



A Community
for All Ages

**Age-Friendly Niagara Council (AFNC)
Executive and Board of Directors**

2026

Executive (Biographies below)

Dominic Ventresca, Chair

Otto Penner, Vice-Chair

Ginger Grant, Secretary

Ursula Hudson, Treasurer

Directors (Biographies below)

Alka Singh

Dan Lynch

Jean D'Amelio Swyer

John Ganaan

Lynn Reynolds

Margo MacFarlane

Rachel Brown (for Alexandra Jackson)

Sabrina Richardson

Sinead McElhone

Tracey Cosco



AFNC Executive Member Biographies

Dominic Ventresca is a life-long resident of Niagara and is passionate about fostering an age-friendly Niagara - a community for all ages. He has served on the leadership and governance bodies for the Age-Friendly Niagara Council since its inception in 2010 until the present, currently serves on the Board of the Association of Councils on Aging of Ontario (OACA) and chairs the OACA Planning and Development Committee. He is also a member of the City of St Catharines Older Adult Advisory Committee.

He is the co-lead for the Ontario Health Team (NOHT) Patient/Client/Family/Caregiver Advisory Council, and serves on the NOHT Planning Table, the NHOT Dementia Working Group and the NOHT Integrated Care Working Group.

Dominic enjoyed a 36-year career with Niagara Region which included serving as the Administrator of Linhaven Home in St Catharines for 19 years, Director Seniors Services (8 LTC homes, 10 Adult Day Programs and various other community support programs) for 16 years and as Acting Commissioner of Community Services for 1 year.

During his professional career, he served as a Director on the Board of the Ontario Association of Non-profit Homes and Services for Seniors, Director on the Board of the Ontario Gerontology Association, and Director on the Board of the Victorian Order of Nurses Niagara.

Following his career with the Region, Dominic served on the Board of the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant Local Health Integration Network for 3 years.

He has a Graduate Diploma in Gerontology from the University of Toronto, which followed an Honours BA also from U of T.

Otto Penner started at General Motors in St. Catharines as an apprentice and worked his way through the ranks to a middle management position as General Supervisor. He was responsible at various times for production in GM's brake division as well as all aspects of maintenance.

In 1984 Otto was elected to the board of the then St. Catharines Auto Workers Credit Union, which has evolved to be FirstOntario Credit Union. He has held all positions on the board over the years, several times over. Due to term limits, he has had to step down twice but has been re-elected again several times over.

After retirement Otto decided that he would try his hand at volunteering, and submitted his name as a candidate for various committees of the City of Niagara Falls. He has served the Seniors Advisory Committee since, mostly as chair of that committee. He volunteered to sit on the AFNC Interim Board and on various ad hoc committees of that board, as well as the Niagara Falls Seniors Advisory committee.

Otto has also worked for Elections Ontario and Elections Canada as a special ballot offsite polling station supervisor.



Dr. Ginger Grant is a seasoned pracademic with over 25 years of experience bridging strategy, innovation, and applied research across public, private, and post-secondary sectors. A dynamic international speaker, she is a strategic thinker with a talent for leading successful change management initiatives. A former management consultant, she now specializes in designing and leading innovation processes that enable organizations to navigate complexity, deliver measurable results, and foster long-term talent and economic development. Her expertise spans business innovation, organizational transformation, and talent management, with a particular focus on adult learning initiatives that align people and organizations during periods of rapid change. She has successfully led both national and international research collaborations, co-authored multi-million-dollar innovation strategies, and developed capacity-building programs that empower diverse communities, from emerging entrepreneurs to senior leaders. Dr. Grant is also deeply engaged in community-based participatory research, championing inclusive methodologies that position participants as co-creators in shaping new approaches to learning, entrepreneurship, and workforce renewal. Known for building strong cross-sector partnerships, she works closely with governments, industry, and academia to advance Canada's innovation ecosystem.

An effective communicator and collaborator, Dr. Grant brings an optimistic yet pragmatic lens to the challenges of today's workforce, blending a strategist's mindset with a designer's toolset to spark renewal, resilience, and sustainable growth.

Ursula Hudson is a seasoned volunteer. She has a deep commitment to serving her community. This commitment started when she became a parent, school events, fund raisers type activities on a one-time basis but repeated year after year. Eventually she became involved with Cadets and that area continued it was switched from the younger generation to the older generation.

She has spent almost 30 years with the Department of Defense/Army and Air Cadets as both a parent volunteer and a cadet officer. Providing services for young adults, Ursula had the privilege of working with young people first starting at the age of 12 and then graduating from cadets at 18. Being able to teach them leadership, discipline, work ethics, teamwork was amazing. As an office cadet she helped organize community events, training events, personal development and was pleased to instill values of service to others. Being a member of the Legion as well as the Cadet Corp, Ursula was the liaison officer. This gave her an opportunity to get more involved with the senior population. It was a pleasure as well as a challenge planning events that brought the cadets, both Army and Air together with the Legion members.

Over the last 10 years Ursula has dedicated her volunteer efforts to senior issues, recognizing the unique challenges faced by older adults in our community, across the country and across the world. She is particularly passionate about ensuring that seniors have access to resources, companionship & activities, live independently and with dignity and respect. With that in mind



she joined the Niagara CARP chapter and is currently the Advocacy Chair. This then led to sitting and being involved with other boards and committees all across the Niagara Region.

Ursula has been involved in many aspects of the work force and feels that every course taken, every position held has helped the wide range of skills she has developed, be they in the business world, driving transport, safety and compliance, project management, events and community outreach.

Her time spent volunteering has been one of the most rewarding parts of her life. It has allowed her to not only give back to the community but also to grow as an individual. Ursula looks forward to continuing her work with both the younger and older generations, strengthening the bonds that make our community resilient.

Director Biographies

Alexandra Jackson, MSc., is a PhD(c) at Queen's University in Aging & Health. She is the Research Program Manager at the Healthy Aging and Wellness Innovation Centre (HAWIC) at Niagara College (NC), since its inception in January 2025. In her role, she collaborates with industry partners, community organizations, and academic programs to oversee the project plan development for applied aging research projects at NC. Prior to her role at HAWIC, she worked with the Faculty of Community Studies and Health Sciences since 2018 as a Research Manager, overseeing academic research projects.

Alexandra was previously a Research Project Manager with the Centre for Elder Research at Sheridan College, where she worked on a project to bring immersive virtual reality simulations to older adults with dementia living in long-term care across Southwestern Ontario. Alexandra has published six peer-reviewed articles and presented them at many national and international conferences throughout her career. Furthermore, Alexandra will be completing her doctoral studies this term, with her research focusing on a perspective study and policy analysis to understand the use of assistive technology by persons with multiple sclerosis (MS) who wish to age in place. In her personal time, Alexandra enjoys spending time with her family, travelling, and camping at the trailer in Warton, Ontario. She is a country music enthusiast and loves to bake.

Dan Lynch is a Member, Founding Board of Directors, Age-Friendly Niagara Council; a Member, Advisory Board, National Research Council Canada Aging-in-Place Funding Program; a Co-Founder of Fika.ai and Fika Friday event; and Senior Technology Advisor, FindNext Inc.

He is an experienced Manager with a demonstrated history of working in the higher education industry. He is a strong professional skilled in Nonprofit Organizations, Entrepreneurship, Public Speaking, Biotechnology, and Proposal Writing. Dan Lynch was Special Advisor, LINC, Office of the Vice-President, Research at Brock University (2018 - 2020) and formerly founding



Manager of BioLinc (2012-2018), Brock's business and technology incubator. Dan brings a strong and career-long commitment to assisting SMEs and academic researchers, mentoring entrepreneurs, facilitating commercialization and industry liaison. Prior to joining Brock he served as the founding Industry Liaison Manager for Innovation York, York University; Dan was also the Vice President Commercialization and Chief Operating Officer of HTX, Ontario's Health Technology Exchange, a leading catalyst for accelerating the growth of Ontario's medical and assistive technologies industry cluster; and for many years he was an Industrial Technology Advisor in the National Research Council's Industrial Research Assistance Program across Southern Ontario including more than five years at the University of Western Ontario. He has worked to develop many innovation and entrepreneurial ecosystems both on and off campuses and with many innovative Ontario companies to assist in developing new entrepreneurs and technologies that resulted in new businesses and the commercialization of new products, services, processes and markets.

Dan has a MASc in Management of Technology and Innovation from U Waterloo, BASc in Chemical Engineering from U Toronto and is a retired Professional Engineer.

Jean D'Amelio-Swyer is dedicated to serving her community and improving the lives of others. Completing a third term as Chair of the Thorold Age-Friendly Committee in 2026, she has been instrumental in advancing initiatives that enhance the well-being of older adults in Thorold. She is also Chair of the Niagara Older Adult Alliance (NOAA) as well as serving on the Thorold Library Board, and the Age-Friendly Niagara Council (AFNC) and is an active volunteer at the Thorold Centre 50+. She serves as an executive member of Single Seniors for Tax Fairness which is a nationwide Canadian movement devoted to lobbying for revisions to the Income Tax Act to provide fairness and equity for single seniors.

Jean served as a City of Thorold Councillor from 1982 to 1991. She is a graduate of both Western and Brock Universities. She is retired from the federal government after nearly 35 years of service, mostly in Public Relations and Communications.

Lynn Reynolds brings more than 35 years of experience in adult education across both university and corporate environments. Her expertise spans the design and delivery of classroom computer training, the facilitation of soft-skills development, and the creation of dynamic learning experiences. In recent years, she has focused on designing online courses and eLearning modules covering academic subjects, corporate processes, change-management initiatives, and professional-credential programs for learners including nurses, engineers, and bankers.

Since retiring, Lynn has become an active contributor to the Pelham/Niagara community. She currently serves as Membership Chair of Probus, sits on the Utility Working Committee, chairs the Seniors Advisory Group, acts as Vice Chair of NOAA, and is a board member of AFNC. Her ongoing commitment to service and lifelong learning continues to shape meaningful programs and support community engagement for seniors.



Sabrina Richardson is a gerontology professional with nearly a decade of experience supporting older adults and their families through life's most significant transitions. Rooted in a background in Communications and Therapeutic Recreation, she went on to earn a Master of Applied Gerontology degree from Brock University, where she was recognized as a Distinguished Graduate Student for Academic Excellence.

Her career spans leadership roles across long-term care, retirement living, funeral services, and community outreach. She currently serves as Community Relations Manager at Willoughby Manor Retirement Residence in Niagara Falls, where she draws on her experiences to build trust, advocate for older adults, and champion age-friendly communities.

Dr. Sinéad McElhone is a public health professional, researcher, and academic leader who serves as the Dean of Health Sciences at Niagara College in Ontario, Canada. With extensive experience in public health practice and higher education, she has dedicated her career to improving the health of populations and preparing future healthcare professionals through applied education and research. Dr. McElhone assumed the role of Dean of Health Sciences at Niagara College in December 2023. In this position, she oversees a range of health-related programs, including nursing, dental hygiene and assisting, paramedic, and pharmacy technician programs. Her leadership focuses on expanding health education programs, building partnerships with healthcare providers, and ensuring students graduate with the practical skills needed to succeed in today's healthcare environment.

Before joining Niagara College, Dr. McElhone worked with Niagara Region Public Health beginning in 2013. She served as an epidemiologist and later as Acting Director of Organizational and Foundational Standards. In these roles, she led teams responsible for research, program evaluation, communications, and data analysis, helping guide evidence-based decision-making and public health planning across the region. Dr. McElhone has also contributed to academic research and teaching. She served as an adjunct professor at Brock University and previously worked internationally as Program Director and Associate Professor in Public Health Nutrition at Leeds Beckett University in the United Kingdom. She also conducted post-doctoral research in Australia focused on childhood obesity, nutrition, and physical activity. She holds a PhD in Life and Health Sciences and a Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Human Nutrition from Ulster University, along with a postgraduate certificate in Health Research from University of Leeds. She is a member of the Age Friendly Niagara Council Board of Directors. Through her work, Dr. McElhone continues to support evidence-based healthcare research, education and community health improvement.



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Tracey Cosco has dedicated over 30 years to serving the Niagara community through her work with the YMCA of Niagara, a charity committed to fostering personal growth, well-being, and community connection. Currently the General Manager of Community Services, Tracey oversees a broad portfolio that includes outreach programs for children, youth, and older adults, as well as day camps and EarlyON Child and Family Centre programs.

Throughout her career, Tracey has held key leadership positions such as Child Care Supervisor, Community Programs Director, EarlyON Coordinator, and Director of Volunteers, Training and Development. These roles have equipped her with extensive experience in program development, partnership building, training, budgeting, human resources, and risk management. She is known for her ability to listen, collaborate, and create meaningful initiatives that respond to community needs.

A long-term Niagara resident, Tracey is passionate about fostering healthy aging and ensuring older adults can live vibrant, fulfilling lives. Her background as an educator and her commitment to lifelong learning reflect her belief in empowering individuals of all ages. Beyond her professional work, Tracey actively contributes to local committees and her church community, volunteering in roles that promote education, outreach, and connection. With strong communication skills and a collaborative approach, Tracey brings a wealth of experience and a deep dedication to community service to the Age-Friendly Niagara Council Board of Directors.