's really just a matter of finding them.

Another lady I know, she's in her eighties, and she lost her husband about a year ago. She is very lonely. That's why I encouraged her to go to Life After Fifty. Like me, she needed the initial push to go, but I think once she goes, she'll enjoy it.



In Linda's words...

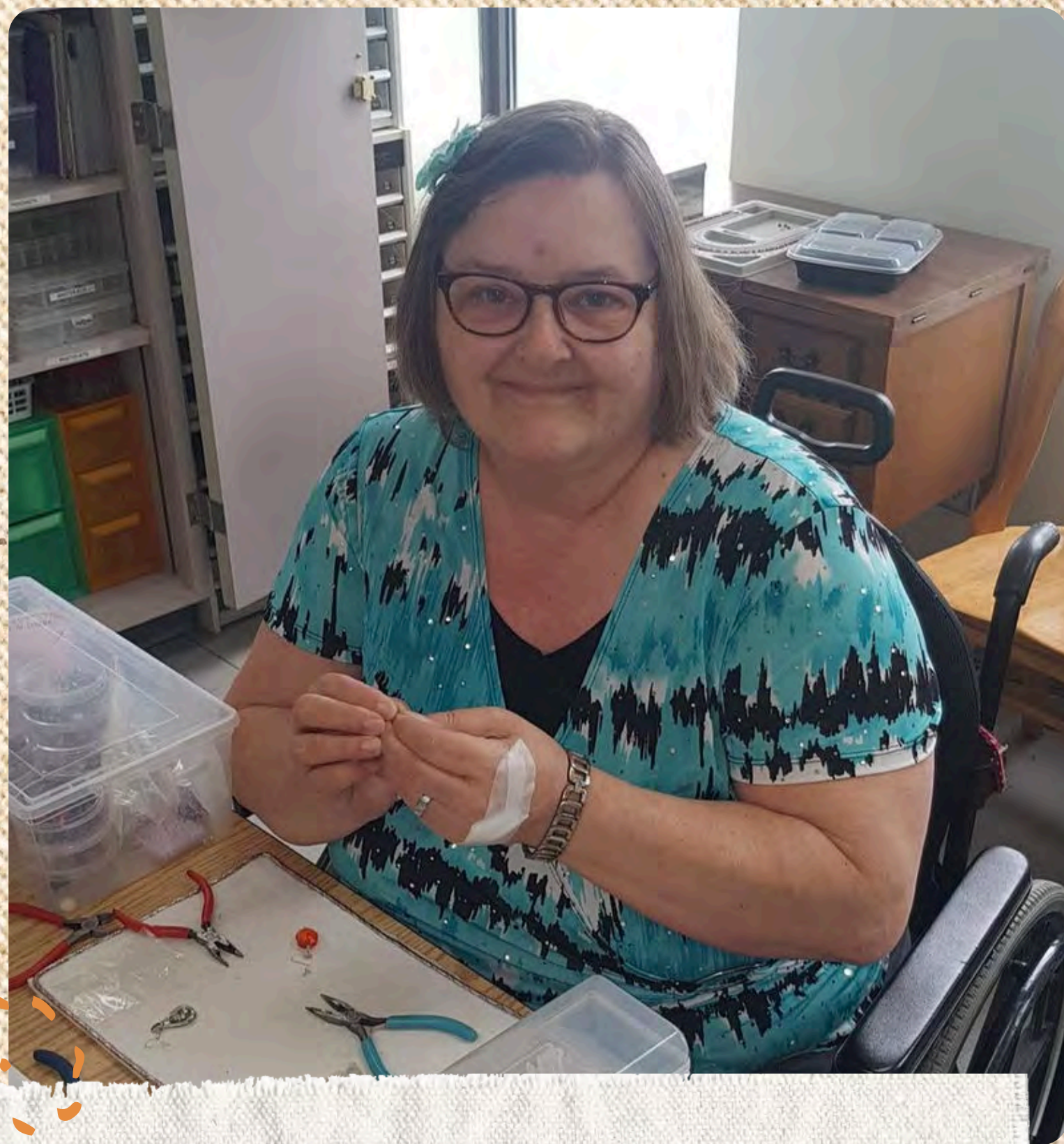
How has social prescribing impacted your life?



REBECCA

VOLUNTEER LINK AMBASSADOR





REBECCA, Volunteer Link Ambassador

Giving Back to Community


Rebecca cites her lived experience with loneliness and says that volunteering with older adults helped her be successful as a Volunteer Link Ambassador (VLA).

Like many other volunteers at her centre, Rebecca felt **compelled to give back to her community** through volunteering because she understands the barriers older adults face from social isolation.



Rebecca saw clients become more comfortable after several calls with her. Being patient and taking time by asking what they like doing helped grow close relationships. After **establishing trust**, she has been able to link clients to community-based supports at her centre or with other agencies.

Rebecca and many other VLAs attributed much of their overall success as volunteers to the **supportive environment at their centres** as well as the training supports provided by the Older Adults Centres' Association of Ontario (OACAO).





I knew what it's like to be a senior living alone. I have a great support system myself, but I realized that, you know, some people don't.

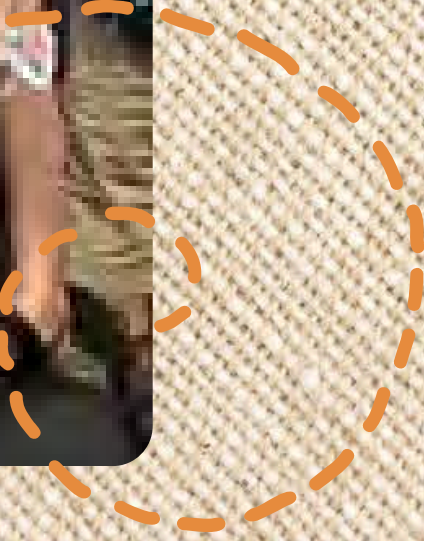
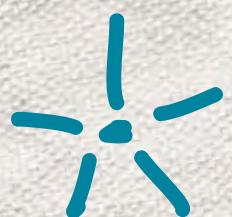
This program **allows me to connect with other people** on that level. The managers in this program are diligent and they're always there to offer support. We can ask questions of them at any time. ”

In Rebecca's words...

Why did you become a Volunteer Link Ambassador?









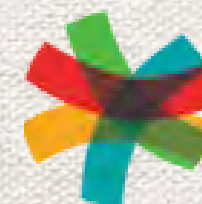
Contact Us:

oacao.org/programs/links2wellbeing/

Dena Silverberg

905-584-8125

dena@oacao.org or info@oacao.org



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