

Ice Cream Tastes Better in a Trishaw

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Hillside Pines Home for Special Care, a long-term care home located in the beautiful Nova Scotia town of Bridgewater, aims to treat loneliness, helplessness and boredom while providing compassionate medical treatment. Their core philosophy holds that every elder (senior) has the right to live their life to its fullest potential emotionally, intellectually, socially, spiritually and culturally. One way Hillside Pines delivers on its commitment is through the use of three-wheeled battery-powered micro-mobility bicycles (e-bikes) known as trishaws.

How it all started

First seen by the facility's administrator at a regional care conference in 2019, the idea soon translated into a funding request to the provincial government's Department of Health and Wellness, seeking dollars to cover the cost of two trishaws and program management.

In addition to the two trishaws, funding also covered costs for additional support equipment, insurance, and the hiring of a program manager. Enter Olivia Bazot, occupational therapist and physiotherapy assistant with a passion for getting elders back into their communities via e-bike.

Back in 2020, when the e-bikes were received, the beast known as COVID-19 hampered the immediate launch of the program. After a strenuous policy-making exercise, the development of accountability paperwork, and training of staff and pilots, the program "Cycling Without Age" was officially launched in June 2022. To meet program certification compliance, all tri-

shaw operators, known as pilots, are required to familiarize themselves with safety procedures, the operations manual and take a 90-minute training session.

Today, the two battery-power assist trishaws from Van Raam (Netherlands) are in near-daily use during spring and summer providing smiles for dozens of elders at Hillside Pines as they enjoy rides in the parks, outings for coffee, journeys to the library and of course trips to the ice cream shop. One trishaw, known as the 'chat rickshaw,' accommodates two sitting passengers via its integrated bench seat while the other (VeloPlus) can accommodate one elder in a wheelchair which can be quickly secured to the trishaw's front deck.

With the VeloPlus, trips are even more accessible for those with limited mobility as they do not need to get out of their wheelchair to transfer off the bike; they can thus wheel themselves around once they arrive at their destination and are free to explore."



Program Goals

- Allow elders and those with mobility issues to spend time in the community
- Improve physical health, mental health and quality of life of the elders and staff
- Reduce boredom
- Decrease reactive behaviours
- Help elders engage with the community and create connections

Batteries are stored safely indoors and recharged after each use. In addition, staff is currently looking to repurpose a small shed on the property to better store the bikes and the accompanying equipment.

Now that the program is fully operational, it is Bazot's job to ensure pilots are fully trained, all equipment such as helmets and safety equipment is functional, and there are plenty of opportunities for elders to enjoy outings.

A maximum of three elders and two pilots are able to enjoy the fresh air ride at any one time and where necessary, the electric pedal assist can be called upon by pilots to ease their efforts as they tour Bridgewater's paths and roadways.

Program Details

The program aims to return elder mobility and connectivity to their community by reducing boredom, decreasing reactive behaviour, and improving physical/mental health.

Of the approximately 50 elders at Hillside Pines, roughly 25 have participated in the program which typically runs from early June through to September, weather permitting. Even if conditions are suitable, some elders are sensitive and may not enjoy their ride. Before each trip, elder passengers are assessed by a physio, occupational or recreation therapist to make sure

they are both physically and mentally confident to embark upon their journey.

A short test drive in the parking lot then occurs and if the green light is given by the therapist and elder, the outing begins.

Each trip lasts between 15 to 90 minutes, depending upon both the elder's and pilot's comfort level and abilities, and both must wear helmets and appropriate safety gear. Hillside Pines boasts 10 trained pilots in the program.

Thanks to the organisation Cycling Without Age, Hillside Pines and other similar participating sites are able to take advantage of a wide variety of program, training and assessment documents. This prevents individual sites from 'reinventing the trishaw wheel' and ensures faster program adoption. According to Jane Hu, Cycling Without Age Canada founder, "Most chapters do exactly what Olivia has done. They utilize our extensive list of resources and adapt them where necessary to fit each individual site's needs."



Biking is always better with a friend. Pictured above are Andrew Barkhouse (left) with pilot Katie Booth and Martin Vissers (right) enjoying a sunny afternoon along the Bull Run Trail. According to Barkhouse, "The bikes make me feel alive!"



We found out about Cycling Without Age,” says Bazot, “from reaching out to other senior care homes in the area that had similar programs and were able to gain resources and information from them first. Then we reached out to the team at Cycling Without Age Canada and were amazed at the help they were able to provide”

A June to August 2022 satisfaction survey of participating elders revealed very promising results with 83% stating the Cycling Without Age program was ‘a very good activity.’ Data also showed that elders who rode on the trishaws had an improvement in satisfaction overall post-ride.

Bazot also notes the initiative has resulted in a lot of positive mental and emotional benefits for elders, particularly for individuals that suffer from ‘reactive’ behavior. They love going on the bikes and end up in calmer states of mind when they return. The program also provides additional benefit for those receiving regular physiotherapy sessions, says Bazot who states, “So much of our physical health is connected to our mental health.”

“It is so rewarding to see the joy it brings, because health care can be very frustrating and there is a lot of burnout, but this is the fun part of health care... to be able to make them [the elders] happy and connect with them as well.”

Trishaw Pilot,
Hillside Pines Home for Special Care

The trishaws have proven to be a fantastic way for elders to regain their sense of freedom and connection with the community after the lengthy COVID-19 lockdown. Many will point out where they used to live, local landmarks such as the school they attended or a favourite shop, and share observations on how the community has changed over time. One elder remarked he loved the trishaw because it reminds him of the motorcycles he used to ride when he was younger. “In short,” says Bazot, “The program brings back a sense of normal, improving the overall quality of life for our elders. It brings them joy.”

Bazot, who is affectionately known as “the bike lady,” says piloting becomes an amazing bonding experience between the caregiver pilot and the elder. “Those who have signed up as pilots have done so for the experience and the bonding it gives - connecting one-on-one with the elders in a more relaxed environment and doing a fun activity. Pilots also enjoy the physical benefits of getting a workout and enjoying the great outdoors while caring for the elders in their charge.”

As with any program, there can be challenges. Flat tires for example and troubleshooting other issues that may arise while on a ride. Routine maintenance is usually done by Hillside Pines staff while larger repairs and regular inspections are conducted by a local bike shop. Because of their size, it can be difficult to transport them for repairs but with a little help, they can be loaded into the back of a half-ton truck. Hillside Pines is currently looking for funding which will be used to purchase



Nice to get out and get some fresh air,” says Max Mosher (front) with fellow elder Andrew Barkhouse along Nova Scotia’s leaf-covered Centennial Trail.

a trailer which in addition to easier transport for repair, would allow the trishaws to be taken farther afield to allow elders to experience new travel locations. Current travel routes have been carefully planned out in advance to ensure there are no dangerous locations or steep hills.

To manage any challenges while on the road, Bazot and her colleagues have developed an emergency plan highlighting what to do in different situations. For accidents and injuries, immediately call 911. For minor repairs such as a chain falling off, the pilot fixes it themselves. Major breakdown with no injuries, Hillside Pines staff are dispatched to retrieve the elder and get them home safely while the pilot deals with the repairs/repair shop. To date, there have been no major breakdowns, injuries or other emergencies.

E-Biking into the Future

Given the success of the program over the past two years, the future looks very promising. Hillside Pines hopes to train even more pilots for 2024, get families of the elders more engaged in rides, and to add a trailer to their equipment inventory to

help access an even larger trail network. They also hope to partner with other long-term care facilities to bring maximum excitement and community connectivity to elders throughout the area.

Advice for would-be Cycling Without Age candidate sites

“Be organized!” says Bazot. “At first it may seem challenging and overwhelming but as soon as you get started it’s really not that bad. You just need to put your ducks in a line and it will all fall into place.”

Bazot also stresses you need to have fun with the program. “Don’t stress too much about it because at the end of the day, if you go on a ride and they’re happy and everyone’s safe, that’s a win for everybody.”

And, never be afraid to ask for help. While you may not currently have the knowledge to implement a project like this, there are lots of people that do. Talk to as many people as you can who have implemented similar initiatives and check out the Cycling Without Age resources at:

<https://cyclingwithoutage.ca/carehomes/>

References

Cover image : Who doesn’t love ice cream? “I love it,” says Martin Vissers who enjoys his ice cream with his friendly pilot Olivia Bazot “I would go anytime!” One of the favourite routes is the Bull Run Trail to get ice-cream at the Tastee Freeze. Image courtesy of Hillside Pines Hone for Special Care.

About Us

The Canadian Coalition for Green Health Care is Canada’s premier green health care resource network and is leading the evolution of green in Canada’s health sector as a national voice and catalyst for environmental change. Collaboratively, we strive to reduce health care’s ecological impact from compassionate care delivery while providing a platform upon which to discuss and promote best practices, innovation, environmental responsibility and climate change resiliency. www.greenhealthcare.ca

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Cycling Without Age

Cycling Without Age (CWA) Canada is a national organisation aimed at reducing social isolation and increasing both mental and physical health for all Canadians. Using specialized electric pedal-assisted trishaws capable of carrying up to two passengers, adventures previously unimagined are made a reality. Envision harkening back to youthful memories of exploration and discovery thought forever lost. Local volunteers called 'pilots' visit care homes, senior centers and community groups to offer rides on the trishaw. Being outdoors helps passengers reconnect with their community while the 'pilots' nurture their emotional well-being. Rides make passengers smile, bring back their memories, and allow them to be part of society again and thereby renewing their appetite for life.

Mission

CWA leads positive social change in partnership with local chapters to enhance the quality of life for all Canadians one bicycle ride at a time. Through active citizenship, we increase awareness, advance philanthropy, and align key partnerships.

Vision

Every Canadian has the opportunity to feel the wind in their hair.

To find a chapter near you, please visit:

<https://cyclingwithoutage.ca/chapters-canada/>



Image courtesy of Cycling Without Age Canada.

Guiding Principles

Generosity: CWA is based on generosity and kindness. It starts with the obvious generous act of taking one or two mobility-impaired people out on a bike ride. It's a simple act that everyone can do.

Slowness: Slowness allows you to sense the environment, be present in the moment and it allows people you meet along the way to be curious and gain knowledge about CWA because you make time to stop and talk.

Storytelling: Passengers, especially older adults have so many stories that will be forgotten if we don't reach out and listen to them. We tell stories, we listen to stories on the bike and we also document the stories when we share them via word of mouth or on social media.

Relationships: CWA is about creating a multitude of new relationships: between generations, among people of all ages, between pilots and passengers, care home employees and family members. Relationships build trust, happiness and quality of life.

Without Age: Life unfolds at all ages, young and old, and can be thrilling, fun, sad, beautiful and meaningful. CWA is about letting people age in a positive context – fully aware of the opportunities that lie ahead when interacting in their local community.

CWA Canada fully and enthusiastically supports the United Nations – Sustainable Development Goals – “A blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all”.

