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“Don’t Call Me Dear” project challenges ageist language, stereotypes

Debbie MacDonald Moynes — County Seniors

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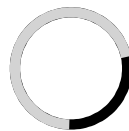
DEBBIE MACDONALD-MOYNES – COUNTY SENIORS PHOTO BY DANIEL VAUGHAN /jpg, Bl, apsmc

A few months ago I had an exchange with a server and was called “dear” yet again. I’ve had white hair for years and that must be the trigger for people. Both frustrated and furious, when I got to my desk I asked our IT folks to see if the domain name “dontcallmedear.ca” was available for purchase. It was and Community Care bought it. Now what?

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

Then the Ministry for Seniors & Accessibility announced its Seniors Community Grant and I applied. We were successful. Next we hired Anne VanVlack as our project manager. Below, Anne explains what the project is about and what's been accomplished to date.

RECOMMENDED VIDEOS



The project "Don't Call Me Dear" is all about challenging ageist language and stereotypes. Age is one of the first things we notice about people, yet globally, one in two people hold ageist views toward older adults (World Health Organization).

Ageism shows up in many ways — through assumptions, stereotypes, and everyday language. For example, terms like “*sweetie*,” “*honey*,” or “*dear*” are often used toward older adults in ways that can feel condescending, even if meant kindly.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

What makes ageism unique is that aging is a natural part of life — a stage we may all reach, and it deserves respect. In our culture, getting older is often seen as a decline, and both younger and older people can unintentionally buy into these stereotypes. Older adults — especially women — are often under-represented in media or portrayed as frail, dependent, or vulnerable, while only those who look or act younger get positive attention.

The “Don’t Call Me Dear” project works to dispel these misconceptions through several initiatives. Its website, DontCallMeDear.ca, offers educational resources and a podcast series, *More Than Age*, which shares the voices and stories of older adults, highlighting their strength, spirit, and life experience. Many episodes are intergenerational, pairing older adults with Grade 12 students from Prince Edward Collegiate as part of *Bridging Generations through Conversation* — a program designed to spark curiosity, understanding, and mutual respect across ages.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

The project also uses Facebook posts to reframe aging, share facts, and counter common myths. See the posts and podcasts on the Community Care Facebook page.

Challenging ageism means recognizing these patterns, shifting the way we speak and think about aging, and valuing people of all ages for their contributions, experiences, and potential. Through conversation, storytelling, and community engagement, “Don’t Call Me Dear” is helping change the way we see aging — one story at a time.

Debbie MacDonald Moynes is Executive Director of The Prince Edward County Community Care for Seniors Association.



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