

## Ed's Story – Friends Make All the Difference!

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The opportunity to add to his circle of friends came at the right time for Ed who is not able to get out and about so much on his own any more. Recent health concerns have slowed him down, and while he is making a great recovery, he is finding himself more housebound. Luckily he has moved to a home share arrangement he loves and where he has regular interaction with his home share family. He also has his two long-time friends, Maggie and Wanda. But still, they all have their own lives and Ed finds himself lonely for company sometimes. So when Crystal suggested that they work together on the *Art of Asking* project, Ed was game.

When they first started, Crystal and Ed followed a lead related to Ed's keen interest in music. They hooked up with a couple who host house concerts and Ed enjoyed an evening of music with them. They also explored potential connections at the Farmer's Market where Ed has many acquaintances. But it proved challenging to take these relationships to another level. So...while he now has a new opportunity to go to the occasional house concert and he continues to have many exchanges with people when out in the community, Ed decided it was better to focus on 1 or 2 new friendships with people he could see regularly for a visit and chat rather than engaging with people at public events.

That's when the idea of connecting with seniors took hold. Ed realized that there were other people like him who were lonely too and would welcome his visits. This first came up with Fran, Crystal's grandmother. When he and Crystal went to the market, they would often pick things up for Fran and drop them off to her. Ed enjoyed stopping by and soon it became part of a regular routine for him. He looked forward to seeing both Fran and Yukon the dog who lived there. Ed observed that he likes having Fran as a friend. "She is lonely too and it makes me feel good to visit with her." Fran and he now get together every 2 weeks for a visit and their visits mostly take place outside of Crystal's time with Ed. While he still needs support to get there, he usually goes with other staff as an established focus of his community inclusion hours and this is working well.

Sandra is another senior who is new to the circle and an example of an incidental contact that grew. Yukon, the dog he enjoyed visiting at Fran's has found a new home with his owner Rob who is fulltime caregiver for Sandra. Ed missed Yukon and asked to visit. This led to a new found relationship with Sandra who is housebound and keen to have company. So far they have visited a few times and Sandra has quickly agreed to be part of Ed's network. They enjoy visiting together and spending time with Yukon – a great fit for both of them!

Roxanne and Kim, Crystal's parents have also joined the circle. He meets up with them on his own for coffee and a chat usually tying it into his weekly town trip with Chris who is part of his home share family. Roxanne explained that Crystal is no longer their link to Ed - they will call Ed directly to set up times to meet. She noted that it hasn't been as consistent over the summer with holidays and other activities but now that fall is here it is starting to be a regular routine again. Reflecting on their relationship, Roxanne said "I thoroughly enjoy Ed's company. He is delightful and loves to meet up with us at River City for coffee." She added that Ed is also drawn to their dog Sophie and often greets her first when meeting up with them which gives Roxanne and Kim a chuckle. The added bonus to this relationship has been the connection they have made with Ed's home share family. Kim and Chris, in particular, share many hobbies in common so a friendship has struck up there too!

No discussion of Ed's network would be complete without mentioning 2 important people. Maggie and Wanda both met Ed as part of their work with PRACL but their relationships with him quickly grew to much more. Maggie and Ed have taken many an out of town trip together – some for health care reasons but others just for fun! Ed also often spends Christmas and other special occasions with Maggie and her family. Right now they are heading off to William's Lake to visit Ed's sister Dorothy. Ed is so excited he just can't wait!!! Wanda is also someone Ed counts as his friend. She offered to be his respite provider and so gets a chance to connect with him quite regularly. When he was not well, they spent considerable time together and she, along with Maggie, proved to be strong advocates for him. Both Maggie and Wanda were delighted to become part of Ed's personal network.

How does the formalizing of a network support Ed? He sums it up best, "I'm not so lonely anymore. I have friends to visit and talk with and it makes me feel good".