

Pathways to Inclusion

Most communities have a number of resources that can offer support to caregivers. Sometimes it just takes a little creativity and research to track them down. In the book, *Building Communities From The Inside Out*, John Kretzmann and John McKnight suggest ways to locate the assets, skills and capacities found within each community.

Youth: Because they usually have a certain amount of free time, a desire to contribute to their communities and a sense of creativity, young people are a wonderful asset. Their energy and enthusiasm can be contagious, creating an atmosphere of optimism. Responsible, caring youth have a lot to offer by participating in activities such as home visits and community programs.

Seniors: Retired people represent a potentially powerful economic force within their communities. Many have the time and finances needed to make a significant contribution, and also have decades of experiences and skills that can serve as valuable resources. They can participate in visiting programs, get involved in home care duties and help with daily responsibilities like budgeting, grocery shopping and food preparation, and transportation.

People with Disabilities: Though caregiver support usually means looking outside of the home for help, finding ways to get someone with HD involved in their community can be just as beneficial. Rather than looking at people in terms of their disabilities, it's important to let the community experience the unique gifts that a person with disabilities can offer. This may mean sharing a special skill with others, or simply extending friendship, compassion and inspiration in a social setting, boosting the pride and self-respect of the person dealing with the challenges of a disabling disease.

Community organizations/neighbourhood associations: Each community has a number of resources that can benefit those living with HD. Some have very specific mandates while others play a broader role in their communities. Here are a few ideas:

Artistic organizations – Musical, theatrical and written entertainment

Charitable groups – Red Cross, United Way, etc. These groups provide a variety of different services throughout their communities.

Senior citizens groups – Local community centres are one way to get in touch with this valuable resource.

Service clubs, mutual support (self-help) groups, social cause groups

Youth groups – Tap into the enthusiasm of the younger generation.

Women's groups – cultural, political, social, educational, vocational.

Take steps to build mutual relationships with the various groups and organizations within your community. It's a great way to learn the capacity of individuals and benefit from the gifts of strangers.