

A passion for later-in-life learning

Jason Menard

At the Seniors' College Association of Nova Scotia (SCANS), lifelong learning is at the heart of everything they do — and it's fuelled by the passion for learning.

"The beauty of it is that no one's working anymore," explained Lois Block, president of the Seniors' College Association of Nova Scotia. "These are topics that they've been curious about, but have never had time during their careers to explore."

The organization started in 2007 with a chapter in Halifax. It has since expanded to Chester, Liverpool, Mahone Bay and Truro, with nearly 800 members.

"Our mandate is to offer affordable courses of an academic nature," Block said. "Membership entitles you to take as many courses as you want in all three terms."

At a membership rate of \$150 plus HST, the organization is committed to offering



SCANS' courses for older adults provide a variety of academic opportunities plus the chance to meet like-minded people. ISTOCK

low-cost academic opportunities for adults aged 50 and up. And as some seniors are on fixed incomes, there are support options available.

"We do have limited bursaries available," she said.

The majority of members are in their 60s and 70s, with many in their 80s. One active

member is 93 years old.

Beyond one full-time and one part-time employee, SCANS is run by volunteers including its board of directors and a curriculum committee. In Halifax, the organization will be offering 15 courses this spring, with two to three courses available at the other locations.

"We canvass our members to see what they're interested in," Block said. "We've offered courses in a variety of disciplines: history, literature, political science, economics, geology, art history, statistics, history of music and psychology."

The year is broken down into three six-week terms. Courses are offered in fall, winter and spring. Beyond the academics, there's an important social benefit that the program offers.

"There is a social element, of course. People get to know other people in the courses, meet people where they have things in common," Block added. "That's always important — especially for seniors. It gets you out and helps you meet like-minded people."

For more information, visit thescans.org.

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