

Client Stories Report

Participants from diverse Senior Active Living Centre (SALC) programs throughout Ontario provided their insights through an anonymous survey, reflecting on their experiences at the SALC. They responded to three key inquiries:

- 1- "What is the most significant change that has happened to you since you started coming to the SALC?"
- 2- "Why is this change significant to you?"
- 3- "How has this change impacted your life?"

This survey captured a mosaic of perspectives, each colored by the individual backgrounds of the respondents. The synthesis of their responses illuminated a heartening conclusion: the impact of the Senior Active Living Centre (SALC) on its clients' lives has been substantial and multifaceted. Three prominent themes that resonated from this survey will be discussed in this report.

Friendships and Community Building

"I have developed so many friends and I feel so lucky to have found this place."

Numerous clients have spoken of the profound connections forged since their involvement with the Senior Active Living Centre (SALC). Many expressed building strong connections and shared with us very unique experiences. While some found joy in lending a hand within their programs, others felt that interacting with new people made them come out of their shell.

One individual voiced that despite their language barrier and shyness, they were embraced with open arms by the SALC community and felt very welcomed. This sentiment was echoed by many who also shared that the community they had built at the SALC was like a "second family" to them, where they had met many "sincere and wonderful" people, made "lifelong friends", and learned about different cultures.

These uplifting testimonies spanned a spectrum of diverse backgrounds. For example, one newcomer shared, "I felt [I] belonged here," and expressed that they likened the friendships they had made with sisterhood. "We became one who have the same things and experiences to share yet [have] different stories". A caregiver, too, revealed that their involvement with the SALC had become a source of anticipation, and they "have been given something to look forward to and an outlet for selfcare" amidst their demanding role. "Attending SALC programs have provided me an outlet for freedom and to a break for myself," the caregiver explained, underscoring the value of the centre as a space for liberation and a chance to rejuvenate whilst also creating meaningful friendships.

Improved Physical and Mental Well-being

“I am happier and more energetic”

Additionally, clients who were involved in the SALC recounted that the activities and exercise programs they embarked on improved their physical well-being. The motivation and encouragement they received from the friends they had fostered within the SALC’s supportive environment allowed them to stay more active and transcend a previously sedentary lifestyle. “I have [had] a very big change in my life and in my body because [now] I want to exercise so I participate in fitness classes [at the SALC],” stated one client who also mentioned that the programs they attended influenced their life very positively. This positive change in physical well-being was echoed by another client that said the fitness classes they attended with their friends at the SALC not only made them become more in control of their wellbeing and overall health, but also ignited a passion to exercise and maintain their physical fitness so that they can practice the skills they learnt and share them with their family.

Some cited a holistic improvement in their wellbeing, noting enhanced mental stability and clarity, along with sharper cognitive skills and improved sleep. One client, coping with herniated discs and a painful loss in the family shared that they found their “happy place” after they started attending chair pilates and yoga at their SALC. These accounts affirm that clients who engaged with the SALC experienced a positive change in their physical well-being which in turn enhanced their mental state.

Rediscovery of Hope and Happiness

“It impacted my life, it regained my self esteem and confidence and encouraged me that life is worth living no matter what.”

Engaging with the SALC has led to significant personal development among clients; they report an expansion in knowledge and a broadening of perspectives, which has resulted in a reinstated sense of self-worth and approach to life.

Many articulated that going to the SALC made them “love life again” and “feel more fulfilled”. Their feedback indicated that the positive transformations extend to their families, who have expressed satisfaction seeing their loved ones thriving socially and learning new skills. One person shared that the SALC was “the place to feel and get well” and that “the more [they] get involved and the more [they] participate, the healthier [they are]”. Additionally, a client with disability highlighted that going to the SALC gave them purpose, stating that they now enjoy participating in all the “wonderful” programs. This shift towards a more optimistic and contented life is evident, as clients associate their time at the centre with feeling “reassured”, “joyful”, “optimistic”, and “happy”, and that the SALC has been “a source of relaxation” for them.

A particularly inspiring account came from a client who, motivated by the positive experiences and relationships at the SALC, decided to revoke a do-not-resuscitate order, and has expressed a profound desire to continue living with newfound happiness. Additionally, clients recovering from serious health conditions, including cancer treatment and hospitalization for depression, have credited the SALC with playing a vital role in their recovery and overall improved mental wellbeing.

For more information visit: <https://www.oacao.org/programs/links2wellbeing/>

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