

# THE AGE BLOG



## AGE AS A SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

### Meeting a need that serves the greater good

*For organizations thinking about becoming a social enterprise, we hope this blog is helpful.*

*AGE develops dementia education programs. Our main program, Gentle Persuasive Approaches (GPA), is a bilingual (English/French) curriculum that equips point-of-care providers with the skills, knowledge and confidence to interact effectively and safely with persons living with dementia and experiencing responsive behaviours.*

For those unfamiliar with the term, a social enterprise is an organization that uses a for-profit business model to achieve very specific social objectives. These objectives *must* be the business's primary purpose. Not all social enterprises are not-for-profit and not all not-for-profits are social enterprises. What we all have in common is a fundamental desire to make the world a better place. As a not-for-profit social enterprise, AGE has a foot in both worlds. What does this mean? Why does it matter? And how is it helping AGE achieve some important social objectives in its mission of ***enhancing the care of older adults by learning together?***

From the beginning, the AGE Board referred to us as a social enterprise. In 2016, in our 3-year Strategic Plan (2016 – 2018), enhancing AGE's profile as a social enterprise became a strategic priority. We defined the role collectively and formally entered it into the AGE Board of Directors' Governing Policies, with a mandate to be successful and innovative.

#### ***On being a social enterprise***

*"Our mission will always drive our business. Revenues and any profits are tools that help us meet a need that serves the greater good: **enhancing the care of older adults by learning together.**"*

— AGE

Why did defining our social identity matter? It's about transparency. Defining ourselves keeps us on track, ensuring our social mission continues to drive our business objectives. The ultimate goal is the success of our efforts and those of our stakeholders and partners in sustaining and spreading a person-centred approach to dementia care. Since AGE does not receive government funding, we rely on our programs to generate revenue. To stay true to the model, each step we take *must* further our objectives and every program we create *must* meet a need that serves the greater good. Any profits are reinvested in ways that advance our mission. We also have a social obligation to keep programs inclusive, accessible and affordable. By no means is this a solo proposition, it relies on five social P's: *People. Personhood. Partnership. Practice and Progress.*

### On engagement

*"If you have knowledge, let others light their candles in it."*

— Margaret Fuller

We surround ourselves with like-minded people and organizations who believe that a person-centred approach to care provides the best care. The concept of 'personhood' — understanding the unique human being behind the disease — is the foundation of this approach. The right partnerships are key. They must embrace networking, knowledge sharing, peer learning, mentoring and practice, all of which move us closer to collective action. AGE's programs are evidence-based and grounded in best practices. Since practice and progress go hand in hand, they are designed from a theoretical framework that promotes sustainability. They are also evaluated, and updated on a four- to five-year cycle. **(BIG NEWS!** We began planning for GPA 4th edition this summer.)

### On change

*"In a gentle way, you can shake the world."*

— Mahatma Gandhi

How is AGE meeting its mission? A social enterprise must have a positive social impact, so capacity matters. To increase our organizational capacity and extend program reach, we have been able to hire additional resources (from five staff members to nine in just three years). Last fiscal year, we certified five new GPA Master Coaches and trained 388 new GPA Certified Coaches (our GPA Champions). In 2017 alone more than 36,000 people took GPA Basics education, GPA Recharged (refresher sessions), or participated in GPA eLearning. New quality assurance procedures make sure Coaches maintain their core competencies in the curriculum. We have also enhanced knowledge transfer and support for Coaches. New products are important. Currently, we are developing an innovative Therapeutic Bathing Program for care providers.

Social enterprise aligns favourably with corporate social responsibility. By engaging in continuous learning, building relationships with other experts, innovating, adapting and incorporating recent research and literature into new editions of our curricula thereby sharing that knowledge, we can cultivate the change we wish to see in the dementia context. Everyone benefits from person-centred care — those living with dementia, those who care for them, those who love them and those diagnosed with the disease in the future.

Our mission will always drive our business. Revenues and any profits are tools that help us meet a need that serves the greater good: *"enhancing the care of older adults by learning together."*

Patti Boucher, AGE Executive Director, speaks on many topics including social enterprise. Visit the [Speakers Bureau](#) on our website at [www.ageinc.ca](http://www.ageinc.ca) if you would like to book Patti to come and speak to your organization.



## A Summer Message from Patti Boucher, AGE Executive Director

As always, much has happened since the AGE [Spring Blog](#). Perhaps, the biggest news is that GPA is going to China. AGE finalized a Memorandum of Understanding with Guanghua International Education Association (GIEA), a leading proponent of international nursing education in Beijing ([www.ghiedu.org](http://www.ghiedu.org)). Over the coming months, we will work with GIEA to begin disseminating GPA in China.

Here at home, GPA education sessions have expanded into two more provinces and one territory. June workshops were held in Alberta and Manitoba and GPA Basics education sessions are currently happening in elder homes in Nunavut, in the Kivalliq Region (located just west of Hudson Bay and including Southampton Island and Coats Island.)

This summer we begin preliminary work on the 4th edition of Gentle Persuasive Approaches (GPA®) in Dementia Care, due out late next year. Each new edition is a collaborative process that includes other experts in the field of dementia, new findings, as well as the important contributions from GPA

Master Coaches and GPA Certified Coaches who are teaching in the field.

Recently, I was asked to be a Co-Chair of the Behavioural Supports Ontario (BSO) Communication and Knowledge Transfer Committee. This is truly an honour and has presented me with a wonderful opportunity to help advance dementia education, research and knowledge transfer.

We are always on the lookout for new and innovative ways to spread our GPA person-centred model of care. Reach out to us if you see an opportunity to partner or collaborate in our dementia education initiatives, or if you would like to train your own in-house GPA Certified Coaches. Let's continue working together to spread the word about the value and importance of person-centred care.

I wish you all a wonderful summer — see you in the Fall.

Patti Boucher



**AGE**

**Advanced Gerontological Education**



**Approches Douces et Persuasives**

Enhancing the care of older adults by learning together

AGE is a national non-funded not-for-profit social enterprise committed to enhancing the care of older adults through dementia education products and services, with profits reinvested to further advance our social mission.

Learn more [www.ageinc.ca](http://www.ageinc.ca)