

Senior Living Article – September 2016

211 and Caregivers Nova Scotia – a commitment to community alliances

By Suzy Teubner, Director of Communications & Outreach, 211 Nova Scotia

Community partnerships are vital for non-profit organizations to thrive and survive. Organizations supporting other organizations help make individual programs stronger and increase community awareness.

Prior to launching its service in 2013, 211 Nova Scotia recognized that building strong relationships with other non-profits would be one of its keys to success. Approximately eighty percent of resources in the 211 database are non-profit organizations to which 211 refers callers, many of whom are seniors.

One of the organizations that 211 is connecting an increasing number of Nova Scotians with is Caregivers Nova Scotia, a non-profit organization established in 1998. CNS is dedicated to providing recognition and practical assistance to unpaid family and friend caregivers by way of free programs, services, information, and advocacy across the province.

“Roughly one in three Nova Scotians (31%) is giving some form of care to a family member or friend. This is higher than the national average of 28% based on data from the 2012 General Social Survey that focused on unpaid caregivers in Canada,” said Caregivers Nova Scotia Executive Director Angus Campbell. “Due to Nova Scotia’s changing demographics, its aging population, and a focus on keeping people at home longer, the need for our services to support caregivers continues to increase. We see this in the number of phone calls we receive and in the requests for our resources by both caregivers and community partners.”

Caregivers Nova Scotia run their programs and services with a small staff of seven consisting of five caregiver support coordinators, a research and operations coordinator and Campbell at the helm. The 211 service tracks all of the calls it receives and clearly, Campbell’s observation that caregiver needs are on the increase is supported because over the past three years, 211 has made over 650 referrals to CNS. Among the caregiver needs documented by 211 are CNS’s one-on-one telephone and email support program, their directory of home care providers, and a wealth of other information and resources.

CNS Executive Director Campbell recently confirmed that with the launch of 211, Caregivers Nova Scotia began receiving calls from many caregivers who didn’t know they existed before. “211 has been an incredibly supportive community partner and a fantastic resource to Caregivers Nova Scotia” he said, adding that “the team at 211 understands who we are and what CNS does. They refer the people who need the support and specific services we can provide. They also refer healthcare providers or community organizations that have requested our resources for their own clients. Such referrals greatly assist us in helping to raise awareness.”

Campbell went on to say that “likewise, if someone calls us with a need that is outside of our scope, we don’t hesitate in turn to refer them to 211 because we are confident they can point the client in the right direction.”

Between 2013 and 2016, Caregivers Nova Scotia expanded its services to include more than 20 monthly support groups, additional staff, the launch of a new website and greater social media presence, and developing more print resources such as the *Where to Begin* guide and their flagship resource, *The Caregiver’s Handbook*

“In that period we have had a 1500% increase in the number of caregivers we support. Family and friend caregivers are expected to do many tasks, including medically-oriented, but they don’t have the training or support,” said Campbell. “Caregivers Nova Scotia is here to help ALL caregivers, regardless of their age or the health condition of their loved one. Caregivers tell us they need specific supports to be able to give good care in a safe environment. Our services, such as confidential one-on-one telephone & email support, in-person support groups, health system navigation, and educational workshops help caregivers build the knowledge, skills, and confidence to enable them to achieve this.”

You can contact Caregivers Nova Scotia toll-free at 1.877.488.7390 or visit www.caregiversns.org for more information.

211 provides a one-stop gateway to vital information, helping link Nova Scotians to the services they need. For more information about the 211 service, dial 211 or visit the 211 website at www.ns.211.ca.

****You viewed this article on the Caregivers Nova Scotia website – CaregiversNS.org. If you have questions, or need information or support, please call us. 1.877.488.7390.