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NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF THE RURAL SENIORS POPULATION OF EAST WELLINGTON

PREPARED FOR THE RURAL SENIORS
ADVISORY GROUP

MARCH 2017

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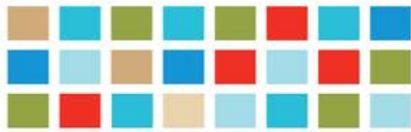
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Contributors

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- Becky Walker and Kari Simpson, East Wellington Community Services
- Karen Nelson, Research Shop Coordinator, Investigator
- Belinda Leach, Associate Dean of Research CSAHS, Principal Investigator
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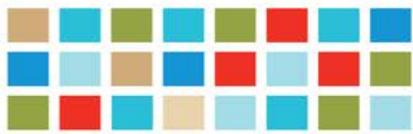
Acknowledgements

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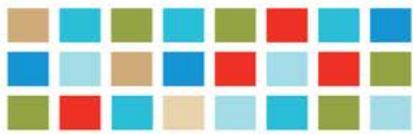


SUMMARY

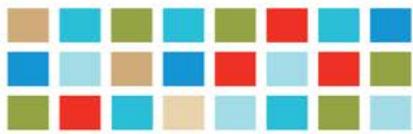
Background: A collaboration between East Wellington Community Services (EWCS), the Rural Seniors Advisory Group (RSAG), and the University of Guelph (the Research Shop) came together to create this needs assessment. The objective of this project was to understand the needs of older adults (50+) in East Wellington from their perspective, in order to inform future service improvements and allocation of funds received by the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat in the area.

Methods: RSAG identified four areas of possible improvement for seniors including: social engagement (volunteerism and social activities), education, support groups, and health and wellness. A survey was developed to capture the perspectives of the population regarding these five activities. Recruitment was performed through local papers, radio stations and posters within the community. Participants (n = 95) responded to the survey in December 2016 and January 2017 at various locations in East Wellington.

Main findings: Most individuals participated in social activities (77%), followed by volunteering (56%), health and wellness (44%), support groups (44%) and educational activities (38%). The biggest barrier to participation was lack of awareness across all categories, except volunteering.



- **Volunteering**
 - Most participants heard about volunteering through word of mouth (91%)
 - 38.5% of participants (n = 65) would like to see more volunteer opportunities
- **Social activities**
 - 82% of participants find social activities enjoyable
 - 36.9% of participants (n = 84) would like to see more social activities
- **Educational activities**
 - 91% of participants find educational activities enjoyable
 - 79.6% of participants (n = 44) would participate if more opportunities were offered
- **Support groups**
 - 84% of participants find support groups enjoyable
 - 37.7% of participants (n = 75) would like to see more support groups
- **Health and wellness activities**
 - 80% of participants find health and wellness activities enjoyable
 - 43.5% of participants (n = 69) would like to see more health and wellness activities



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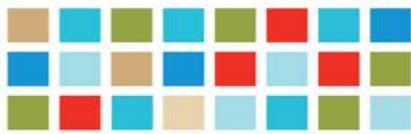
Recommendations: Recommendations were created based on survey results. The recommendations for funding allocation include:

- Increased advertising (particularly word of mouth) for existing events occurring in East Wellington
- Computer-skill educational activities
- More sporting activities (a variety)
- Increased volunteer opportunities to help vulnerable populations and transportation to/from volunteer opportunities (for volunteers)
- More free or low cost social activities
- More support groups in the community, including mental health and grief support



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Funding decisions: After presentation of the findings and recommendations, RSAG members discussed and voted on where they believed funding should be allocated. These decisions include:

- **Intergenerational Indoor Walking Program**
 - The honorarium will cover an indoor walking program held at the Erin Indoor Recreation Center during fall/winter/spring months.
- **Health & Wellness Rides**
 - The honorarium will be given to the Erin Legion to continue to offer health and Wellness rides.
- **Older Adults Expo**
 - Organization of a half day/full day senior's expo for various workshops.
- **Alzheimer & Dementia Support Group via Ontario Telemedicine Network**
 - Continuation of the caregiver support group.
- **Senior Speaker Series**
 - Coordination and hosting of monthly talks focusing on specific needs of Older Adults.

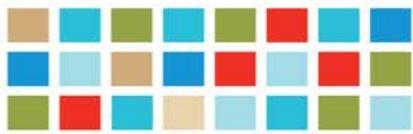


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INTRODUCTION

Background

The East Wellington Rural Seniors Advisory Group (RSAG) values community collaboration, and works collectively to identify and address needs regarding seniors within the community. The committee includes stakeholders from within the community who aim to represent the needs of the senior population (50 years and older). It is open to anyone within the community including: organizations, support services, government bodies, planners, and senior community members who share the same values as RSAG.

RSAG meets a minimum of seven times a year in hopes to advise the East Wellington community about the importance of social components, specifically: social engagement, education and information sharing, and health and wellness programming. The main objective is to ensure these societal aspects meet both the physical and psychosocial needs of the aging population. Any decisions regarding changes or allocation of financial aid made by the group are generated by consensus. The predominant goal of RSAG is to identify gaps relating to these social aspects while creating a senior-friendly community. RSAG aims to create greater supportive opportunities for seniors and development of programs where the gaps occur.

A collaboration between the RSAG and the University of Guelph (the Research Shop) came together to create this needs assessment. A needs assessment is the first phase of a project that intends to help identify the usage of community-based services among rural seniors, as well as identify social barriers that may make services difficult to use or access.

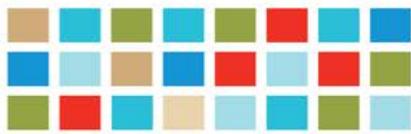
Objectives

The objective of this project is to understand older adults' (50+) needs in East Wellington from their perspective, in order to inform future service improvement and allocation of funds received by the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat.



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METHODS

With funds granted for the improvement of resources for the rural seniors population (50+) of East Wellington, a decision for allocation of the funds was needed. The Rural Seniors Advisory Group (RSAG) met to discuss what options were available to allocate these funds. They came up with five main areas including: social engagement (volunteering and social activities, separately), educational activities, support groups, as well as health and wellness. This research is focused on assessing the needs, desires, and opinions of the rural senior population in East Wellington with regards to each of these five areas, in order to help inform the allocation of these funds.

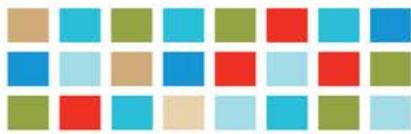
To conduct this needs assessment, the researchers and community partners at the RSAG developed a survey. The survey was adapted from a previous questionnaire of a community needs assessment project for the same population. It was designed to assess the rate, reasons, frequency, barriers, and enjoyment of participation, as well as what participants would like to see for opportunities in the future. The survey was advertised through local papers, local radio stations, and posters in the community. A total of 95 participants responded to the paper survey at various locations throughout East Wellington and the surrounding area. The survey took on average 30 minutes to complete, however, not every participant managed to complete the survey in full. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses were performed and reported as descriptive statistics.

Following analysis, the results and recommendations based on the surveys findings were presented at the to the RSAG. The RSAG discussed the proposed recommendations and potential areas for funding allocation. Following the meeting, members of the RSAG voted and came to decisions for the allocation of the available funds.

RESULTS/FINDINGS

Demographics

Participants consisted of 29 males, 65 females and 1 participant who did not specify gender. The participants roughly accounted for 15% of the East Wellingtons Older Adult population and represented numerous age groups throughout the community (see Figure 1). Of the participants, 96.8% were from East Wellington; more



specifically, participants were primarily from Erin (58.9%), Hillsburgh (18.9%) and Rockwood (15.5%). Many participants live in their own house with a spouse or significant other (63.2%) and 90.6% say that they have someone close by to call for help or support. Many participants were retired; some stayed home (34.7%), while others spent their time volunteering (26.3%), or helping family or friends (15.8%). Several participants still worked full-time (10.5%), part-time (12.6%), or casually (3.2%) and 5.3% of participants were on assistance.

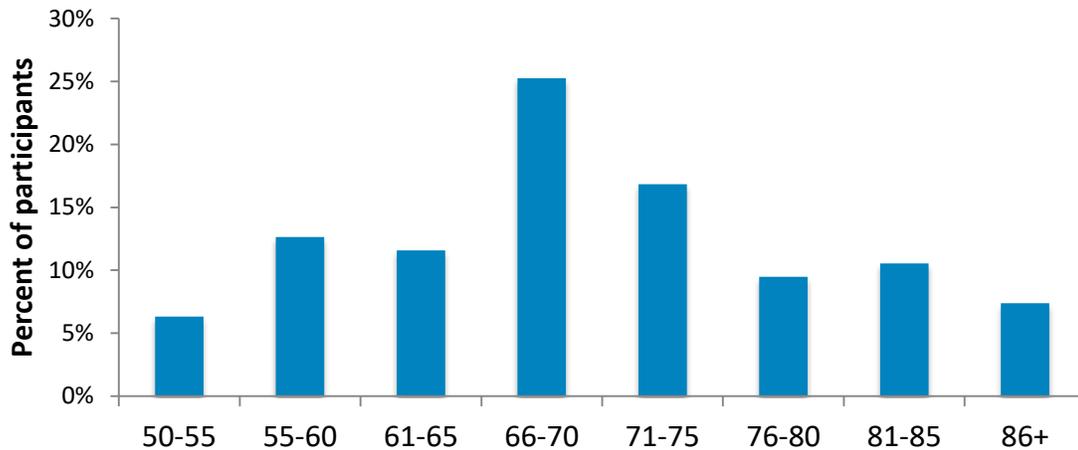
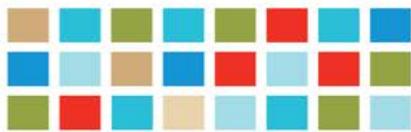


Figure 1. Distribution of age groups

English was the first language of 96.8% of the participants. Other first languages included French, Danish, and Spanish (3.2% of the participants). Of the participants, 21% also spoke a second language.

Comparing across categories

Participants were asked about social engagement (volunteering and social activities, separately), educational activities, support groups, and health and wellness. Figure 2 displays the percent of respondents who participate in each of these categories of activities.



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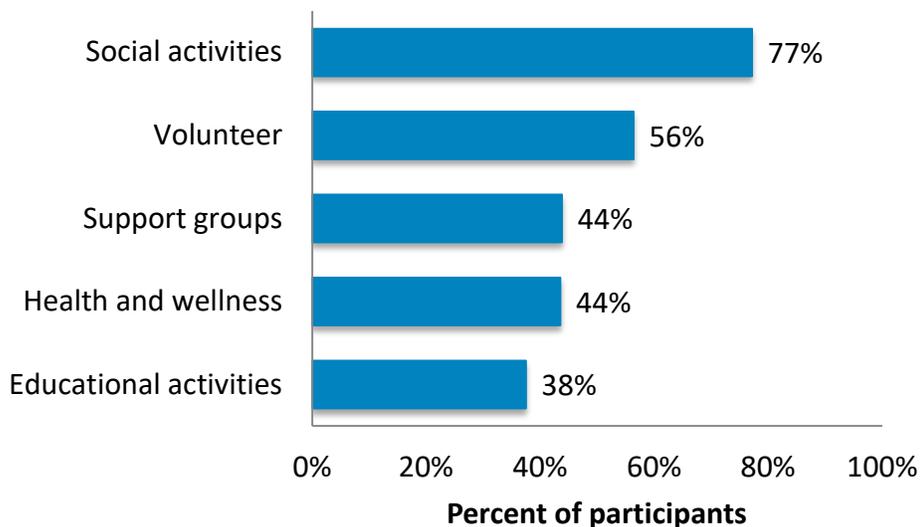
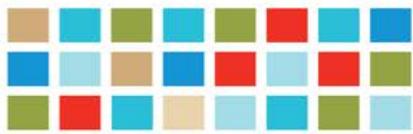


Figure 2. Participation in each of the categories

Of those who participate in each of the activities, 19.2% said they participate in volunteering, 30.4% in social activities, 18.2% in educational activities, 13.5% in support groups, and 14.1% in health and wellness activities, outside of East Wellington. When questioned about what attracts them to activities outside of the area, participants' responses were divided into four categories: facilities, social network, convenience and activities offered.

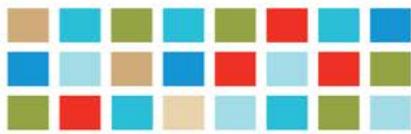
A few participants expressed interest in facilities located in areas outside of East Wellington; two participants were interested in the gyms and two were interested in the churches. Social networks were expressed as a reason for participating in activities outside of East Wellington by 15 of the participants. Social networks included wanting to participate with friends and family members, social interaction, having a common goal as the other participants in the group, and enjoying the instructor of the activity. Convenience was often based on location, particularly for participants who live on the borders of East Wellington. Finally, specific activities attracted participants to areas outside of their community. These activities varied greatly and are described in Table 1.



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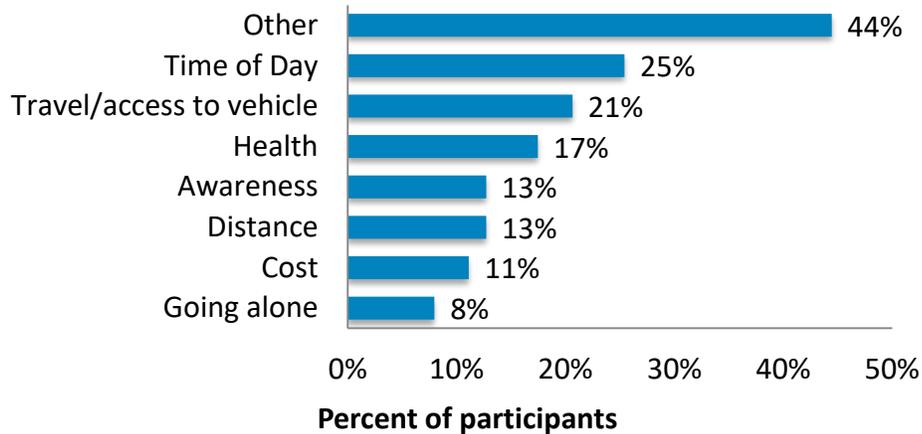
Table 1. Overview of activities participants were interested in outside of East Wellington

Activity	Number of participants
Other sporting activities	6
Quilting	4
Biking/cycling	4
Hiking	3
Pickle ball	2
Tennis	2
Choir	2
Music	2
Contra Dance	2
Theater	2
Art	2

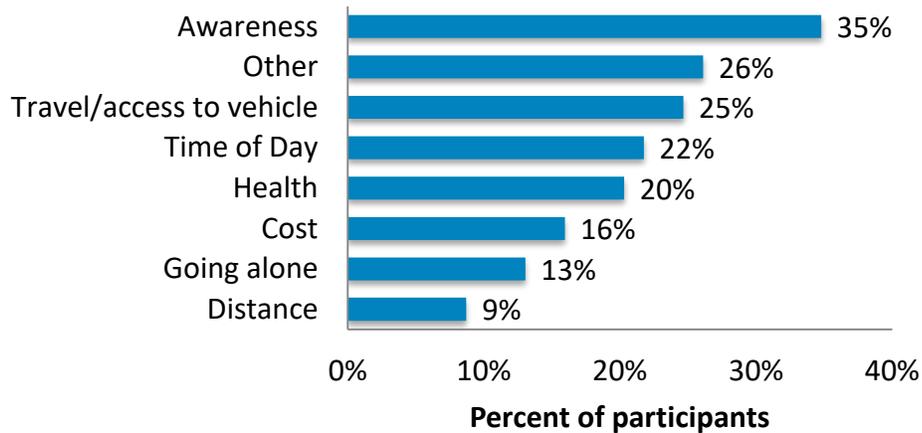


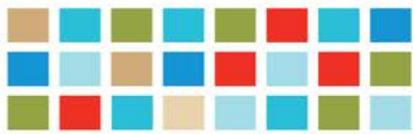
Barriers including travel, distance, awareness, health, costs, and time can prevent seniors from participating in each of these activities. Overall, lack of awareness was the biggest barrier to participation, followed by travel or access to a vehicle. See Figure 3 for an overview of the barriers for each category.

Barriers to volunteering



Barriers to social activities



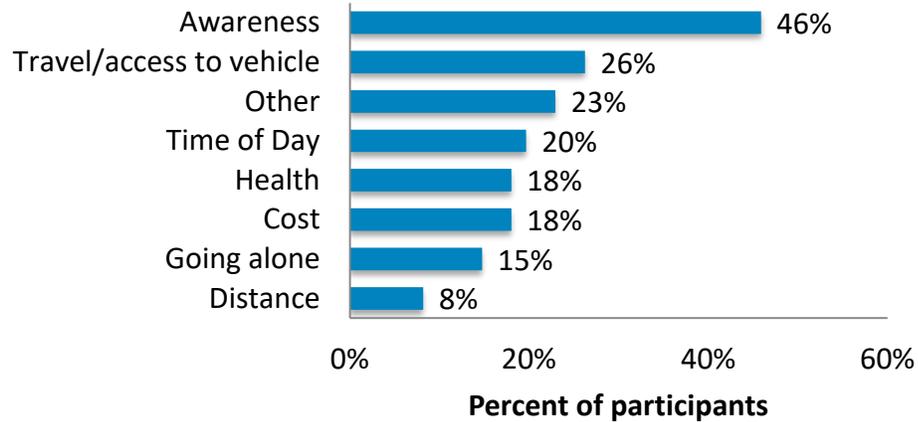


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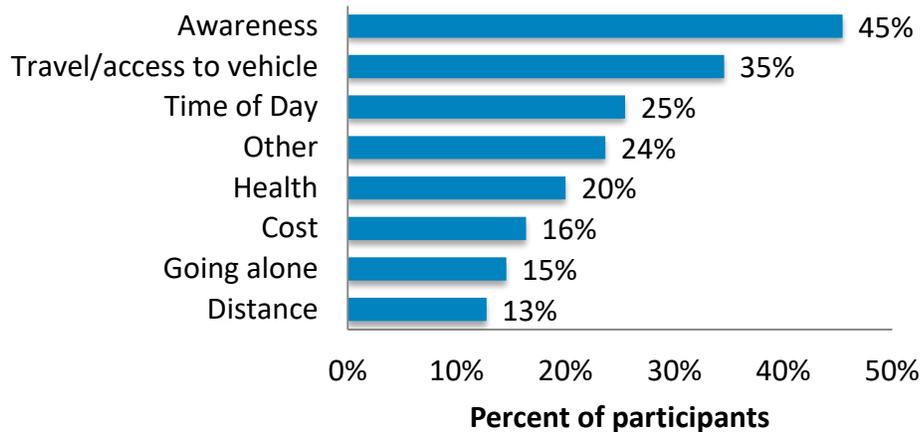
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Barriers to educational activities



Barriers to support groups





Barriers to health and wellness activities

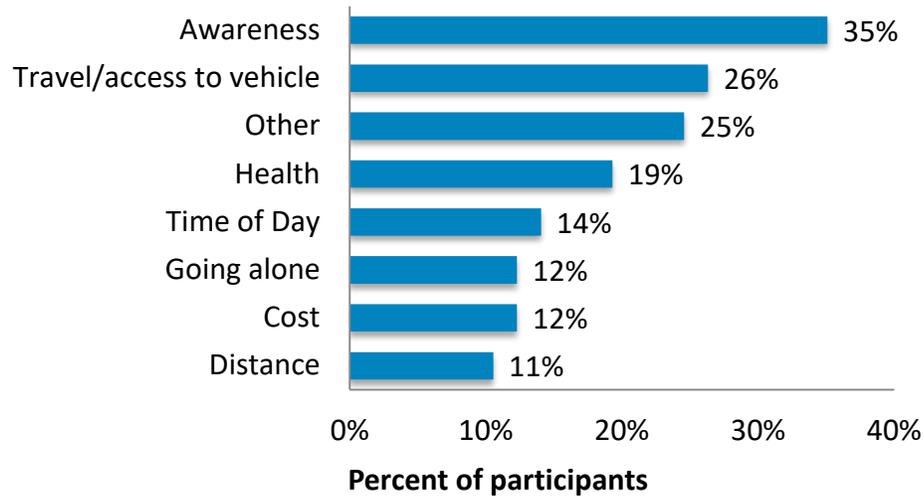


Figure 3. Barriers to participation

Volunteering

Of the participants who say they volunteer inside or outside of East Wellington (n = 53), the average number of volunteer hours each week was 6.4. The number of volunteer hours each week ranged from 15 minutes to 27 hours and 30 minutes. The most common types of volunteering amongst participants included church activities; sitting on boards; helping seniors or youth; community services and events, among others. Word of mouth was the main means by which most participants became aware of volunteering opportunities, see Figure 4. Reasons for volunteering are shown in Figure 5 (n = 53).

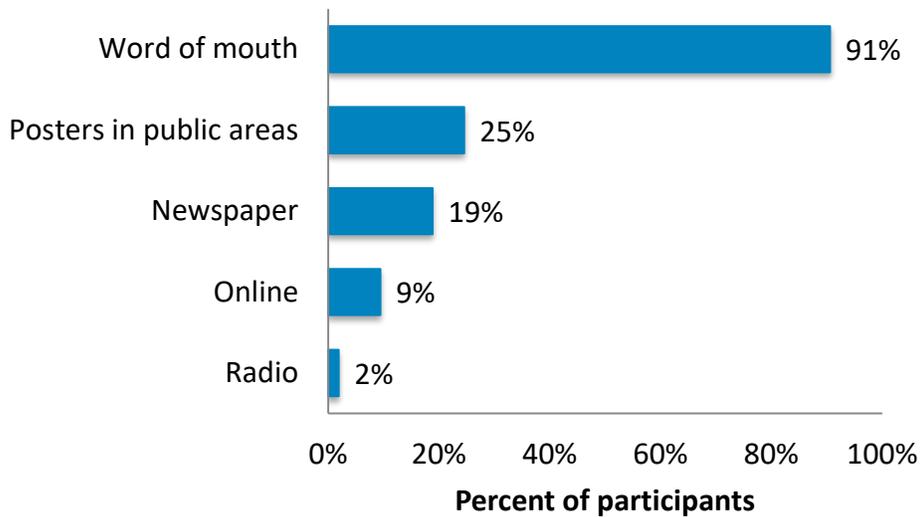


Figure 4. How participants became aware of volunteer opportunities

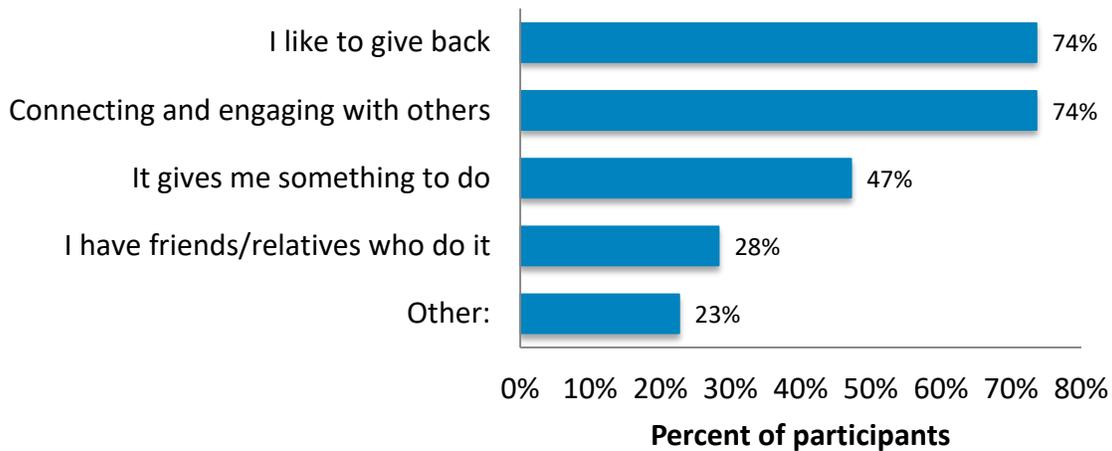
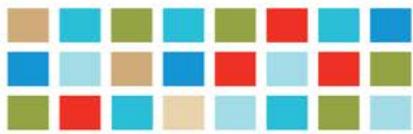


Figure 5. Reasons for volunteering

When asked if they would like to see more opportunities for volunteering in the community, 38.5% of participants say they would (n = 65). Participants gave examples of the types of opportunities they would like to see, including: helping various groups (pregnant women, children, homeless, individuals in nursing homes



and hospitals), activities that provide transportation for its volunteers, and exercise programs, among others.

Social activities

Of those who say they participate in social activities inside or outside of East Wellington (n = 68), 33.8% said they participated in 0-3 activities, 33.8% said 4-6 activities and 32.4% said 7 or more activities, in the past month. Most participants found social activities in their community very enjoyable, see Figure 6 (n = 66).

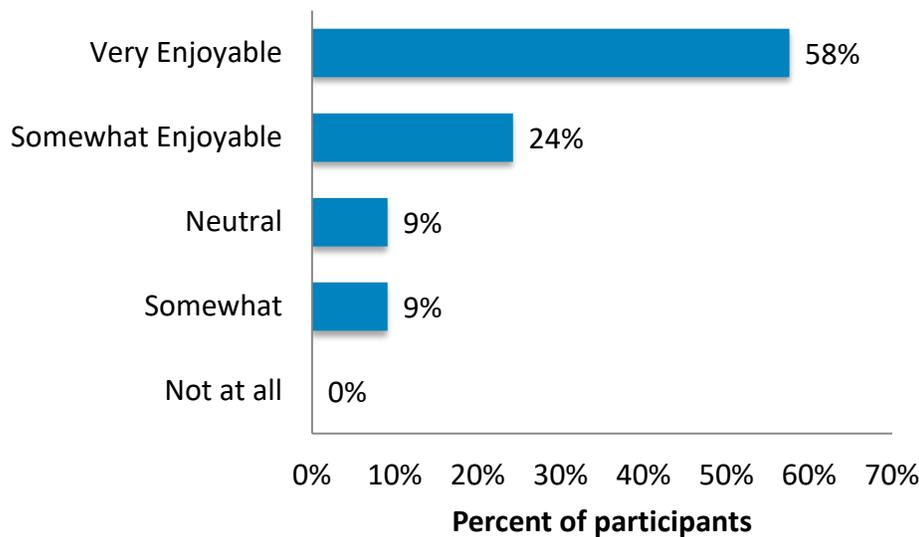
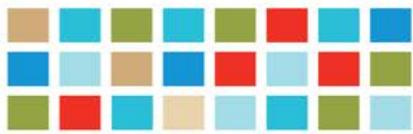


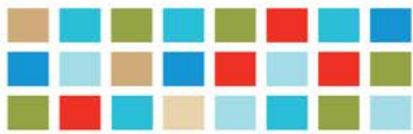
Figure 6. Social activity enjoyment



The types of social activities enjoyed most by the participants are listed in Table 2.

Table 2. Most commonly reported social activities

Activity	Number of participants
Volunteering	13
Dinners/Lunches	5
Church	5
Theater/concerts	5
Arts/crafts	4
Dance/parties	4
Cards	2
Exercise/sports	3
Knitting/quilting	2
Book club	2
Gardening	2
Computers	2



When asked if they would like to see more social activities offered in their community, 36.9% of survey participants say they would (n = 84). The types of activities a few participants would like to see offered include: free or reduced price activities, cards, arts and crafts, music, and dance. Figure 7 shows the likelihood of participation if more opportunities were offered (n = 89).

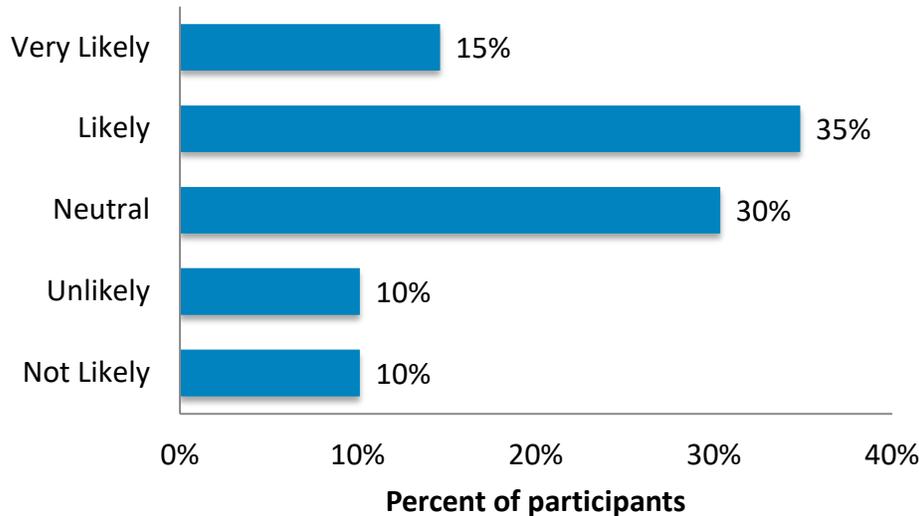
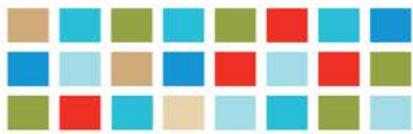


Figure 7. Likelihood of participation



Educational activities

Of those who say they participate in educational activities inside or outside of East Wellington (n = 33), 57.6% said they participated in 0-3 activities, 27.3% said 4-6 activities and 15.2% said 7 or more activities, in the past month. Most participants enjoy learning new skills through educational activities offered in their community, see Figure 8.

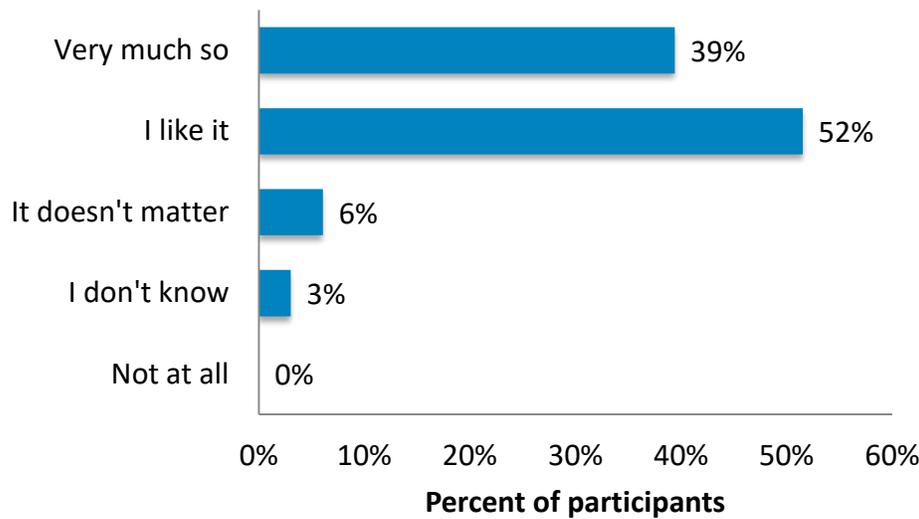


Figure 8. Enjoyment of learning new skills



If more educational activities or classes of interest to participants were offered, 79.6% say that they would participate (n = 44). Participants gave examples of the types of activities or classes they would be interested in. Many participants mentioned wanting to learn computer-related skills, other skills of interest included arts and crafts, languages, and financial planning/budgeting. Figure 9 shows the likelihood of participation if more classes or activities were offered.

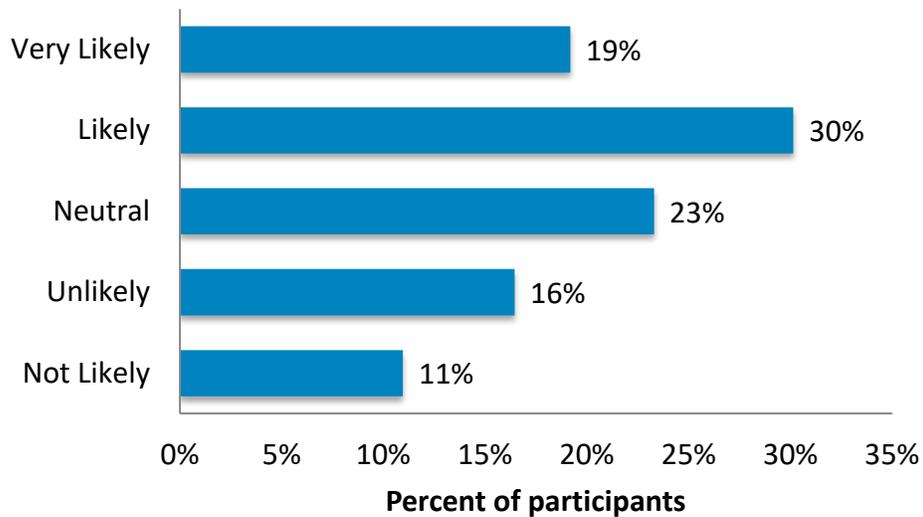
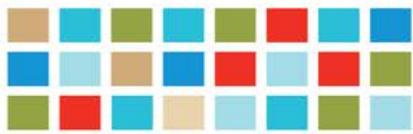


Figure 9. Likelihood of participation if classes/activities were offered



Support groups

Of those who say they participate in support groups inside or outside of East Wellington (n = 32), 37.5% said they participated in 0-3 groups, 46.9% said 4-6 groups and 15.6% said 7 or more groups, in the past month. The majority of participants enjoy participating in support groups, see Figure 10.

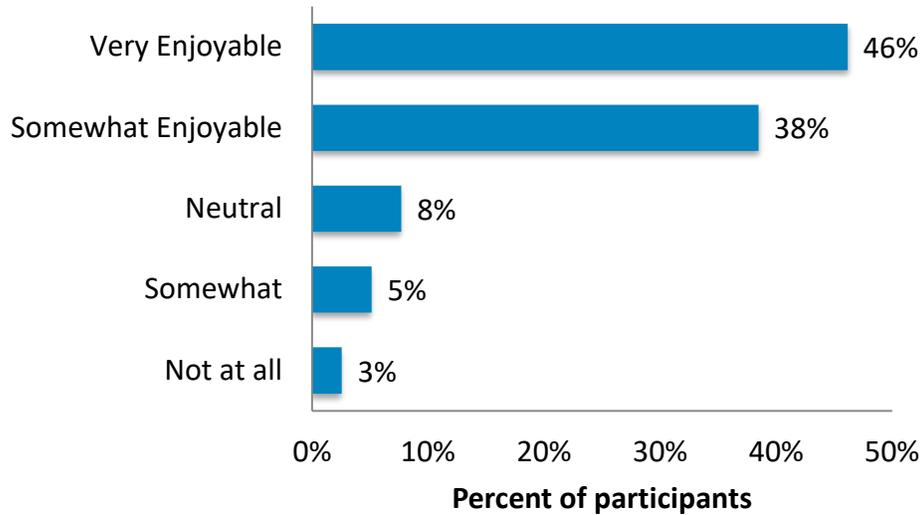
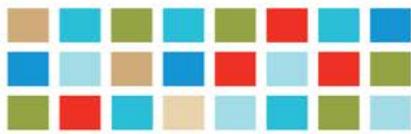


Figure 10. Enjoyment of attending support groups



37.7% of survey participants said they would like to see more support groups in their community. When asked what types of support groups they like/would like to attend, some of the responses related to support for seniors, mental health, grief support, support for bipolar disorder, living with disability, the adult day program and more resources for men. Figure 11 shows the likelihood of participation if more support groups were offered (n = 75).

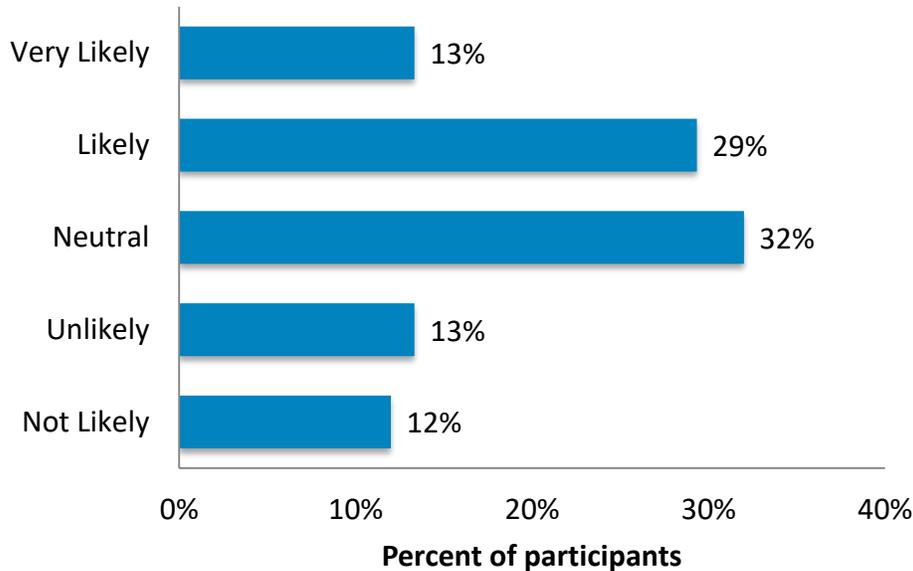
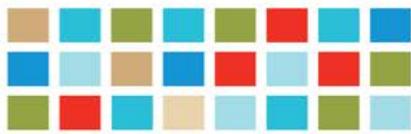


Figure 11. Likelihood of participation if support groups were offered



Health and wellness

Of those who say they participate in health and wellness activities inside or outside of East Wellington (n = 35), 54.3% said they participated in 0-3 activities, 22.9% said 4-6 activities and 22.9% said 7 or more activities, in the past month. Most participants found health and wellness activities enjoyable, Figure 12 (N = 36).

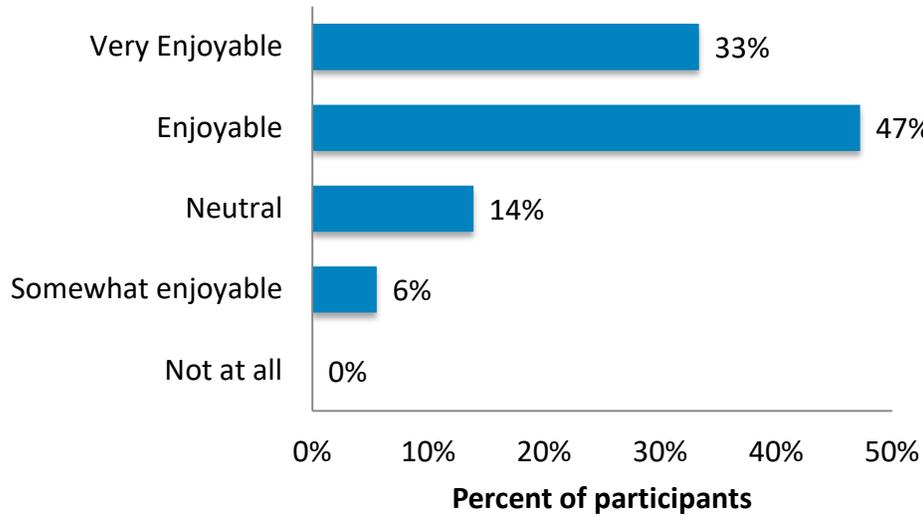
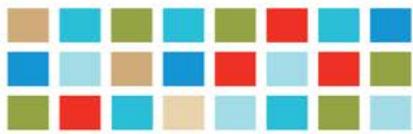


Figure 12. Enjoyment of attending health and wellness activities



43.5% of survey participants said they would like to see more health and wellness activities in their community (n = 69). When asked what type of health and wellness activities they would like to attend, a few participants mentioned: meditation; walking; nutrition; and more education and awareness. Figure 13 shows the likelihood of participation if more health and wellness activities were offered (n = 71).

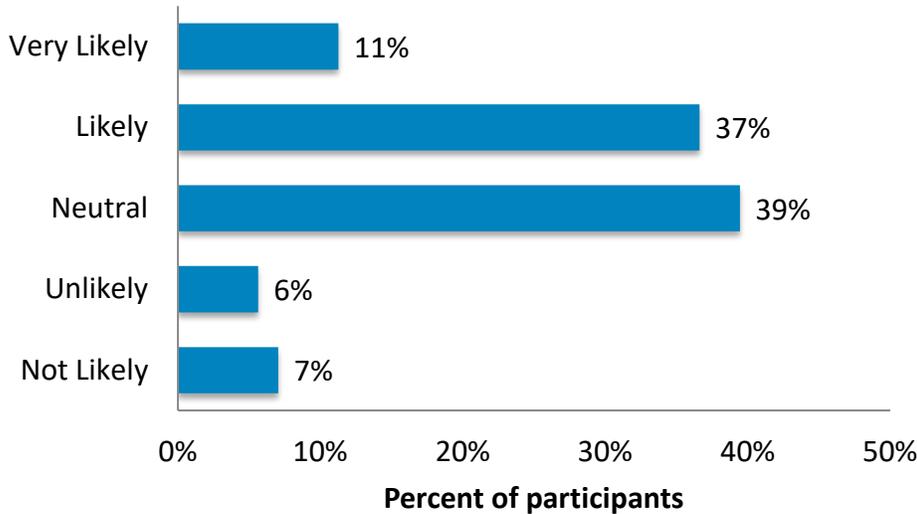


Figure 13. Likelihood of participation in health and wellness activities

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND FUNDING DECISIONS

Results of the survey highlighted the needs, desires, and opinions of the rural senior population in East Wellington to help inform the allocation of funds. The survey focused on four areas of interest: social engagement (volunteering and social activities, separately), educational activities, support groups, and health and wellness. Participants indicated activities they would be interested in participating in and ones in which they were currently involvement. They gave valuable suggestions regarding what types of activities they would like to see brought to their community, as well as what they already like about the activities offered. Furthermore, they identified what prevents them from participating in activities offered in East Wellington and what attracts them to opportunities outside of East



Wellington, when applicable. These results should help inform the allocation of funds by the Rural Seniors Advisory Group to improve resources for seniors.

Based on the analysis of the survey results, the priority areas where funding should be allocated are recommended.

Recommendations

- As lack of awareness was the primary barrier to participation in most categories of activities, we recommend funds be allocated to increase advertising and promotions for the current events occurring in East Wellington.
- Word of mouth was identified as the most common way participants heard about volunteer opportunities, as such it is recommended to have ambassadors who already participate in these activities pass along information, verbally or through flyers, to others in their neighbourhoods and communities. Furthermore, ambassadors would encourage members to accompany new members to events for the first times.

Social Engagement (volunteering & social activities)

- Participants were very interested in volunteering; currently, more than half of the survey participants are involved in volunteering activities. Offering volunteer opportunities that help vulnerable populations would be of interest to the population of this survey. Participants expressed that transportation provided to and from their location of volunteering would increase participation.
- Offering more free or low cost social activities was highlighted by multiple participants as ways to increase accessibility for seniors.

Education

- Many participants said they would participate if more educational activities were offered. As they expressed their interest and will to participate, funds should be allocated to courses focused on computer skills. A proposed



activity is to allow seniors to bring their own technology to learn about how they can be used more effectively.

Health and Wellness

- Offering more sporting activities (a variety) may increase participation by those who go outside of East Wellington to participate in recreation/sporting activities.

Support Group

- More than a third of participants expressed their will to have more support groups in the community, including mental health, grief support, living with disability, and general support groups for seniors.

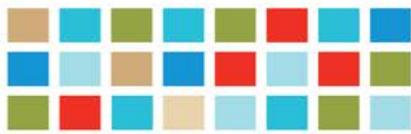
Funding decisions:

After presentation of the findings and recommendations, RSAG members discussed and voted on where they believed funding (\$1,000 per category) should be allocated. These decisions include:

Social Engagement (volunteering & social activities)

Intergenerational Indoor Walking Program

The East Wellington Family Health Team (EW FHT) has seen success and great interest in its' Indoor Walk Fit Program that they were able to offer this past winter. Survey results showed an interest in creating opportunity for physical activity in the winter months when outdoor activity is not possible or potentially too hazardous for the aging members of our community. The Walk Fit Program is offered as an intergenerational program, open to new moms as well as older adults. Feedback from the program has been positive and reflective that the older adults appreciate the opportunity to have an indoor walking space as well as the opportunity to talk with new moms or to watch the children walk and play as they walk the perimeter of the track. The honorarium will be paid to EW FHT Allied Services and will be held at the Erin Indoor Recreation Center during fall/winter/spring months as coordinated by Kim Bell of East Wellington Family Health Team, Allied Services. Each week of use costs \$75. The honorarium will allow for a 7 week program to be offered.



Health & Wellness (H&W) Rides

The honorarium will be given to the Erin Legion to continue to offer H&W rides and gain traction and quantitative data about the value of investing in H&W transportation. The Erin Legion has partnered already with EWCS and has a volunteer driver that was recruited specifically to fulfill this H&W travel need. The Erin Legion has also been doing quarterly outings to different activities through the Ontario Seniors Secretariat grant money that they were able to secure for 2016-2017. This investment will allow the Erin Legion to continue to offer planned outings utilizing the EWCS bus and ensure that they are able to reach an isolated senior who has a desire to participate in community activity, but lacks accessible and/or available means of transport.

Education

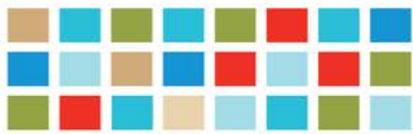
Older Adults Expo

The honorarium will be made to the Erin Legion and support from EWCS will be given to organize a half day/full day senior's expo. The expo will allow East Wellington and RSAG to engage the Older Adults in East Wellington to learn more about the services and programs that are available for them within their community. RSAG members and other organizations of benefit to Older Adults will be invited to participate by setting up booths. Workshops will be offered outside of the booth area on topics that were identified through the RSAG Survey. Workshops will include: Bring Your Own Device (and learn how to use it), elder abuse and scams, getting the most out of your Canadian Pension Plan and other pertinent/needed topics (input from RSAG). Erin Legion could pay for a bus and driver from EWCS through honorarium as well as lunch and speakers as required.

Support Group

Alzheimer & Dementia Support Group via Ontario Telemedicine Network (OTN)

The Alzheimer Society of Waterloo/Wellington is completing its first session of a caregiver support group offered in a new and innovative format. Led by a Social Worker employed with the Alzheimer's Society, there are multiple rural locations that connect into the support group via OTN. This offers a unique and innovative way of offering a specific type of a support group to rural communities while ensuring there are enough participants to have/create good dialogue with the



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Needs Assessment of the Rural Seniors Population of East Wellington – Prepared for the Rural Seniors Advisory Group

facilitation of a trained, experienced social worker leading the group. The group is offered at Family Health Team sites. The \$1,000 honorarium allows the Alzheimer's Society of Waterloo/Wellington to continue this program and expand it to include the East Wellington community.

Health and Wellness

Senior Speaker Series

The EW FHT, Allied Programs would coordinate and host monthly talks focusing on specific needs of Older Adults. The Legion has been attempting to incorporate this into Zoomers Group, but the Zoomers Chair stated she has found it takes away from the club and activity feel. Kim Bell (EW FHT) offered to coordinate the series and offer space for series at EW FHT. The series would be based on the recommendations/ suggestions on topics from RSAG. The honorarium would be given to EW FHT Allied Services to purchase food, pay speakers if necessary and possibly to pay EWCS to provide transportation to the event (cost of gas and paid driver) or to provide attendees with travel vouchers/gas cards if required.



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