



CEED CENTRE SOCIETY

CONNECT. ENGAGE. GROW.

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HUMOUR FINDS A PLACE IN COMPASSIONATE COMMUNITIES



What should you say when someone living with dementia suggests they should leap off a balcony because someone is invading their living space? Perhaps try suggesting that they haven't had their afternoon tea yet. An appreciation for humour enables people to foster connections and camaraderie in the best – and worst - of times. Christian Cowley, Executive Director, [CEED Centre Society at the CEED Centre Neighbourhood House](#) in Maple Ridge, British Columbia, implements this approach in every aspect of his work, building pathways to peace and understanding through humour.

Setting the bar for what it means to be a 'compassionate community', staff at the CEED Centre Neighbourhood house are passionate and committed to enhancing the quality of life for those with a life limiting illness. At a roundtable hosted by the BC Centre for Palliative Care in September, Christian explained that his organization carries this out by getting people together to share their lived experiences – in an open-minded, fun, and relaxed setting.

People with dementia create unique challenges for caregivers, friends, and family. SAGE at the CEED Centre Neighbourhood House provides a welcoming space for widows and widowers to connect and share their life experiences. Participants in the CEED programme learn useful strategies from one other in a stigma-free space, welcoming an element of humour into the discussions. The organization offers community inspired and led programs, including the Seniors Activity Group Eh! (SAGE) for couples living with dementia, CEED Centre Art Group for artists of all abilities, and Wednesday Community Discussion for the public.

Success has not come easy for the CEED programmes, however. Volunteers, funding, staffing and the age of the groups create occasional challenges. As people age, transportation and access to technology may be problematic. It can also be difficult to find people who are isolated if they're not socially connected. Finally, the cost of advertising makes it prohibitive to keep people informed.



Are you interested in starting up a compassionate community initiative to support people who are affected by a serious illness, end of life, or grieving experience?

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To overcome these hurdles, the group keeps its programming very flexible and keeps their eye out for champions in the community to meet emerging needs.

For example, they created the Golden Ears Transition Initiative (GETI) as a grassroots umbrella organization to make the community more resilient to climate change and other global issues. This initiative seeks synergies and collaborators in each sector and provides volunteer opportunities, including for seniors with dementia.

Christian Cowley, Executive Director, CEED Centre Society, says “It’s my job to encourage our team to push ahead despite these impediments and follow the wisdom of Margaret J. Wheatley. She said that activists can continue to act in the face of burnout not because they can expect results, but because they know it’s simply right to carry on.”

The CEED Centre Society focuses on building a compassionate community ‘from the inside out’ by mobilizing the talents, skills and knowledge of people, organizations, and institutions in the community. To this end, they collaborate with complementary organizations to expand their impact and strengthen their own organization. Community-wide agency networks, such as the Maple Ridge Pitt Meadows Katzie Community Network and MRPMK Seniors Network, have been invaluable resources for the CEED Centre Society. These networks help with joint funding, referrals, issue scoping, idea brainstorming and moral support to reduce the burden of some of the challenges.

“Building a compassionate community is a team effort on many levels,” says Christian. “We’re all in this together and are all striving to make a difference in others’ lives. The results are worth the effort – it’s incredibly fulfilling.”

The CEED Centre Society is clearly a social innovator, fostering social connections – so that we can all thrive as part of a compassionate community.