



Media Release

THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF VERNON
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Greater Vernon's seniors are getting an extra pep in their step

This winter, an innovative program that motivates seniors to get up, get out, and get active is returning to Recreation Services and it will be free to join. *Choose to Move* is a program based on scientific research that motivates and supports individuals 65 or older to get moving and meet new people in the community.

Based on research [from University of British Columbia's Active Aging Research Team](#), Choose to Move is designed to help seniors to set and meet their physical activity goals. The researchers behind the program observed that while most British Columbian seniors were struggling to meet the recommended amount of weekly physical activity, few programs were actually helping in a sustainable way.

“One reason why this program seems to work is that it is choice-based. This means that participants set goals and choose activities that are of interest to them to help them achieve their goals,” explained Christa Hoy, one of the researchers. “With the support of their activity coach and peers, participants add more physical activity into their daily lives, which makes it easier to continue being active once the program is finished.”

Choose to Move is designed for people who are not currently active, but want to get moving. Participants work one-on-one with an activity coach to develop a personal plan that fits with their preferences and lifestyle. Participants meet with their activity coach for guidance, and will connect with their peers for support.

“Choose to Move is a great step in the right direction for getting and staying active,” said Deb Treherne, Recreation Programmer. “It is not a fitness class, so participants don’t have to go to the gym – instead they choose activities they like to do.”

Choose to Move is offered through the BC Recreation and Parks Association and the YMCA, with the support of UBC’s Active Aging Research Team led by Drs. Heather McKay and Joanie Sims-Gould. The researchers will monitor Choose to Move across the province and evaluate its impact on health, mobility, and social connectedness of older adults.

In fact, early evaluation of Choose to Move revealed that many participants echoed Hoy’s words, “Choose to Move has been beneficial for me, particularly because of its flexibility. My activity levels have increased and my days are busier. I love that. I have more choices so I am choosing to move,” said a past participant.

The motivation that comes from support is also central to the success of Choose to Move. Marnie, a participant in Kamloops, explained that Choose to Move has, “motivated [her] to get up and do something...almost every day,” She added that, through the program, she now has a group who help to motivate each other to continue to stick to their physical activity goals.

Choose to Move has to-date, effectively enhanced the health of over 5,000 seniors across British Columbia. An information session is planned for January 4 at 1:00 p.m.at the Vernon Recreation Centre (3310 37th Avenue). To register, visit www.gvrec.ca. For more information call 250-550-3672 or email activeliving@vernon.ca.