The Benefits of Community-Based Programs

Men's Sheds

Photo Manitoba Men's Sheds

'When I come home from there, I feel on top of the world'

Henry (not his real name) rarely misses a meeting at his Men's Shed, where as many as 20 men get together each week to engage in woodworking projects. The objects they make are then sold at craft sales. Although Henry is completely blind, he helps out by sanding the wood. "I can do that with my hands. I don't need eyes for that," he says.

'Henry found out about the Men's Shed when he talked to the Senior Resource Coordinator in his community. He felt he needed to do something useful, but wasn't sure what. When the Coordinator recommended the Men's Shed, it was a perfect fit for him.

Men's Sheds were initially formed in Australia in the 1980s and have since spread around the world. In Manitoba, there are Sheds in and outside of Winnipeg. Sheds are community-based groups specifically designed to bring together men to engage in practical activities, such as woodworking projects. Being able to socialize in a friendly environment is another key aspect of Sheds.

Older men can lose a sense of purpose and identity after retiring; many become socially isolated and lonely. Research shows that Men's Sheds benefit older men's mental health; they provide a sense of purpose, inclusion, and camaraderie.[1,2]

Henry's experience is consistent with this research. He is happier because he feels like he is doing something useful, he says. The social connections that Sheds provide are also important for him. "It's a really fun group. Because it's old guys, there's no sacred subject here", he adds with a chuckle. "Every Tuesday when I come home from there, I feel on top of the world."

For more information about Men's Sheds in Manitoba see https://mensshedsmanitoba.ca/

Social Prescribing Manitoba is led by the Manitoba Association of Senior Communities. For more information see: manitobaseniorcommunities.ca

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1. Banack et al. (2024). Men's sheds and mental health in rural communities: Exploring the benefits of a community-level program. *Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health*, *42*(4), 1-20.

2. Barbagallo et al. (2023). Australian Men's Sheds and their role in the health and wellbeing of men: A systematic review. *Health & Social Care in the Community*, *2023*(1), 2613413.

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