In 2011, it engaged 50 volunteer-drivers and served around 450 unique seniors by providing 11,478 rides from Sep. 2010 - Sep. 2011.

The model is simple yet effective as it builds on community's embedded social capital; promises culturally compatible and socially sensitive ways of facilitating mobility; volunteer-drivers and coordinators speak the same language and hail from similar culture; does not require advanced booking; nor penalizes cancellations; provides group rides instead of individual transport and seniors or drivers do the pick-and-drop coordination also which takes significant burden off the program coordinators. Increasing intrinsic efficiency of the model and reducing transaction costs. The exercise improves social relationship between seniors and drivers as positive externality.

PACE is transparent, participatory, cost-effective with no significant administrative overheads, does not require user-fees and is inclusive and equitable. It busts the traditional myth model where transportation is considered expensive and challenging because of the assumed purchase of vehicles, hiring of drivers and related overhead costs.

PACE has measurable socio-economic benefits, enables seniors to socialise, exercise and increase their options to stay physically and mentally fit, emotionally healthy and thus age gracefully, it also shows how social capital can work with cost-effectiveness and sustainability.

View our 13 minutes documentary (Health, Hope & Happiness) produced by Human Endeavour on healthy outcomes of preventive engagements. http://www.youtube.com/humanendeavour

If you need information to replicate HOPE or PACE in your area or want to know more about the health and lifestyle improvements; please contact Human Endeavour at 905-553-9291 or email at info@humanendeavour.org or visit www.humanendeavour.org

INTRODUCTION

PACE (People Assisted Community Express) is community-based, innovative transportation model improvised by Human Endeavour. Addressing mobility as key determinant of health, it affords social integration of seniors by providing free rides and enables healthy and graceful aging, something most seniors would not have imagined due to frailty, dependency and other barriers.

It was initially funded from Human Endeavour’s own resources but later attracted funding from United Way of York Region and Central LHIN. Banking on volunteer-drivers, most of whom are low-income individuals such as home-bound mothers and newcomers, PACE provided over 49,000 one-way rides since its inception in March 2005, at fraction of the market price, and set high standards of safety and quality.

The expanding demand and feedback from seniors and caregivers affirm efficacy, quality, cultural compatibility and contribution of the model in improving seniors’ mobility and consequent quality of life and well-being.

BENEFITS TO SENIORS

Seniors who attended healthy and preventive activities as a result of PACE availability demonstrate following;

93.0% more aware about their health
83.0% health improved due to these engagements
50.9% improvement in Arthritis conditions
30.0% improvement in Diabetes
23.8% improvement in High Blood Pressure
19.8% improvement in Cholesterol level
21.0% reduction in regular medication intake because of various health improvements

DETAILS

Seniors face many barriers to their social integration soon after immigration to Canada due to a host of linguistic, cultural, financial and climatic challenges; Newcomers over 60 do not obtain driving license nor resort to public transport in 905-area, where it is both infrequent and non-senior-friendly. Their low mobility and consequently reduced opportunities to interact with peers from their country and culture makes seniors isolated, unhealthy, a stress for their caregivers and a strain on the health system.

Human Endeavour was set up in 2004 in Vaughan by community members to serve the most vulnerable segment of their community, the seniors.

Mobility arguably is the most critical social determinant of health after income and housing and impacts individual health predictably and positively when it compliments other determinants. Low mobility, on the other hand, adds to isolation, depression and mental health issues.

To respond to this evident vulnerability of the South Asian seniors, Human Endeavour started a wellness program with personal funds, support from the City of Vaughan and active involvement of community. It engaged volunteer-drivers from low-income groups (home-bound mothers & newcomers) who needed additional income, to transport seniors in lieu of moderate honorarium ($3/person/ride).

The provision of free transportation acted as incentive for seniors and caregivers alike and the number of participants increased in months, in 2006, United Way of York Region started funding the program and in 2008, Central LHIN funded its expansion, and by 2008, the program was serving seniors from Tamil, Punjabi, Gujarati and other communities at five locations. This increased the need of more volunteers, so more community members were engaged to drive seniors.

Free rides are pivotal in increased program attendance and improved quality of life, well-being and health of seniors. PACE is vehemently supported by the community ensuring its sustainability.