



Vernon & Coldstream Chapter

CYCLING WITHOUT AGE

SNAPSHOT

Cycling Without Age – a non-profit organization - was established in 2012 in Copenhagen Denmark. It is a 100% volunteer organization that takes the elderly and less able citizens out for free bike rides in specialized bicycles called trishaws. This program has since expanded to more than 3,050 chapter locations worldwide with over 4,900 trishaws in use and with over 39,000 volunteers involved taking millions of passengers for free rides!

The elderly often experience a loss of mobility leading to social isolation, loneliness and depression. Cycling Without Age provides the elderly and less abled with an opportunity to remain an active part of society and to experience life beyond the confines of their residence or nursing home. The program gives them the right to wind in their hair, the ability to connect with nature, and the chance to share their stories.

ABOUT

Local volunteers called 'pilots' visit care and senior centers/facilities around the community and offer residents an opportunity to be a passenger on the Trishaw – the opportunity to get out on their own and experience freedom and independence they otherwise would not be able to do. We break them free from social isolation. Make them smile. Bring back their memories. And let them be part of society again and thereby renew their appetite for life itself. We believe life can and should be beautiful at any age - even at 100!

Cycling without age is not only about the elderly or less able. It is also about the volunteers – the pilots – it is about bringing the young and elderly together, in the great outdoors, experiencing the joy of travelling by bike and feeling free. It is probably less about volunteering in the traditional sense of the word – and more about active citizenship. Citizenship driven by a desire to get involved and to make a real difference for someone. It's about creating relationships between people.

The program has grown rapidly throughout the world from a single care home in Copenhagen in 2012. We now span 52 countries worldwide with 3,050+ chapter locations (> 50 chapters with bikes in Canada), 4,900+ Trishaws, and 39,000+ trained volunteer cycle pilots. Several **million** seniors have been on rides. The oldest registered volunteer pilot is 90 years of age and the oldest passenger 110 years! The Trishaws cycle millions of km a year. The idea of Cycling Without Age is simple -the effects are profound. There is no fee to participants. It is all through volunteerism - through the simple act of generosity and kindness.

**RIGHT TO
WIND IN YOUR
HAIR**

CYCLING WITHOUT AGE GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Generosity: Cycling Without Age is based on generosity and kindness. It starts with the obvious act of taking one or two elderly or less-abled people out on a bike ride. It's a simple act that everyone can do.

Slowness: Slowness allows you to sense the environment and to be present in the moment. It allows people you meet along the way to be curious and gain knowledge about Cycling Without Age because you make time to stop and talk.

Storytelling: Elderly people have so many stories that will be forgotten if we don't reach out and listen to them. We tell stories, we listen to stories on the bike and we also document the stories when we share them via word of mouth or on social media.

Relationships: Cycling Without Age is about creating a multitude of new relationships: between generations, among the elderly, between pilots and passengers, nursing homes/senior centres and residence employees and family members. Relationships build trust, happiness and quality of life.

Without Age: Life does not end when you turn 75. Life unfolds at all ages, young and old, and can be thrilling, fun, sad, beautiful and meaningful. Cycling Without Age is about letting people age in a positive context – fully aware of the opportunities that lie ahead when interacting in their local community.

BENEFITS

The benefits of this program are immeasurable - for the passengers, the pilots and for the community. It is transformative on many levels.

Passengers

The Passengers will be given a new sense of purpose and freedom. They will be offered opportunities they would otherwise not have and which have significant positive physical and psychological-social impact. The impact has been shown to permeate through a care or residential home, opening up discussion, fostering friendships and offering hope. It provides the freedom to journey outside, share stories and develop relationships for the simple pleasure of doing so-rather than being on outings that become primarily appointment orientated. The bike rides become a means for social change, help create a feeling of being valued and integrated into a wider society and reduce the isolation and depression of our aging population.

Pilots

The volunteers that participate in this project come from all walks of life bringing their own life experiences and stories. Pilots gain a strong sense of fulfillment and satisfaction in giving back to their community and in serving the senior population. The intergenerational relationships formed between the pilots and passengers is what strengthens the bonds within communities building trust, happiness and quality of life. Volunteers in chapters around the world come

forward readily and truly enjoy the experience – to be able to offer such a basic freedom that has such far-reaching positive effects with minimal time and effort is a wonderful feeling.

The Community

Cycling Without Age enriches the community as a whole. It promotes volunteerism, healthful opportunities, intergenerational relationships and it promotes a 'bike friendly' environment. It helps us as a community convey a clear and empowering message for the formation of a stronger and more cohesive culture. Nothing beats witnessing the joy of the elderly, pilots and residential personnel interacting on and around the Trishaw and seeing the smiles of the passengers coming back from their first ride with wind in their hair, rosy cheeks and with stories to share. It radiates throughout the community. Together we can make the world a more joyful, peaceful and united place.

WHERE WE ARE NOW - NEXT STEPS

The Vernon & Coldstream chapter of Cycling Without Age was officially launched June 3, 2019. We were on 'hold' 2020 – 2021 due to the Covid 19 pandemic – then resumed very successfully in 2022 and 2023 running daily from mid May – October 31. Through these 3 seasons our program has taken 1,328 seniors for free rides covering 8,113 km giving these seniors an opportunity they otherwise would never have visiting local sites they would never have access to – out from the confines of their residences.

CWA continues to be an exciting and multistep endeavor. Establishing community connections and relationships, recruiting and training volunteers, fund raising and setting up all that goes into an organized and energized program - remains ongoing. The initial goal was to secure funding through grants and donations to purchase two Trishaw bicycles with the intent to offer free rides to senior citizens and those challenged with disabilities. This goal was achieved in 2019/2020. We have now succeeded in fundraising **\$80,160** through grants and donations as of December 31/2023. We have purchased a 3rd Trishaw which arrived January 19, 2024, we are building a contingency fund and we have secured tools, accessories and spare Trishaw parts to support the program. The Trishaws are not made in North America. These very specialized bikes are purchased through Cycling Without Age Denmark and are built in Europe (Trio – Copenhagen; Van Raam Chat – Holland). They incorporate safety features not found on regular bikes. They are electric assist, hold two passengers in the front of the bike (in a seat belted carriage) with the rider 'pilot' behind the passengers. The Trishaw bikes come with options such as a fold up rain hood, additional batteries and fitted insulated blankets. The cost per bike including delivery is now approximately \$21,500.00CND with an extra battery for each Trishaw bike costing an additional \$2000.00 per battery.

Schubert Centre Society in Vernon continues to support our program providing a secure space to store the bikes/charge the batteries, providing assistance with liability coverage for passengers and volunteers, and offering meeting space when needed. The 3 Trishaws purchased have been donated to Schubert Centre while the Cycling Without Age program continues to manage and run the program otherwise. The intent and mandate of Cycling Without Age is to operate the program entirely with volunteers. There are no financially compensated members within our program. All Trishaw rides are free to passengers and we will always remain a free community service. The Vernon and Coldstream Cycling Without Age program runs daily late spring through fall.

WHAT MIGHT SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

Perhaps it will be apparent...

... with all the new stories we hear from the individuals involved.

... from seeing an elderly or disabled individual confined to their residence leaving for the first time for a Trishaw cycle.

... by having an elderly resident enjoy the outdoors again, not restricted to a car or to a wheelchair but feeling free, with the wind in their hair, directing where they want to go and sharing their stories.

... with improved quality of life and mental health, improved appetite and sleep, and in the need for fewer medications.

... from witnessing those with degenerative or chronic medical conditions or with visual loss feeling temporarily relieved of their symptoms and suffering and once again feeling back in control of who they are and what they want to do.

... by closing the intergenerational gap and bringing people together again to promote social change and cohesion and improving trust within the community.

... by everyone feeling purposeful in their lives and empowered to play their part as members of an active, supportive, cohesive and outward looking society.

... by simply bringing hope, joy and purpose to life.

RESOURCES

The Cycling Without Age website has a wealth of resources to explore and learn more about this amazing program. The website has some particularly good videos with my favorite being the one titled “Amazing Humans.” It is short – under three minutes in length - and conveys the intent and heart of the program very well. “The Grey Escape” is a wonderful 20 minute documentary of Seniors enjoying a multiday trip from Copenhagen to Sweden. The Canadian website (Cyclingwithoutage.ca) has links to Canadian Chapters.

I look forward to further discussion regarding the Vernon & Coldstream Chapter of Cycling Without Age.

Best Wishes,



Lauren Lypchuk MD, CCFP (Retired)

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