

Cummings Centre provides an antidote to the winter blues

With the launch of its winter program offering, the Cummings Centre is ever mindful to keep participants engaged and encourage social connections.

The Cummings Centre, a non-profit community organization serving the 50+ in the greater Montreal area, offers programs specifically designed to bring people together, encourage social interaction and camaraderie, through creative arts, fitness programs, social groups, volunteering and more.

Marc Haligua, now in his sixties and an active volunteer at the Cummings Centre for over two years, has seen first hand the difference the programs and services offered at the Centre make each day in breaking social isolation for older adults. "Social isolation and loneliness are very serious problems," he said. "We need to encourage more people to come to the Centre so they are not alone."

Learning a new craft or skill, keeping active, joining a club or giving of your time to help others is a sure-fire way to build social connections. "We all have a tendency during the winter months to be less adventurous and remain indoors. It's really about getting out of the house and connecting with others," says Pauline Grunberg, Executive Director. "We all need to make that extra effort, pushing ourselves to try something new and make new friends."

Performing Arts, a specialty at Cummings, with offerings such as a Ukulele Club, the Rock 'n Soul Choir and Theatre classes are designed to foster creativity and bring people together through music and creative expression. "Music is a wonderful way to



Cummings Centre Ukulele Happy Hour Club

encourage social interaction, creating something as a group is where the magic happens," notes Victoria McNeill, a music therapist at the Centre. "Many individuals who never knew each other are now making music together."

"We need to encourage more people to come to the Centre so they are not alone."

The Centre's Cross Country Skiing and Snowshoeing Club, with outings over the winter months, gets members out of the house, socializing and

enjoying the fresh air and nature. Sharon Zajdman, an active participant, explains that through the outdoors club she found a community at the Cummings Centre.

"Exercise is key to staying strong, energetic, independent and healthy as you age," says Annette Vezina, Wellness Centre Manager. "By participating in fitness programs with small class sizes at Cummings you have the added benefit of making social connections and creating a support network."

The Centre recently launched its 'Jazz and Blues Nights, Mix and Mingle 5 à 7,' a new initiative featuring live entertainment that also provides an avenue for members to connect, socialize and enjoy music.

Marilyn Fisher, a leader of the Circle of Friends social group for active single women, typically meets twice a month for lectures, special events, outings and to network. "We are very inclusive, welcome new joiners and encourage new friendships," she said.

The Cummings Centre empowers and enhances the quality of life of adults age 50 and over by providing dynamic and innovative programs, social services and volunteer opportunities in a vibrant, respectful, inclusive and compassionate environment.

Winter registration is now on for all courses and programs. To get involved call 514-343-3510 and ask for a free guide. Drop by 5700 Westbury Avenue or log onto cummingscentre.org.