

Aging In Place Committee - Lobby Displays August 25, 26 and 27 2021

by Philip Dawson

For the most part in my day I usually stick to routine of the moment. You may do the same.

Well, a nice surprise waited for me as I entered my building today. And that was the welcoming hello from Jo-Anne Kennedy and Gord Auttonson from the Aging In Place committee at City Park Co-op. With a picturesque display surrounding them they each had that warm star quality to draw you closer in the most unintimidated friendly manner. And there began the specialness.

Every once in a while there is an occasion which makes your day shine brighter. That may sound like something you've heard before, but you don't always see it plainly in your home. Living at City Park Co-op can be high paced having the bustling of members coming and going, seeing a friend while doing laundry, or catching up with someone collecting mail. It can be the vaguest of meetings or instants. Not so much overwhelming as it can be leaving us lonely and craving more interactions before we head to our apartments. Add the fact that we are all living through a pandemic and it leaves the mind spinning endlessly for something good that resonates in a positive way, right?

Jo-Anne Kennedy - "I loved interacting with members and have them decide on how to spend the money, what was decided on."

A grant had been given to City Park Co-op from OpenLab's NORC project. The Aging In Place committee decided it would be the members themselves who chose what would be purchased with the money. Ranging from picnic tables, to raised garden beds, Zen gardens, to outdoor chairs. A total of seven posters were on display. Taking a colourful sticker one chose what they wanted. Simple fun never gets outdated. Especially when the conversation is this stimulating.

Gord Auttonson - "Initially I had doubts about the whole exercise. I thought people would be jaded and/or unresponsive. I was pleasantly surprised. The majority of members that passed by engaged with us and many expressed their appreciation for our efforts."

I had heard of the Aging In Place committee. Seen the posters for various seminars, or the exercise group. Saw they did many more important things for those living at CP. I just never ventured further than respecting what they did. Seems like I have now found a place to put my energy. This is how I can best serve my community here. The electricity of this professional performance from Jo-Anne and Gord catapulted my decision to join the Aging In Place committee. Within minutes I said to myself, "Sign me up!"

Jo-Anne Kennedy - "I was happy talk to members and let them know that the AIP events were meant to benefit everyone in the co-op."

Listening to every word and noting every gesture it's easy to say magic came from Jo-Anne and Gord with intentional conversation. From building interest of whether it's 'this' or 'that' to put the money toward through their caring and passionate nature each brought it back to me. What did I think? That's the reason I stopped the usual routine and wanted to stay and talk more. Oh, and the chocolate on offer was great too!

Gord Auttonson - "Several members spent a lot of time going over their choices. They raised pros and cons for each option and in the process they often sparked lively debates with other members. At some points a party-like atmosphere seemed to take hold. All we needed was a disco ball and a DJ."

Effortless. Creative. And most importantly inclusive. We got to choose. How often does that happen in today's world?