

Coronavirus: Kind Canadians start 'caremongering' trend

More than 35 Facebook groups have been set up in 72 hours to serve communities in places including Ottawa, Halifax and Annapolis County in Nova Scotia, with more than 30,000 members between them.

People are joining the groups to offer help to others within their communities, particularly those who are more at risk of health complications related to coronavirus.

The pandemic has led to acts of kindness around the world, from delivering soup to the elderly in the UK to an exercise class held for quarantined residents on their balconies in Spain.

But in Canada, a country whose inhabitants are stereotyped in the media as kind to a fault, helping others has become an organised movement called "caremongering".

As it's all driven by social media, the altruism is arranged online and the hashtags provide a permanent record of all the good happening in different communities across Canada – an uplifting read in anxious times.

The acts of kindness sparked by coronavirus

The first "caremongering" group was set up by Mita Hans with the help of Valentina Harper and others. Valentina explained the meaning behind the name.

"Scaremongering is a big problem," she tells the BBC. "We wanted to switch that around and get people to connect on a positive level, to connect with each other.

"It's spread the opposite of panic in people, brought out community and camaraderie, and allowed us to tackle the needs of those who are at-risk all the time – now more than ever."



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beyond her expectations, with the Toronto group itself now having more than 9,000 members.

“We thought we’d have a couple dozen people,” she said with a laugh. “It’s grown to thousands.

“But the most positive thing is the local groups that have started, geared to specific neighbourhoods. It’s really shown us the need that people have to have some level of reassurance and hope.

“Anxiety, isolation and lack of hope affects you. In providing this virtual community which allows people to help each other, I think it is really showing people there is still hope for humanity. We haven’t lost our hope.”

‘This will give me a fighting chance’

Typically, posts are divided between two main topics – #iso and #offer.

#iso posts are for people “in search of” help, whereas #offer posts are (as the name implies) for people offering help.

There are other topics for things like discussions, news articles and which shops are open, but these two tags make up the bulk of the posts in the groups.

Paul Viennau, who joined the caremongering group in Halifax, said that the help he received through the trend felt “like a hug”.

“There’s a lot of negative things about social media,” he tells the BBC.

“It’s a place that can make you feel isolated normally. This is an opportunity to people to reach out and help each other.

“I have had a disability for the last 29 years, plus a compromised immune

system. I live on hand sanitiser in normal circumstances. I started to worry about running out three days ago.”