

PARKWOOD HILLS WOMEN'S CRAFTING GROUP

The Women's Crafting Group began as a way to provide social-recreation opportunities for newcomer women in Parkwood Hills.

WHY/ HOW DID THIS GROUP GET STARTED?

Newcomer women in Parkwood Hills wanted more opportunities to socialize, have fun, and reduce isolation for those new to the community. The women wanted to have more opportunities to connect with their neighbours, and learn new skills and talents from each other. Through feedback from the community an application was put forward to the Community Development Framework which was successful in securing funding to help the women achieve their goals and objectives.

WHAT DID THE GROUP DECIDE TO DO?

The Women's Crafting Group began with a facilitator who would provide a different crafting activity each week—such as painting, knitting, card making, etc. The group then created a “Trees of Strength” project which connected people interested in acquiring a certain skill or talent (ie. Cooking, language, sewing, etc), with someone who was willing to teach these skills to others. Following this they began a social enterprise project where women who had completed their safe food handler training would use a commercial kitchen to prepare food for public food sales. These sales grew to include other items made by the participants, such as clothing and jewelry. With the arrival of Syrian refugees in their community the women began making culturally appropriate outfits and other clothing items to provide to families in need and helped host a welcome event for these families.

WHAT HAPPENED?

The Women's Crafting Group continues to run on a weekly basis in Parkwood Hills. Resident leaders are now the main facilitators of the sessions sharing their skills and expertise with others. Each week provides a different activity—such as cooking or sewing lessons—and participants hold monthly planning sessions to guide the activities/ projects for the group. Through participation in this group residents have gained access to employment opportunities, provided donations to those in need, gained confidence, created friendships, and engaged in providing ongoing feedback about what they would like to see happen in their community. These women continue to be forces of positive change in Parkwood Hills!