



MUNICIPALITY OF  
**North Perth**

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## MEDIA RELEASE

# Gateway Centre of Excellence in Rural Health and The Municipality of North Perth Collaborate to Expand Free Program for Isolated Rural Older Adults



Project is supported by the McCall MacBain Foundation

**Lonely No More**  
Rural Community Connections ●●● a program for seniors

February 8, 2021 – The Council of the Municipality of North Perth recently supported the Municipality’s collaboration with Gateway Centre of Excellence in Rural Health to expand the reach of the Lonely No More Program to North Perth.

Gateway Centre of Excellence in Rural Health initially launched the Lonely No More program in 2018 in Huron County to provide a free weekly phone-based program for isolated rural seniors.

These calls are facilitated by trained community members to facilitate peer support, coaching conversations and system navigation assistance. Older adults who are a part of the program report increased social connection as well as strengthening and expanding their support networks. Participants are also encouraged to identify and engage in healthy behaviours.

Lonely No More peer volunteers are empowered to be advocates in their community for isolated and at-risk older adults while also being able to address and confront facts that may cause isolation. Since the program’s inception, program feedback shows 75% of participants and volunteers report the program had a positive impact on their life.

“Since the pandemic began, we have received numerous requests to share our program model – some from as far as the U.S.”, shares Sheila Schuehle (Lonely No More Project Lead), “We are very happy to have secured funding from the Government of Canada’s Emergency Community Support Fund and Community Foundations of Canada to support our regional neighbour, the Municipality of North Perth. This collaboration initiates our first official inter-Municipality collaboration of the Lonely No More Program. We’re excited to be able to offer our experience and resources and share an evidence-based outreach model to reduce the social isolation faced by rural older adults, especially now with COVID-19 restrictions.”

“As a relentless promoter of good mental health and a happy community, I am so pleased that we have the opportunity to introduce Lonely No More in North Perth,” said Mayor Todd Kasenberg. “I have been quite involved in the early discussions to create this opportunity. This program delivers an incredible opportunity for our older adults who are a bit lonely and isolated, and who would welcome friendly voices and supports.”

With this expansion, Gateway is recruiting additional community members as volunteers for the Municipality of North Perth Lonely No More Program. In addition, to further build resiliency within the community and inspire dialogues aimed at reducing the social isolation experienced by at-risk community members, Gateway is also providing free educational opportunities (e-learning course and webinars) to community members who are interested in learning more about peer support, coaching conversations and system navigation.

An Online Workshop for North Perth residents will be held on **February 24, 2021 from 9:00 a.m. -12:00 p.m.** Register for the online workshop on the Connectedness Coaching Training Eventbrite page: <https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/connectedness-coaching-empowering-resilient-communities-tickets-138490531909>

Sarah Versteeg, Lonely No More's Program Coordinator, adds, “I've seen first-hand the toll COVID-19 has made in our community, especially in our older adult neighbours. Through these difficult times I saw the empowering benefits that our peer support program can make in our community. I am very excited to offer our new foundational Lonely No More training (Connectedness Coaching) to Huron County and the Municipality of North Perth residents to help empower their resilience and foster community connections”.

For more information on Connected Coaching and Lonely No More please visit:

<https://www.gatewayruralhealth.ca/connectedness-coaching.html>

<https://www.gatewayruralhealth.ca/lonely-no-more.html>

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