March 2011

Silver Song Club – Kelowna Pilot takes flight

The first Silver Song Club in Canada has commenced. The six month pilot project began March 2011 in Kelowna, British Columbia (BC).

A local Sing For Your Life Foundation, BC (SFYL) was established last year and the two local Directors initiated community outreach to garner participant interest and funding support.

Representatives from Interior Health (IH) (the local health authority) recognized the inherent benefits to the Silver Song Club model and were impressed with the UK experiences and results to date. While IH was unable to offer direct funding support they provided a letter of endorsement and promised future access to volunteers and/or space.

The Central Okanagan Foundation agreed to fund one Silver Song Club pilot group and a local music store – World of Music – has loaned a keyboard and provided percussion instruments at cost.

Jill Hilderman, one of the Canadian leads, received Train the Trainer Facilitator instruction in the UK in autumn of 2010 and returned to Canada to train the first Facilitator Vonda Sinclair. Vonda is a talented key board player who is well-connected in the local elder community. Volunteers from the Kelowna Sweet Adelines White Sails Chorus are attending each session to assist Vonda and to encourage and socialize with the seniors.

To add an inter-generational aspect to the Silver Song Club, the Kelowna group has invited the participation of a 16-year-old student and talented pianist Amanda Cawley. Amanda will partner with Vonda and be a guest Facilitator leading several songs at upcoming sessions.

The Westside Health Network Society in West Kelowna provides a number of programs for seniors in the community and they have collaborated with the Canadian SFYL Foundation to help secure space and manage participant registration. They collaborated to host an initial "Taster Session" where local elders were able to experience a typical Silver Song Club Session and decide if they would like to register for the future program.

"Our first session of this six month pilot was a great success, " says Jill Hilderman, Sing For Your Life Foundation, BC. "We'd created our own distinct song book that incorporated many UK favourites and included popular Canadian songs… we had super turnout and enthusiastic participation for the elders and volunteers. We have room for a few more participants and there is a move among those that attended to recruit friends and to encourage a few more husbands to join us at the next session in April."