

Senior Services Available at the Scarborough Public Library

By Nick McKelvy, Trustee, Scarborough Public Library

The Town of Scarborough has a significant, and growing, senior population. There are a number of retirement communities in town and, per a recent survey, 31% of Scarborough households include at least one adult age 65 or older. The Scarborough Public Library fills a unique role for our community's seniors by providing opportunities for personal enrichment, for developing new skills and for forging social connections. It does everything.

On a most fundamental level, the physical building of the library is a welcoming environment for those who live alone and who may not have other reasons to venture out. The library offers seniors access to information and media that they might not otherwise be able to afford due to income restrictions. Thanks to the library's collections and staff, seniors can continue to read their favorite books, peruse their favorite magazines and watch their favorite movies even if they are living on a fixed income. The library is centrally located in town and the entrance is close to the parking lot.

The library staff can share stories of senior patrons who stop by every day of the week to read the newspaper, check out a large-print book, enjoy a temperature-controlled environment, and/or simply say hello.

In addition, library programming offers seniors a chance to mix with people outside of their normal peer group. For example, many seniors partake in the library's knitting group where they learn new skills and trade stories with knitters of all ages. The youngest members of the group are still in grade school. Other examples include morning and evening book groups, the Let's Talk America political discussion forum and the ever-popular Movie Matinee on the first Monday of the month. The library routinely has to turn people away because the room is at capacity. For many seniors, the library's free monthly show is their only opportunity to go out to the movies.

Some library programs and services are aimed directly at the senior community. The library offers workshops on using electronic devices such as e-readers and ipads and even programs on how to navigate social media. The staff makes themselves available for one-on-one tutorials as well. Similarly, during tax season the library provides a meeting space on a weekly basis for AARP Tax-Aide volunteers to provide free professional tax help to senior members of the Scarborough community. Recently the library offered the Spring Senior Series, a three-part series of programs presented by financial and adult service professionals about the dangers of Senior Financial Fraud, Medicare Fraud, and the importance Advanced Health Care planning.

One of the most significant programs offered by the library is senior outreach. For those seniors in our community who cannot come to the library, the library will come to them. The library will deliver materials to patrons who can no longer make it to the building for a physical reason. If there is a specific title a patron wants, the library will deliver it free of charge to the patron's home. They can also specify a genre or general interest and the library staff will track selected items, so the same materials are not sent twice. The library also delivers bags of books to various retirement and assisted living homes. All lending materials are available through the outreach program.

In summary, the Scarborough Public Library is a transformational resource for the senior community. People can come in and read the newspaper, participate in a knitting group, attend a program about the dangers of Medicare fraud, catch a movie or simply stop by for a visit. And if they are no longer physically able to visit, the library will come to them. Whatever their interests and physical abilities, the library has something to offer Scarborough seniors.