

# Rothesay centre promotes 'healthy lifestyle': Mayor

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**ROTHESAY** • About 30 people gathered at Rothesay Hive, a new age-friendly community centre which focuses on the health and well-being of seniors, to mix and mingle.

Community members, including seniors participating in the 50+ Friendship Games, came together Monday and were introduced to the new centre located at 70 Hampton Rd. within the Rothesay Town Hall, which officially opened its doors on May 24. Rothesay Hive offers several activities and programs for residents from Rothesay and other surrounding communities, with an emphasis on older adults.

Marilyn MacDonald of Rothesay visited the centre for the first time on Monday, alongside her seven senior companions, and said she is considering getting a membership.

"I think it's good for anyone to get to know their friends, know their neighbours," MacDonald said.

According to Rothesay Mayor Nancy Grant, the introduction of the centre was part of an initiative by Rothesay council to make the town an "age-friendly" community, in line with the provincial age-friendly community movement that encourages the establishment of policies, services and structures to "promote healthy aging and wellness in communities."

Through their age-friendly community strategy, the Town of Rothesay struck its Age Friendly Advisory Committee in the fall of 2017, and distributed a survey to seek community input from residents aged 50 and above.



Elsie LeClair, Mary Quartley, Annette Brinda and Monique Losie visited the Rothesay Hive age-friendly community centre for a meet-and-greet event on Monday. PHOTO: NOUSHIN ZIAFATI/TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL

"As part of that process, we had to survey our seniors and see what we were doing right, what was lacking, and then we had to develop an action plan from that," Grant said.

What they learned through the survey was that most seniors in Rothesay wanted a physical space to gather for information, socialization and education, Grant said. Then, after applying for age-friendly status and a year and a half of "very hard work," the town officially received the designation of age-friendly status by the province and opened up the Rothesay Hive centre in

partnership with the YMCA of Greater Saint John.

"And so this is the result," Grant said. "We want people to be at home, we want people to be supported at home and this is a big boon to Rothesay. A lot of people can walk to the centre, we don't have to take our cars and hurt the environment, and we're promoting a healthy lifestyle."

Coun. Miriam Wells said they have partnered with the YMCA to offer a variety of programming. This includes meet-and-greet sessions, storytelling, a speaker series, seated yoga, a book

club, board games, knitting, cribbage and programs to teach seniors how to use online services like Netflix and YouTube.

There will also be inter-generational activities offered, which means people from all ages can come together to immerse themselves in their community.

"We want people to feel that they've got a place to go and be with other people and have an enjoyable time," Wells said, stressing the importance of socialization among not only seniors, but all citizens.

Shilo Boucher, the president and CEO

of the YMCA of Greater Saint John, said the Rothesay Hive is one of the ways in which the Y is working to improve the "vitality of older adults." There will be a full-time YMCA co-ordinator as well as other Y staff and volunteers participating and supporting the centre, Boucher said.

According to Wells, the programming at Rothesay Hive will evolve over time to suit the needs and wants of the community.

"We're looking at the health and well-being of our seniors, really through this centre," Wells said. "We've got an aging population, and we need to serve the needs of that aging population. We want people to continue to stay in our community, be happy in our community, and we hope that this is a way to achieve that."

Grant and Wells are members of the centre, too, and expressed their interest in participating in some of the centre's programs.

"I might be interested to learn some card games," Grant said. "Who knows, I might even try to knit, never done that before."

Wells said she's also looking forward to the card games and the speaker series at the centre.

The Rothesay Hive is open from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. from Monday to Friday during its summer soft launch.

A membership for Rothesay Hive costs \$50, plus tax, annually to people from the age of 50 and above. People who are YMCA members get free access to the centre. There will also be free activities offered at the centre.

For more information, people can visit the YMCA of Greater Saint John's Rothesay Hive website.