

Good Neighbors expands across province

By ROB SAVAGE
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Thomson News Service

TORONTO - Neighbors are learning to poke their noses into other people's business, a conference heard Tuesday.

Roy Borley, of the Good Neighbors Community in Sudbury, said elderly people and others who may need help don't go looking for it. Active community members who want to help must search these people out, he said.

"They're not going to put signs in their front windows to tell you they need you," Borley said.

Borley said conventional views

that a good neighbor minds his or her own business no longer work. Neighbors are learning, he said, that it is good to show an active concern for others.

Borley made the comments to the first conference of Good Neighbors Communities. There are 37 communities - including Halton Hills - that have started or are planning such programs.

Delegates from the various programs met in Toronto to share information about starting and running such programs.

The Good Neighbors Community system, which began about three years ago, doesn't actually run its own programs.

Instead, the system brings

together community volunteers who work to identify the needs of people such as the elderly, the disabled, single mothers and others. The volunteers then work with existing community programs and facilities to help arrange ways to meet those needs.

Some examples of how the system works include:

-in Sudbury, schools have arranged to have students shovel snow for some elderly homeowners.

-in Thunder Bay, church groups are doing outreach programs to people in their homes.

-in the Town of Newcastle, library books are being taken to the homes of seniors.

Ellis Katsoff, director of the Community Services Division of Halton Region's Social Services Department, told conference delegates that creativity is one of the keys to making a system work.

He said the style of a Good Neighbors Community program varies from community to community. Organizers should be innovative and willing to take risks on new ideas, he said.

"You can't create something perfectly the first time."

Janet Hardy Burke, a representative for the Horning's Mills Good Neighbors Community in Dufferin County, said her community has run programs

such as a Historical Reminiscence meeting, where the local curator brought a collection of old photos and artifacts to a meeting.

They event had a large turnout in the community, which is very history-oriented, Burke said.

"It was just great," she said in an interview. "Everybody was so excited. Looking at stuff and remembering things."

Other programs since the group's creation in November have included arrangements to take seniors out for a drive and social afternoon. The Good Neighbors Program is now expanding throughout Dufferin County, she said.



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