

Green Through the Ages: Today's Seniors Are the Original Environmentalists

Skills and practices from the "good old days" endure

Mississauga, Canada, April 21, 2015 - When it comes to being earth friendly, it's a case of the more things change, the more they stay the same, according to a group of older adults, up to the age of 91, in Toronto, Ontario. As many around the world prepare to celebrate Earth Day on April 22, this group gathered to talk about their environmental practices, past and present. Having grown up in the period following the Great Depression, and during or just after the Second World War, this generation had no choice but to learn to be inventive with what they had, extend the life of items by making repairs, and accept that everything didn't have to be shiny and new to be good.

After a period in which society seemed to collectively forget or lose some of this knowledge, the wisdom of living green is now widely recognized, with reduce, reuse and recycle being a familiar mantra.

"Some of it was just the time we lived in, but you had to take care of things," said Iris Berry, 89, who resides at The Annex. "We all knew how to fix a flat tire on our bicycle, or grow vegetables. It just made sense to do these things."

In a recent conversational group of 10 residents at Revera's The Annex Retirement Community on Spadina Road in Toronto, Ontario there was talk of times past, when toasters and telephones were items to be repaired instead of thrown out. When the food they ate every day wasn't labelled as organic or local, but in reality it was just that. The group talked about the fact that for the average person transportation usually meant using your feet, a bicycle or maybe a horse, rather than a car. The more they talked, the more it emerged that for the earlier part of their lives, green living was just *living*.

While there was consensus that the way things were required a lot more elbow grease and time, there was also a recognition that maybe they were on to something.

“What we heard from these older adults was that recycling used to mean finding new ways to use things—now it means putting it on the curb for someone else to come and collect,” said Deea Linehan, Vice President Operations East, Revera. “This is a generation that has always been very conscious of the resources they use, and developed skills, like fixing things, or canning food, that are actually being recognized as quite valuable again today.”

At the end of the conversation the group talked about what practices they had that were still relevant for those who wanted to be good environmental stewards today:

Green Living Practices That Endure

- Growing your own vegetables
- Composting food scraps
- Walking instead of taking the car for local errands
- Purchasing only what you need, purchasing fewer items of higher quality
- Repairing items, such as clothing, that still have good life in them
- Repurposing items into new uses
- Cooking meals from scratch, freezing big batches of some items
- Canning food to preserve it
- Air drying laundry
- Putting on more layers of clothing instead of turning the heat up
- Bringing reusable bags to the store
- Salvaging items so that their raw materials could be extracted, instead of putting them on the curb

None of the group polled were interested in going back to the days before washing machines, modern medicine, and electric refrigerators—although there was some nostalgia for the “ice man” bringing big blocks of ice door to door. But there was recognition that today’s older adults had important wisdom to impart and may have more in common with today’s home-canning-bicycle-riding-organic-community-garden-growing-hipsters than one might think.

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About Revera Inc.

Revera oversees the second largest network of accommodation, care and services for seniors in North America; serving older adults at more than 500 locations across Canada and the United States. Through its portfolio of partnerships, which includes the Revera and Sunrise Senior Living brands, the company offers independent living, assisted living, memory care, long term care and skilled nursing. Focused on



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markets that serve an aging demographic, Revera invests with Health Care REIT as a key strategic capital partner and jointly owns more than 20 retirement communities in the Province of Quebec with Réseau Sélection. Revera was founded in 1961 and is headquartered in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada. Find out more at ReveraLiving.com, facebook.com/ReveraInc or on Twitter @Revera_Inc.

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