

ISSUE 40 • DECEMBER 2024

# HOLIDAY SPECIAL

*Join us in celebrating the joy of community this holiday season!*

**HelpAge**

**Canada**



## From HelpAge Canada to You – Thank You for Another Great Year!

As we wrap up another incredible year, our hearts are full of gratitude for the unwavering support you've shown. Thanks to you, HelpAge Canada has continued to empower communities in Canada and around the world, so that older people can thrive in the places they call home. Whether you gave a gift this year, shared our story, or simply cheered us on, **you have played an essential role in bringing our mission to life.**

During this season of giving, we celebrate you – our cherished community of supporters – who inspire us daily and make all of this possible. From the entire team at HelpAge Canada, thank you for your kindness, generosity, and dedication. Together, we're making a brighter, more inclusive future for older people everywhere.

Sincerely,

The HelpAge Canada Team



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Thank You!

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## Partner Spotlight: Older Adults Find Healing After Loss Through Community Grief Support Group

Having lost her spouse of 32 years, Mellhina knows the profound impact grief can have. The loss left her grappling with not just an emotional void, but also a change in her sense of self. **She had spent the past three decades as one half of a couple – what now?**

Like many people who experience grief, Mellhina found herself feeling like an outsider in her once familiar circle of friends. That's when she found the Desert Valley Hospice Society's *Stepping Out of Grief* program – a community initiative that brings together those grieving a loved one for monthly gatherings filled with personal stories, opportunities to connect, and activities like theatre, music, and exercise, and is complete with meals and transportation.



Thanks to an Age Better grant from HelpAge Canada, the *Stepping Out of Grief* program helped 15 older people, including Mellhina, enjoy time together outside their homes, supporting each other on their healing journeys.

**For Mellhina, the opportunity to take part in *Stepping Out of Grief* was a game changer.**

“Going out with the *Stepping Out of Grief* program, everyone [knew what it felt like] to be on their own. **It created a common bond and a level of understanding of each other beyond words or repetitive conversations.** Being a couple is wonderful, but life is good in a herd as well!”

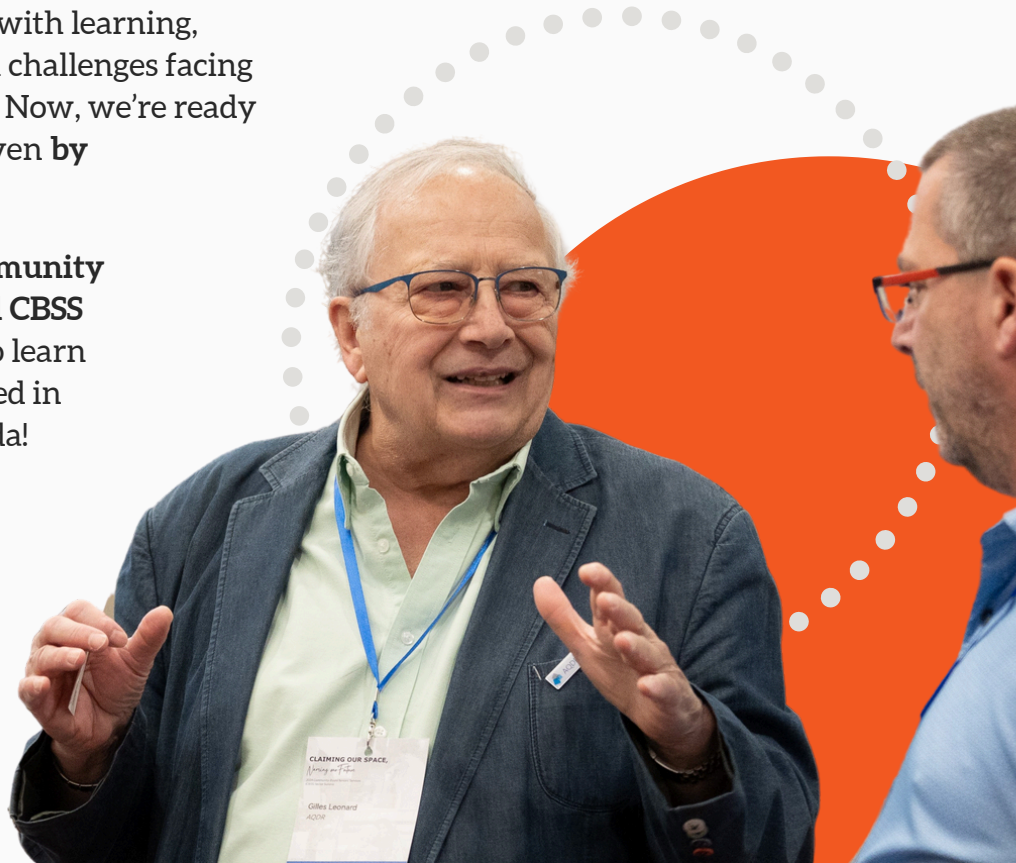
Now, Mellhina is stepping out of grief and moving forward alongside a community of resilient people who have walked where she's walked. In her own words, **she's found her herd.**

# HelpAge Canada Rallies Community Voices to Transform Aging in Canada

This past June, HelpAge Canada hosted the **first-ever Community-Based Seniors' Services (CBSS) Sector Summit**. It was an incredible opportunity for grassroots organizations to come together, make their voices heard, and build a vision for a unified national seniors' services sector in Canada — **one that helps every older person feel supported, valued, and connected in their own communities.**

Our three days together were filled with learning, sharing stories, and tackling the real challenges facing older people and their communities. Now, we're ready to put those insights into action, driven by **communities, for communities.**

Keep an eye out for updates on **community consultations with older adults and CBSS organizations** coming in 2025 and to learn more about how you can get involved in shaping the future of aging in Canada!



***We want to show older people that they're not alone this holiday season.***

Stories like these are why supporting community-led action is more important now than ever before. **A donation of as little as \$20.00 today** can help us reach even more older people with programs and services tailored to their needs, right in the heart of their own communities.

*Will you join us in helping even more older adults across Canada and around the world thrive?*

***Call us at 1-800-648-1111, extension 705, to speak with a friendly HelpAge Canada team member and make your gift today!***



## Finding Hope and Belonging at a HelpAge Shelter in Lviv, Ukraine

At 83, Kateryna has found solace and a semblance of normalcy in a shelter in Lviv amid the turmoil brought by the war. Originally from the Luhansk region, where her hometown and house were destroyed, Kateryna's journey to safety has been fraught with hardship. Reflecting on her life now, though, she showed incredible optimism despite everything she's been through: "I thank God that I ended up [at the shelter]. It is good here. I have a place to live, a nice room, we were given bedding and clothes – everything is clean. They feed us four times a day... I keep remembering how I barely ate once a day when the war started."



The shelter is not just a building, but a community where emotional and social needs are nurtured. We helped to give a local community-led organization, Ageing with Joy (Starist na Radist), a grant to provide psycho-social support and engaging activities like art therapy to older Ukrainians displaced by the war.

"The girls, social workers, [they] visit me all the time... It's like my second family!" Kateryna shared. "Painting and other activities are a great support for us, where we can relax and forget about our troubles."

These opportunities help older Ukrainians to express their emotions and foster connections within their community. **For Kateryna, more than anything, the shelter has given her a sense of peace and belonging:** "Most importantly, they don't shoot here. There is no noise, no explosions, but the birds are singing. I feel safe here."

## STAY IN TOUCH

Do you want to hear more stories from older people and learn how you can be part of the movement for an age-inclusive world?

Follow us on social media to hear first-hand from older people and their communities!

 HelpAge Canada

 @HelpAgeCA

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