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RTOERO Magazine

Spring 2023



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celebrating life's choices, challenges
and changes

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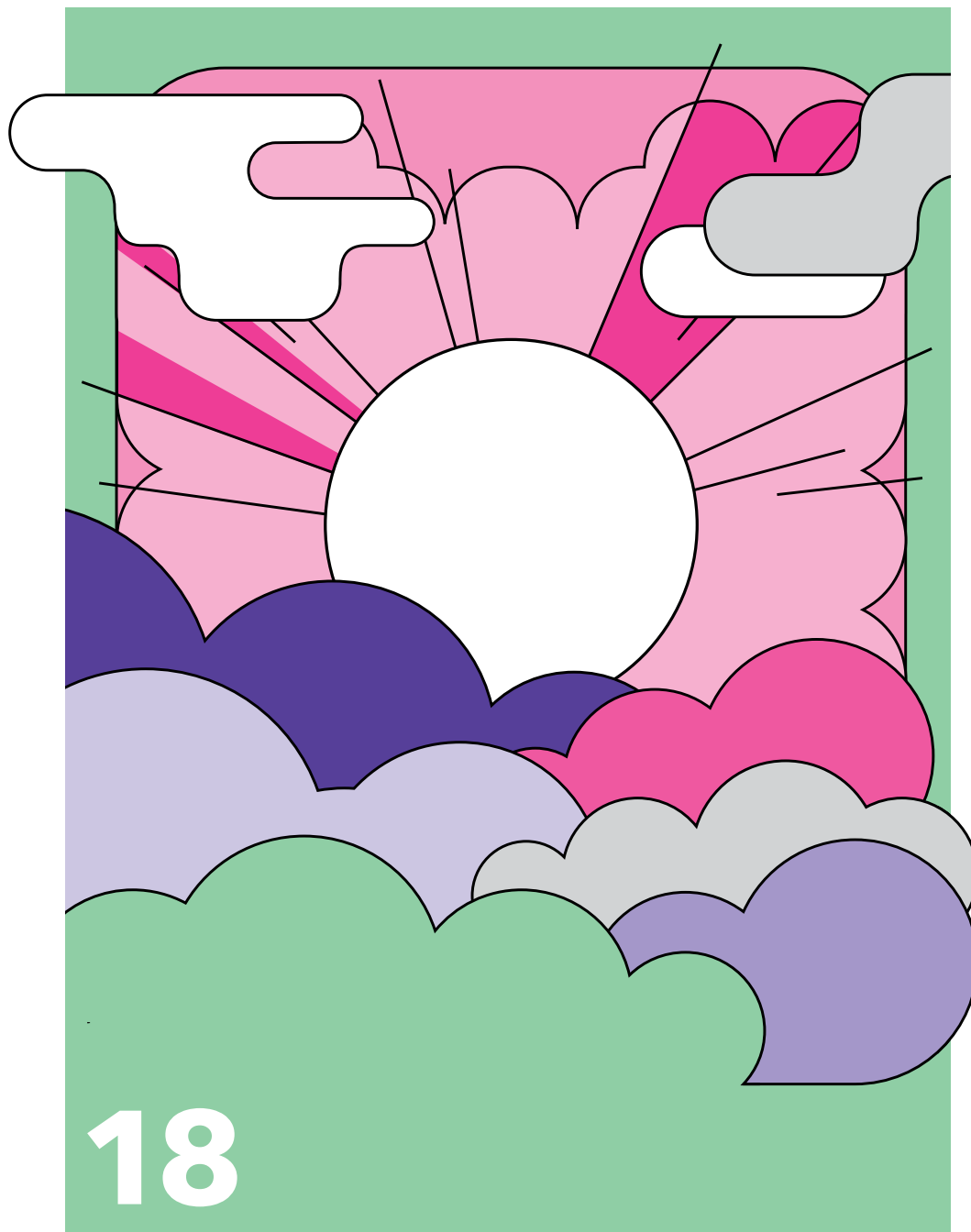
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features

- 18 Future focus**
Leaning on life lessons

- 22 The power of mentoring**
Open doors, increase opportunities, grow communities

- 24 I didn't see it coming**
How letting go can unlock the potential of what is

- 28 What I know now**
My life's journey and lessons learned along the way



On the cover
Jason Gordon/Siw Vththi Wn Di

forward

- 4** Letters
- 5** Contributors
- 7** From RTOERO

research + action

- 8** Sharing time, making friends

advocacy

- 10** Providing care and comfort

living well

- 12** Nutrition
- 13** Health
- 14** Fitness
- 16** Wellness

life

- 30** Off-peak, out-of-the-way Europe
- 34** Ask the travel pro
- 35** Food
- 38** Notable
- 39** Cheers!
- 40** First person
- 43** Money matters
- 44** Spotlight on

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MOVING?

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Reader letters



I identified with Barbara Rogelstad's "Wartime letters home" article in the winter issue of *Renaissance*. While sorting through my mom's things, I came across letters my father, William Carr, wrote to his young bride, Grace, while stationed in England in the RCAF. They gave a poignant picture of everyday wartime life as well as vignettes of a tender romance. They had married in 1941 and my father spent 1943 in Lancaster bombers. Kathy Page wrote *Dear Evelyn* after being inspired by her parents' love letters. After reading Dad's letters to Mom twice and sharing them with my sister, I sent them to the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa along with his medals and flight book listing bombing missions. Appreciate when members' stories are in the magazine.
 –Gail Murray (District 23 North York)

My compliments to Peter Mernagh for his inspiring article, "Travel for good," in the winter 2023 issue of *Renaissance* magazine. He answered in a very practical way two of the questions considered by virtually all philosophers: What is the good life, and what is the purpose of my existence? Powerful!
 –Peter Durksen (District 31 Wellington)

[The] article "Investing in a sustainable future" in the winter issue of *Renaissance* discusses the many advantages of purchasing and owning an electric car. The introductory paragraphs evolve into a read on the importance of considering an electric vehicle based on the environmental concerns of the day. While many RTOERO members are considering purchasing electric vehicles, many are also considering NOT purchasing electric vehicles. I would suggest publishing an article that balances, in thought, this one. An expert in the field of environmental studies, especially electric vehicles, might be suggested as a writer contributor.
 –Berenice Pepe (District 36 Peterborough)

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PHOTOS: COURTESY OF GAIL MURRAY

We asked RTOERO members Bernice Marsland and Terry Chattington and award-winning quilter Natalie Skinner, who created the quilt featured on the cover, to share an unexpected experience that had an impact on their lives.



BERNICE MARSLAND

During COVID I was home alone, nowhere to go, nothing to do. While reading through my grandmother’s box of old letters, I came across an old portrait of Grandma Marsland’s uncle in full British military uniform. His identity was a bit obscure, so the quest was on.

Many years ago, I had asked Grandma who this person was, and I thought she said the name was Brock. Years later I showed the picture to our family genealogist, Doris Oatman, who told me we had no relative by that name. As it turned out, I misunderstood what Grandma had said. His name was Major Charles Henry Broackes.

After getting the name straight, we found articles from old newspapers now in digital format. Twice during his military career, he was a personal attendant to Queen Victoria when she visited his military barracks.

In telling this tale, I rejoice in the truth of this old saying: “To every cloud there is a silver lining.”

District 37 Oxford



TERRY CHATTINGTON

I almost died once.

I was 10 years old and swimming alone at the “Bad Boys’ Bare Bum Beach” — we called it that because we often skinny-dipped — at the Thames River near Woodstock, Ont.

It was a hot summer afternoon and I was by myself. I recall swimming over a log and snagging my bathing suit on a knot. I tried to push myself back as my head was underwater, and I couldn’t do it. I tried to go forward and come up the other side, but the log was so heavy it wouldn’t turn. The next thing I remember was someone grabbing me by the hair and pulling me off the log.

Do you believe in guardian angels? Well, I do. Some guy was also in the water that day, at that time and at that location, to grab me by the hair and ask, “Are you all right, sonny?”

I remember that life-changing experience to this day.

District 8 London, Middlesex



NATALIE SKINNER

When my husband and I decided to start a family, we never expected to have a child with autism. Caring for and living with an autistic person has made me learn empathy and patience to a degree I never thought possible.

I’ve learned to be empathetic to his struggles, without fully understanding what those struggles even are. It’s a leap of faith I have to take because, as a neurotypical person, I will never really comprehend the daily challenges he faces. (The frustration that this disconnect can create has allowed me to build self-empathy too.) Fortunately, with empathy comes patience, and patience is golden.

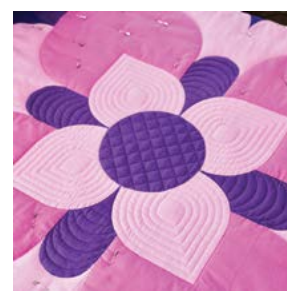
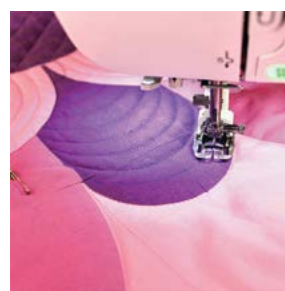
CELEBRATING THE JOURNEY



To celebrate RTOERO’s 55th anniversary,

we asked award-winning quilter Natalie Skinner to create a piece of art that reflects our journey from then to now. Skinner’s quilts have appeared in several publications and have been juried into a number of national and international quilt shows and exhibitions. She lives in Victoria, B.C., with her husband, two kids and dog.

“The flower blossom represents growth and celebration,” Skinner explains. “It is a fitting symbol of the path RTOERO has travelled over the past 55 years.”



QUILT PHOTOS, COURTESY OF NATALIE SKINNER

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From association to corporation



Dynamic change for a
more secure future

by **Martha Foster**,
RTOERO Chair

This issue of *Renaissance* celebrates 55 years of RTOERO, and what amazing years they have been!

We have evolved from a group of concerned retired teachers, who hand wrote invitations to their retired colleagues to join the association of the Superannuated Teachers of Ontario, to the corporation of RTOERO.

Most of that change, from association to corporation, took place with no notice. Activities and events continued as they had in the past. Over the years, RTOERO had slowly evolved, growing in membership and developing interests in more than just teachers' pensions. Our health insurance plan is one of the best in the country, and our membership is now organized across Canada.

So where is the change?

As RTOERO continued to grow — there are now more than 82,000 members — the structure of a group (senate) of more than 100 members making operational decisions for the organization became a serious risk. A group that met twice a year did not have a sense of the day-to-day needs of members; individuals and districts of that governing body could have self-interests that might affect their decision-making. Through a two-year process, the governance committee, with the assistance of a governance consultant, brought forward recommended changes to the senate.

In 2018, after four different presentations and with input from each senate, the final recommendations were adopted and are now the foundation of our organization.

The results? We are a corporation, structured under the law, with a board responsible for all fiduciary responsibilities of the organization and with legal obligations to make decisions that are in the best interest of the corporate body — RTOERO. Those decisions are always made after input from the members and districts, and that input is a crucial part of the process.

What does this mean for you? An organization that is on more sound footing and better prepared to keep moving in the direction that best serves all members; one that is run with all members' best interests as a part of the decision-making process. 🍷

That's worth celebrating!
Martha

Celebrating 55 years



Help us spread the
great news

by **Jim Grieve**,
RTOERO CEO

For 55 years, this organization has proudly served our growing membership of education retirees across Canada with world-class health benefits and strong advocacy for healthy, active living.

Our 51 districts are celebrating this emerald anniversary by connecting with K-12 and post-secondary colleagues and friends who are still working but approaching retirement.

In the five short years since our golden anniversary, we have welcomed many new education-community members. We are delighted that post-secondary members have discovered RTOERO retiree benefits plans and, in particular, our travel insurance.

Thousands of retiring Ontario teachers join us each year. University and college staff from British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador have learned about RTOERO insurance from our members and their faculty associations, and they're joining in large numbers. New post-secondary members from across Canada now account for almost 12 per cent of the 100,000-plus RTOERO insurance policies.

To celebrate our anniversary, we're inviting *Renaissance* readers to share what they love about being RTOERO members with their former colleagues, neighbours and friends from K-12 schools and early-years and post-secondary settings.

Remember, you don't have to be retired to join RTOERO and discover the exciting engagement options each district provides. Currently, our members have attracted more than 2,800 actively working education staff who are nearing their retirement dates.

The next step is to welcome these prospective members to RTOERO and to your district by inviting them to a few after-hours or weekend social events. You can show them that RTOERO health and travel insurance and your vibrant district engagement activities make the obvious choice when they celebrate their magic retirement day.

As a *Renaissance* reader, consider celebrating our emerald anniversary by telling your education friends how fortunate and welcome they will be. 🍷

Happy anniversary,
Jim

Sharing time, making friends

Chime In responds to your call for action

by **Sue Horner**



In a breakout room during a Chime In session, Judy-Anne Tumber (District 36 Peterborough) met two Janets. Janet Spindloe lived in Peterborough, too, but didn't know another local RTOERO member, Gabriele Southby. Janet Neatby (District 8 London, Middlesex) did; she and Southby were long-time friends. Tumber later invited Spindloe to a District 36 luncheon, where they met Southby and other RTOERO members in her neighbourhood.

"It was another wonderful way of making connections thanks to Chime In," says Tumber, who occasionally drops in to the RTOERO Foundation program. "It's a bit of mystery theatre in that you just never know what will happen. But we often know people in common or go down memory lane, and shared experiences make for great conversations."

Joel Eisenberg (District 16 City of Toronto) hasn't met anyone local yet and doesn't have a "small world" experience like Tumber's, but he finds regular participation in Chime In to be worthwhile, too.

"It's successful at fostering interaction among members, and I enjoy being able to talk to other teachers with different backgrounds and locations," he says. "Even though it's not in person, it's a good way to reduce isolation, and the hour goes by quickly."

Those are exactly the kind of connections and social activity Chime In is meant to spark.

Canadians of all ages have had less social interaction over the pandemic. Feedback from RTOERO members suggested that the foundation needed to take action on social isolation in addition to raising the profile of the issue during

an awareness campaign every October. The foundation agreed, launching the Chime In program in October 2021.

"We want to get back to a state where we all have meaningful social connection in our lives once again," explains Mike Prentice, executive director of the foundation. "We chose the name to reflect our wish for the program, that members on each online chat will feel free to join the conversation — chime in — with thoughts and ideas."

Of course, Zoom is no substitute for an in-person encounter, and Chime In isn't supposed to replace face-to-face interaction. Instead, online chats are a great way to expand your social circle, or stay connected when the weather's bad, or manage mobility issues.

And, as RTOERO members have discovered, an online friendship is often the doorway to an in-person one.



Chiming in via Zoom.

Here's how it works.

Chime In is an hour-long online chat every Wednesday, which you join on Zoom or by telephone. The chat takes place in French from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. EST and in English from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. EST.

You only need to register once, at rtoerofoundation.ca/chimein (English) or rtoerofoundation.ca/onjase (French). You can then join in as often as you'd like for all or part of the hour. You'll receive reminder emails each week with the Zoom link and telephone number. You're also welcome to invite friends, neighbours or family who might enjoy the chat.

Tammy Gonsalves, manager of philanthropy for the foundation, hosts the English chats. Her colleague Deanna Byrtus, manager of donor relations, is online for the French chat, called On jase, which started in May 2021, and there are volunteer bilingual hosts to help keep the conversation flowing.

"I'm mostly active early in the chat, to welcome participants and prompt conversation, if needed," Gonsalves says.

She sometimes offers conversation starters, such as "What would you do with a lottery win?" or "What person has had a big impact on your life?" If the group is big enough, she'll assign people to breakout rooms, mixing up the participants at the half-hour mark and then bringing everyone together again at the end of the hour. This gives participants a chance to meet a variety of people.

"We have some regulars who come every week and have become great friends," Gonsalves says. "We also have people who drop in occasionally. Either way, feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, and everyone seems to enjoy the conversation and connection. We encourage RTOERO members to try it at least once and see if it's for them."

Eisenberg tried Chime In and has become a regular. "I put it on my calendar and look forward to Chime In almost every Wednesday," he says.

"Chime In is only an hour out of your day, but you'd be surprised the conversations that go on and who you might meet," adds Tumber. "I'm grateful that the RTOERO Foundation introduced it."

For more information on Chime In or help signing up, email foundation@rtoero.ca or call 1-800-361-9888.

MORE MEMBERS CHIME IN ABOUT CHIME IN

"Chime In is intended for those who wish to enlarge their circles, meet new people, enjoy conversations and contribute to discussions of interest. It is certainly an awesome way to spend one hour of my week."

–Polly C., District 23 North York

"Chime In was a bright light in a very dark time, and I am so happy that the RTOERO Foundation took the initiative to host these events to improve connection among us."

–Edith H., District 28 Region of Durham

"[Chime In] is especially beneficial if you cannot go out due to inclement weather – and it would also be a comfort to those members who cannot go out due to poor health or mobility issues."

–Janet N., District 8 London, Middlesex

MOVING? THINK ABOUT TRANSFERRING TO MAKE MORE LOCAL CONNECTIONS

When Janet Spindloe moved to District 36, she stayed part of District 24 (Scarborough and East York). She hadn't realized she could stay connected to her original district with a social or associate membership but transfer full membership to the new local one to make connections closer to home. That's what Judy-Anne Tumber did 11 years ago, when she moved to Peterborough from Scarborough.

Members who make the switch won't see any change in coverage under RTOERO, but you may need to get your old district newsletter online. And don't forget to let the office know your new mailing address! 📧

Care and comfort

Advocate for compassionate end-of-life care

by **Patricia Ogura**



Older adults are the fastest-growing age group in Canada. Together with our members and partners, RTOERO advocates for critical policy improvements to address urgent needs now and create a more secure and compassionate future for everyone.

And that includes advocating for compassionate and respectful end-of-life care.

End-of-life care covers palliative and hospice care and medical assistance in dying. Provinces and territories govern end-of-life care with help from federal resources.

In 2017, Parliament passed the Framework on Palliative Care in Canada Act (Framework). Health Canada then conferred with stakeholders to identify challenges, opportunities and best practices. The research defined a five-year action plan with evaluation processes for which the federal government is responsible. The plan was tabled in 2018 and the report is expected in 2023.

For Framework details and to connect with provincial or territorial bodies responsible for end-of-life care: canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/palliative-care.html#s1.

Palliative care

Palliative care supports people living with advanced, life-limiting health issues, regardless of age. Care may be in-home, in-hospital, in a non-medical facility or in a hospice and is dedicated to improving quality of life.

Palliative care is holistic – with a team addressing the whole person. The practice manages illnesses, pain and other symptoms as well as the emotional, psychological, spiritual and cultural needs of patients. Programs help with treatment decision-making and also try to support caregivers in a variety of ways, including providing grief counselling.

In an effort to support Canadians' end of days with compassion and respect, medical teams are collaborating with professionals who deliver standard medical care to integrate palliative practices, for cancer or heart disorders, for example.

And this partnership is paying off, figuratively and literally.

In September 2022, a report in *The Canadian Medical Association Journal* suggested that “adoption of a model of regionally organized, collaborative, home-based palliative care that uses

shared decision-making may improve end-of-life outcomes for people with chronic heart failure.” Compared to standard-care patients, patients treated with a collaborative approach visited emergency departments less often, had shorter hospital stays and were less likely to die in hospital.

This collaboration in delivering end-of-life care also offers cost-saving measures.

The role of hospices

The modern hospice movement was founded in the 1960s by Dame Cicely Saunders, a British doctor who recognized that the terminally ill should live their last days with dignity, compassion and serenity.

“You matter because you are you,” she argued. “You matter to the last moment of your life, and we will do all we can, not only to help you die peacefully, but also to live until you die.”

Hospices provide support with the entire end-of-life experience, from providing life-affirming care to palliative individuals to supporting their loved ones through the process of death and dying and the grief that follows.

The hospice movement also respects the whole person and their family and friends and has proven to make passing easier for everyone involved.

For provincial and territorial information on hospice care, consult with the Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association: chpca.ca/about-hpc.

You can take action to promote and strengthen end-of-life-care programs:

- Research palliative and hospice care in your area.
- Help people to be aware of the benefits associated with palliative and hospice practice.
- Talk to elected officials about palliative and hospice options.
- Evaluate processes you need to follow to access the care.
- Advocate for improvements and further innovations.
- Support hospices in your area.

To learn more about RTOERO's advocacy efforts and how to participate: rtoero.ca/vibrant-voices. 🗨️



keep in touch!

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Is organic food really healthier?

No fertilizers, pesticides or synthetic additives.
Does it matter?

by **Fran Berkoff**, registered dietitian

As a registered dietitian, I often find myself ushered into discussions/debates among friends and family about best food choices, and whether or not the latest trendy diet is legit. The one topic that often causes some heated debate: organic versus conventionally grown fruits, vegetables and grains.

What is organic?

Organic food is grown or produced without synthetic pesticides, fertilizers, herbicides, antibiotics, growth hormones or genetically modified organisms (GMOs). In Canada, the designation of organic is regulated by the federal government and must meet the Canadian Organic Standards, which allows its logo on packaging. Using the logo is voluntary. Some farmers may follow organic standards but not use the logo, often because of the cost to qualify. So, a good practice when visiting local farmers' markets is to speak with growers about their practices.

Why organic?

People choose organic produce for a variety of reasons. Some are fearful of

the health effects of synthetic pesticides in conventional crops, others choose it for environmental reasons, and still others prefer the taste.

Is organic healthier?

There is no strong research that concludes organic is more nutritious than conventional foods. Some studies have shown that organic produce is higher in antioxidants than conventionally grown crops, but it's not a significant amount. And complicating things: The nutrients in produce can vary widely depending on where the food was grown, so it can be harder to get accurate numbers on the antioxidant content.

Is organic better for the environment?

Yes. Organic farming has a smaller carbon footprint, conserves and builds soil health, and its practices create less pollution.

Does organic food have fewer pesticides?

Organic produce is not always pesticide-free. There are some pesticides

used in organic farming, but they are derived from natural substances as opposed to the synthetic pesticides in conventional produce. Conventional produce is examined in Canada, and pesticide residues must be at levels far below the amount that could cause health concerns, but organic produce usually has lower levels of pesticides.

So, what's the bottom line?

Eating enough fruits, vegetables and grains is an important part of a healthy diet, and many people fall short. If it's time to up your consumption, whether you choose conventional or organic, just eat more!

Organic foods are generally more expensive because organic farming can require more labour and also tends to have lower yields than conventional. These days, with food costs skyrocketing, this can be problematic for many.

If this makes the cost of organics prohibitive, buy conventional food.

But either way, always wash it well before you eat it — even fruits and vegetables you will be peeling. Washing carefully can reduce — and often eliminate — pesticide residues, dirt and bacteria. Wash with cold or warm running water and scrub with a brush, if appropriate. Do not use soap or detergents! Wash your hands and cutting boards before you start. Throw away outer leaves of leafy vegetables such as lettuce. Wash the outer rind of melons before cutting into them. 🍀

Women and heart disease

Gender matters, so understand the symptoms and risk factors

by **Pauline Anderson**



New research is challenging the idea that heart disease is a “man’s disease.” For an update, *Renaissance* spoke to two Canadian experts in the field: Karin Humphries, PhD, an associate professor in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of British Columbia (UBC) who holds the UBC Heart and Stroke Foundation Professorship in Women’s Cardiovascular Health, and Paula Harvey, MD, PhD, who’s the head of the Department of Medicine and holds the F.M. Hill Chair in Women’s Academic Medicine at the University of Toronto.

Heart disease in women can look quite different than heart disease in men. Women’s bodies are built differently, their hearts and coronary vessels are generally smaller, and they present with unique symptoms.

First of all, risk factors for heart disease affect women differently than men. For example, type 2 diabetes is twice as likely to lead to heart disease in women. Smoking is also especially hard on a woman’s heart.

Some heart disease risk factors, for example hypertension (high blood pressure), are often not picked up on or treated as promptly in women as they are in men.

Some risk factors affect women almost exclusively. In addition to breast cancer, these can include autoimmune disorders like rheumatoid arthritis, which might cause inflammation of the blood vessels or plaque buildup.

Women who had high blood pressure during pregnancy or gestational diabetes are at higher risk for cardiovascular disease as they get older. To prevent later-life hypertension, it’s important to regularly monitor blood pressure. “Every time you go for an annual exam, get your blood pressure checked and make sure it’s not going up. If it is, it needs to be treated,” says Humphries.

Eating well, maintaining a healthy weight and getting regular exercise are also key to heart health. But instead of a single workout or physical activity a day, Humphries advises, “try to increase physical activity throughout the day because the benefits are cumulative.”

Women who suffer heart attacks often don’t present the same kind of symptoms as men do. You know: the classic sharp chest pain described by men. Instead, women might feel a heavy pressure in their back, extreme fatigue, jaw pain, nausea or sweating — symptoms that may be misdiagnosed or dismissed by

health care personnel, says Humphries. These unique symptoms may be because the disease affects the heart’s smaller blood vessels rather than major arteries. Women’s smaller coronary arteries make procedures such as bypass surgery more difficult to perform, and this increases their chances of a poorer outcome.

Research has historically focused on men, but that’s changing. A recent study in the *Canadian Journal of Cardiology* uncovered a concerning increase in heart attacks among Ontario women under 55 years. The findings suggest women do as well as men a year after a heart attack, but only after adjusting for risk factors. “They are doing worse than men, and it’s because they’re obese, and it’s because they have hypertension and diabetes,” says Humphries.

But women are also less likely than men to be prescribed blood pressure or cholesterol-lowering medications after a heart attack. And they’re less likely to be referred to cardiac rehabilitation, or if they are referred, they drop out because they’re uncomfortable exercising with men, says Humphries. Or they may be caring for children or elderly parents while still holding down a job and can’t get to rehab sessions during the week. And transportation is a concern for women living alone and struggling economically, says Harvey.

The good news: Experts are working to customize cardiac rehab, offering classes for women only, as well as virtual and weekend sessions.

The debate continues about whether menopause increases the risk of heart disease because of the loss of the protective effects of estrogen.

Past research has found that hormone replacement therapy didn’t protect women against heart disease, but it studied only women who had been menopausal for some time, says Humphries. “Had we given estrogen closer to when they went through menopause, maybe we would have seen some benefit.” 🌸

May I have this dance?

Ballroom dancing offers more than fun

by **Ylva Van Buuren** Illustrations by **Jori Bolton**



Learning to ballroom dance will change your life — for the better!

Have you ever dreamed of doing the tango to the emotional strains of “Por una Cabeza”? Or making those dramatic foxtrot moves to Frank Sinatra singing “Fly Me to the Moon”?

Ballroom dancing isn’t just a super-fun social activity. It’s also a pretty terrific mind and body workout.

Simply put, ballroom dancing refers to a variety of recreational dances with a partner and can include everything

from the waltz, tango and foxtrot to more rhythmic dances like the cha-cha, rumba, mambo and East Coast swing.

The key for beginners, says Glen Michael, president and founder of the National Ballroom Academy in Thornhill, Ont., is to dance to music you enjoy.

“You don’t have to be super fit, and dance instructors will evolve the dancing based on your personality and what your body can do.”

Need a nudge? Here are eight reasons to learn to ballroom dance.



1. PHYSICAL EXERCISE

Dancing is great exercise for your muscles and your heart. Health benefits include improved muscle and bone strength with low risk of injury. “Dancers work with fluidity, range of motion and coordination, which help to improve posture, balance and motor skills,” says Sarah Robichaud, a former dancer and the founder and executive director of Dancing with Parkinson’s. This can help prevent falls and other accidents.

2. ANYONE CAN DANCE

Ballroom dancing is a great activity for all age groups and especially older Canadians. If you’re on your own, no worries. Class participants will rotate so everyone gets a turn with a partner – and often the teacher. Physically challenged individuals can dance too. “In Dancing with Parkinson’s classes, we have dancers in wheelchairs and walkers, and we can modify the dances so they can do them seated, too,” says Robichaud. Someone in a wheelchair can dance with a standing partner, or two wheelchair users can dance together. Often the arms and upper body create the flowing dance movements.

3. BRAIN WORK

Dancing uses more parts of the brain than any other activity, says Michael. “There

is motion, music and dancing with a partner. You learn steps and learn them in coordination with the shape of the room and your partner; then there’s also your own artistically based impressions of the music.” All this information is processed in the corpus callosum, a collection of nerve fibres in the brain, to create the mind-body connection, Michael explains. Some research has shown that this type of mental work may help prevent symptoms of dementia.

4. COME AS YOU ARE

All you need is a clean pair of comfortable shoes, comfortable clothing and a smile, says Mark Read, a long-time professional ballroom dancing instructor at Joy of Dance, in Toronto.



5. SOCIAL ACTIVITY

Ballroom dancing makes it easy to meet new friends. “A lot of people take lessons to be with other people,” says Read. “And that social part is important because we all need human contact.”

GETTING STARTED

- Take private lessons. To find a studio, ask friends for referrals, visit studios in your neighbourhood and search online. Private lessons can be costly, though. For example, the average cost at National Ballroom Academy (nationalballroomacademy.com) is about \$70 to \$90 a lesson.
- Join a ballroom dancing group class. Dance studios such as Joy of Dance (joyofdance.ca) and National Ballroom Academy offer classes, as do municipal and city recreational programming. For example, the City of Toronto provides social dancing courses (tinyurl.com/2ypjapd6) for older adults. Group lessons, in general, start at about \$15 a class.
- Contact specialty organizations such as Dancing with Parkinson’s (dancingwithparkinsons.com). “We provide opportunities for physical activity and social connection in an artistic, inclusive and joyful setting,” says Robichaud. There are free daily online classes as well as in-person classes throughout the GTA. (Dancing with Parkinson’s is currently expanding to other provinces.)
- Take an online ballroom dancing class. Do your research to make sure the class is what you’re looking for and learn what the cost is.

6. FUN

“As much as there is a learning curve,” says Read, “my thing in class is laughter. I tell everyone to ignore what other people are doing or thinking; just do it for yourself and have fun!” Bonus: Some dance studios hold social dances where members can invite friends to join in.



7. SELF-DISCOVERY

“Dancing is a self-exploration journey,” says Michael. “People have a good time, but it is also about learning about yourself, seeing what you can do, what you can’t do, and enjoying the journey.”

8. A DE-STRESSOR

“Once you walk into our studio and the doors close,” says Read, “the outside world is gone. To dance and learn how to dance, you have to be present in the moment; you can’t be thinking about other things.”

Why you need a health coach

A coach can make the difference between reaching your goals and giving up

by **Brooke Smith**



Want to play a better game of tennis?

You might hire a coach. Looking for life or career advice? You might hire a life coach to help you there, too.

You might consider your family doctor a coach because they give you health advice, but according to *Medscape Physician Compensation Report 2016*, most respondents spend between 13 and 16 minutes with their doctor on any given visit.

So maybe a health coach is in order.

What is a health coach?

A health coach is a guide and partner. They help you implement lifestyle changes to improve your health — both mental and physical. They typically focus

on nutrition, exercise, sleep, smoking, stress and time management.

“The health coach’s role is to help the person connect what they know — and to fill in gaps where they don’t know — to their actions,” says Marvin Nixon, who is certified by the National Board for Health & Wellness Coaching (NBHWC) and based in Toronto. “[It’s] getting those actions to become behaviours, to become habits to lead to a healthier lifestyle.”

Why would you want one?

Sometimes it’s hard to go it alone. Many people need help with focus and motivation, says Jocelyn Hill, also based in Toronto and NBHWC-certified. “Even if you have knowledge of what to do,

that knowledge doesn’t help a whole lot; otherwise, January resolutions would be way more successful.”

She’s right. According to a 2016 study, of the 41 per cent of Americans who make New Year’s resolutions, only nine per cent feel they’ve succeeded in keeping them by the end of the year. And the stats would probably be similar for Canadians.

Coaches can also help with the dips that inevitably happen if you’re going solo to make a change. “People on their own don’t prepare for setbacks,” says Hill. “They don’t prepare for those dips. A skilled health coach can rescue people from those dips and get them back on track.”

“The only thing I’m an expert in is behaviour change, nutrition, sleep and exercise. If you say to me, ‘I will not go to a gym,’ great, let’s not go to the gym. So what else can you do?”

—
Marvin Nixon

What are the benefits?

“Many people will seek out a health coach as a preventative measure,” says Nixon, “to feel better, to look better.” One U.S. study found that participants who went through three months of health coaching saw significant health improvements, including in their blood pressure, cholesterol, body weight and cardiovascular fitness.

What do they coach you on?

Anything health-related is up for grabs: losing weight, getting exercise, eating healthy, getting more sleep.

But remember, the health coach isn’t in charge — you are. “The client is the expert in themselves, in their body, in what they like, what they hate,” says Nixon, who’s also a personal trainer. “The only thing I’m an expert in is behaviour change, nutrition, sleep and exercise. If you say to me, ‘I will not go to a gym,’ great, let’s not go to the gym. So what else can you do?”

How does health coaching work?

Typically, you meet with your coach (either online or in person) once a week for an hour, for anywhere from three to five months. The coach is there to listen, provide information and options, and help guide you to achieve your health goal(s).

How else do they help?

Don’t have time to make a healthy meal or go to the gym? Health coaches fit

solutions into your life. “Part of my job is to make it easy for you,” says Donna Druzic, a holistic health coach based in Kingston, Ont., “to find solutions that work in your busy life.”

They can also help weed out the ton of information you’ll find online. “We give very curated information,” says Druzic. “That’s what people want. It’s a busy world, and if you google, you’ll get overwhelmed.”

How much does it cost?

Most health coaches will sell a package of sessions, as opposed to single sessions. “That’s going to depend on the coach and how they work,” says Nixon. “I don’t sell sessions; I sell five months. A program with my health coaching is five months because that’s what it takes to really see change.”

Pricing can run from \$100 to \$150 per session; there may be discounts for buying in bulk.

What kind of training do health coaches have?

Hill completed her health coach training through Duke University in 2014/15, and then qualified to write the NBHWC exam in 2017. Of the training, she says that “there was absolutely nothing comparable in Canada [at the time].”

York University in Toronto now offers a Health Coach Professional Certificate. According to the York website, the certificate is the first and only NBHWC-approved training program in Canada.

Once individuals complete the certificate, they can apply to write the NBHWC exam.

Nixon says that NBHWC “is the only group that’s internationally setting standards and boundaries. It’s important that a health coach understand the health basics but also stay in their lane and not drift into counselling, medical advice. The board really helps set that scope of practice.”

When you’re looking for a coach, consider these questions to ensure you get the best:

- Where did you complete your training? Do you have the NBHWC credential? Do you have any additional credentials or training?
- How many years of experience do you have?
- Do you offer a free consultation or discovery call? “This is typically 15 to 20 minutes,” says Hill. “It’s a great opportunity to see if the coach is a good fit.”
- What type of clients do you work with? Some coaches have a niche in weight loss, burnout, menopause or osteoporosis, for example, says Hill.

How do you find a health coach?

Contact one of these two reputable institutes to find a coach in your area:

- Health Coach Institute healthcoachinstitute.com
- National Board for Health & Wellness Coaching nbhwc.org

future focus

Leaning on life lessons

by **Stuart Foxman**



As we age, what can we fall back on that contributes to a sense of well-being?

That's what two Chicago psychologists aimed to find out when they tested 300 people, ages 60 to 89. The researchers discovered that those who savoured life lessons had greater satisfaction and were more likely to see this stage of life as a time of growth. With positive perceptions, these people tended "to view older adulthood as a period of continued learning and engagement," the authors wrote in the study, published in 2019 in the journal *Aging & Mental Health*.

Life lessons shape and comfort us. We can trace their impact looking backward and lean on them going forward. We talked to three RTOERO members who reflect on the lessons they've learned along the way, which have guided them and now help them plan the next steps on their life journeys.



Christine Bretherick, left, with Hariett Madigan, founder of Living Fit, a program for seniors. This artwork is from the intergenerational Poppy Project at The Village at Canadore College.

Life lesson: When there's no path, build one

Christine Bretherick (District 31 Wellington)

Christine Bretherick comes from a small town in Wales called Burry Port. Its claim to fame is being the landing spot, in June 1928, of the plane carrying Amelia Earhart from Newfoundland — the first transatlantic flight by a woman.

The town has a monument to Earhart, and Bretherick loves a quote from the legendary aviator: "Some of us have great runways already built for us. If you have one, take off. But if you don't, it is your responsibility to grab a shovel and build one for yourself and for those who will follow after you."

Bretherick had taught in London, England, for a year, but back in Wales there were no jobs. So she and her husband decided to try Canada for three years. She arrived at 23, on a frigid day in January 1976. At the Toronto airport, "the entrance to the baggage halls was frozen," she recalls.

She taught for the next five years, stopping when she had the first of her three daughters. Bretherick returned to university when her eldest was nine

“For me, art is an endless opportunity to explore, discover, experiment and create something that hasn’t existed before.”

Brian Middleton

months old, studying English one course at a time. She graduated in 1989 and went back to teaching in Guelph, where the family was now living.

On several occasions Bretherick had to build her own runway. The day she received her university degree, she learned her husband was having an affair with a neighbour. She promptly found a house to rent with the kids. A year later, Bretherick placed an ad in the newspaper seeking a companion. She met someone and has been with him ever since.

A far greater challenge came when her middle daughter, Andrea, passed out in a pool on a class trip at age 10 and had to be resuscitated. The cause, not known at the time, was congenital cardiac arrhythmia. At first, a neurologist told Bretherick that she was just an overanxious mother. It took 18 months to properly diagnose Andrea and correct her issue with a pacemaker.

“I had to become an advocate for Andrea, because I wasn’t getting the answers. The whole thing with her gave me confidence that I can knock on any door.”

Recently, Bretherick knocked on more when she started fresh again, moving from Guelph to Callander, Ont., to be near her children. She created an opportunity by volunteering at the Callander Bay Heritage Museum and helping students to create a series of paintings that the museum displayed. Now she volunteers with The Village at Canadore College, a facility for seniors, to promote the arts.

Our paths can take twists and turns. Sometimes the path isn’t even there. In those cases, Bretherick remains ready. “Here comes the shovel,” she says.



Brice Balmer

Life lesson: Seek progress and empower others

Brice Balmer (District 11 Waterloo Region)

When he graduated in 1966 from Bluffton College, a Mennonite school in his hometown of Bluffton, Ohio, Brice Balmer knew his next big step. He had a teaching job waiting in Columbus, the state capital, 100 miles away. But first, the Mennonite Central Committee, a relief service and peace agency, sent Balmer to Atlanta for the summer.

There, he worked in a community centre and a high school, the only white person in a Black community. Returning to Ohio, he taught at an all-white school. “It felt like two different countries and caused so much chaos in my mind,” he says.

Balmer had many questions about segregation, prejudice and what it meant to be an American. He moved to Cincinnati, working for a poverty program and teaching young women who had previously dropped out. Yearning to do more, he entered the seminary to follow his lifetime pursuit — “the search for justice and equity.”

For the next seven years, Balmer worked in an urban ministry in Denver. He moved to Kitchener

Right: Brice Balmer with students in Qom, Iran, where he was teaching advanced-study imams, preparing for their master’s or doctoral degrees.



Left: Christine Bretherick, at back right, at Bayview Glen Junior School in 1977, just starting off her teaching career in the private system.

FAR LEFT PHOTO, COURTESY OF CHRISTINE BREThERICK
OTHER PHOTOS, COURTESY OF BRICE BALMER

in 1979 to be closer to his family in Ohio and his wife's family in Ontario. Balmer was the long-time co-pastor of the First Mennonite Church in Kitchener. For 24 years, he was also the chaplaincy director of the House of Friendship, which supports Waterloo Region residents in need of food, housing, community resources or addiction treatment.

Balmer has also served on the faculties of Waterloo Lutheran Seminary, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (in Indiana), Renison University College (affiliated with the University of Waterloo) and Wilfrid Laurier University's Faculty of Social Work.

Over his career, he has been drawn to the marginalized. He has worked extensively in addictions treatment and taken a keen interest in social welfare and housing, especially the effects of long-term homelessness on mental health, addiction and recovery. As well, he has worked with people with physical disabilities (helping to form an independent living centre), refugees and those living in poverty.

Balmer was formerly also executive director of the Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition. Now in retirement, he volunteers with Muslim Social Services Waterloo Region.

When the Black Lives Matter protests erupted in the summer of 2020, Balmer wrote an opinion piece for the *Waterloo Region Record*. In it, he recalled his experiences in Atlanta and Cincinnati observing inequities, saying he was grateful that they pushed what he called a "privileged white man" to be on a quest for progress.

What ties together his life's efforts is a desire to empower those who can face all sorts of struggles. "I work hard to help people, to walk with people, so that they can have a life of contentment and be as much a part of society as they want to," says Balmer.

Life lesson: Never stop exploring

Brian Middleton (District 47 Vancouver Island)

Whether he's working on traditional canvases or, most recently, his digital paintings, art has fascinated Brian Middleton for 50 years. "For me, art is an endless opportunity to explore, discover, experiment and create something that hasn't existed before," he says.

While that has been his pastime, the joy of investigating and learning is also what any teacher tries to foster in their students. Middleton did so while teaching French, art and ESL in Toronto, Brantford and Guelph.

His journey to teaching and to art wasn't planned. In 1972, he was studying history and French at York University, thinking of maybe joining the civil service, when he decided to do an exchange



Above: Brian Middleton at a digital-painting workshop at Opus Art Supplies in Victoria, B.C., 2014. Right: Middleton and his husband, Carl McLuhan, in Carlisle, Ont., in 1979, shortly after beginning his apprenticeship with Gerard Brender à Brandis.



in France. Art was everywhere. During his time abroad, Middleton visited the Jeu de Paume in Paris, the Prado Museum in Madrid, and Paul Cézanne's studio in Aix-en-Provence, the city where he was studying.

Something clicked. Until then, Middleton was highly academically focused. "I was an A+ student. Everything was poured into achieving in school. This was my first opportunity to think of what else I wanted to do in life. At one point, I said, 'I think I can paint.' I had no background but an enormous desire. It was crazy, a complete change of direction, and I couldn't let it go."

He began drawing and found that he actually had some talent. When Middleton returned to Toronto, he started studying art at night. After York, he was accepted to the Ontario College of Art and Design.

Following his graduation, Middleton worked as an apprentice for a wood engraver, took on odd jobs and also did some supply teaching. Through his future husband, a teacher, he learned of an opportunity to teach calligraphy to adults at night school. Finding teaching rewarding, Middleton went back to university at age 32 to study education. He ended up working as a full-time teacher for 25 years.

When he was in his 20s, Middleton asked himself what his purpose was. It couldn't just be to earn money. He realized that he needed to connect with people and share his passions. Whether as an artist or a teacher, he's expressing himself. "Something authentic is happening when we interact," he says.

As a retiree, he works on his own art and does workshops for teens and adults on digital painting. Learning and creativity have much in common. To Middleton, it's about the chance to grow, and how you get from here to there. That's the excitement of exploration. "For me, art is more about the process. And life is about process. If you work at it enough, you can create something that's identifiably yours." ☘



Brian Middleton



the power of mentoring

Your chance to open doors, increase opportunities, grow communities

by **Sue Horner**

Betty Ann Colquhoun (District 11 Waterloo Region) doesn't consider herself a mentor. She's just a retired teacher who loves languages, helping students in El Salvador practise their English while she learns Spanish.

That "help" has grown beyond Colquhoun's wildest dreams.

After her retirement in 2002, Colquhoun volunteered with an organization that offered English-language learning in El Salvador. When that organization shut down, Colquhoun's children encouraged her to carry on the work. They created CanTeach Connections (canteachconnections.org) to provide conversation partners for students in that country.

In all, volunteer partners spent more than 800 hours talking to students one-on-one in 2021. With new confidence in their English, many students went on to earn safe, well-paying jobs in call centres and other places that require proficiency, proud to be helping support their families.

In January 2022, CanTeach added a virtual program for English teachers. By the end of the year, volunteers had logged about 300 hours of conversation with them.

"I was there in August 2022 and had coffee with some of the teachers," Colquhoun says. "They were already competent and in many ways didn't need the program, but their confidence soared, and that made all the difference. Still, I was surprised they saw me as a mentor."

Mentors make a difference by sharing their knowledge, experience, advice and encouragement. Often a mentor helps a less experienced or younger person develop and achieve career or life goals. The mentor might also support peers in polishing their skills and improving their performance, as Colquhoun did with the English teachers in El Salvador.

Mentoring can change lives, says Mentor Canada, a coalition of organizations that provide mentoring for youth in Canada. A 2021 Mentor Canada survey showed that youth supported by mentors were twice as likely to have completed high school than their peers without mentors. They were 95 per cent more likely to have pursued further education and twice as likely to feel they belonged in their communities.

Toronto Metropolitan University (formerly Ryerson) has long seen the power of mentors, introducing a Tri-Mentoring Program in 2001.

"Counsellors noticed that certain populations were making it to the university but having a difficult time staying," explains Jennifer Barcelona, who manages the program. "Our hope was that every student who walked through our doors would feel a sense of belonging and not feel they had to leave their identities at the door."

The Tri-Mentoring Program matches students in three ways: peer-to-peer mentoring matches first-year and upper-year students to ease the transition to university; group mentoring helps Black, LGBTQ2I, East and South East Asian, Indigenous and other groups connect and share their experiences; career mentoring matches third-year students with industry professionals so they can gain insight into the world of work.

In its first year, the program created 60 matches. Over the past 21 years, more than 30,000 students have been mentored.

And it's not just the mentees who benefit from a mentoring relationship.

The Tri-Mentoring experience has been so positive that at least 80 per cent of the mentors have themselves been mentees. "Alumni of our program are always willing to give

back their time as mentors or guest speakers," Barcelona says.

Mentor Canada, too, found that youth who had mentors were twice as likely to be interested in mentoring others in the future than those without.

As for Colquhoun, "I love my time with students and teachers in El Salvador," she says. "The work really gave me a focus through COVID-19 — plus I learned enough Spanish to write a decent email and follow along in classrooms."



Betty Ann Colquhoun, seated, front left, with teacher participants in the conversation partner program.

10 YEARS FOR GOOD BEHAVIOUR

Jane Sims (District 23 North York) volunteered for 10 years at the Don Jail in Toronto.

A former English teacher, Sims became involved to fulfill a volunteer component while doing her master's degree. Another student had volunteered in Saint Kitts, which included visiting a local jail, so Sims volunteered there, too.

When she returned, she volunteered to help an acquaintance who taught full-time at the jail. Sims mentored several young men, helping them get their high school diplomas and supporting others who were completing college correspondence courses.

Her volunteer time ended when the jail relocated, but "it was an extremely meaningful experience in my life," she says.

ONCE A TEACHER, ALWAYS A MENTOR

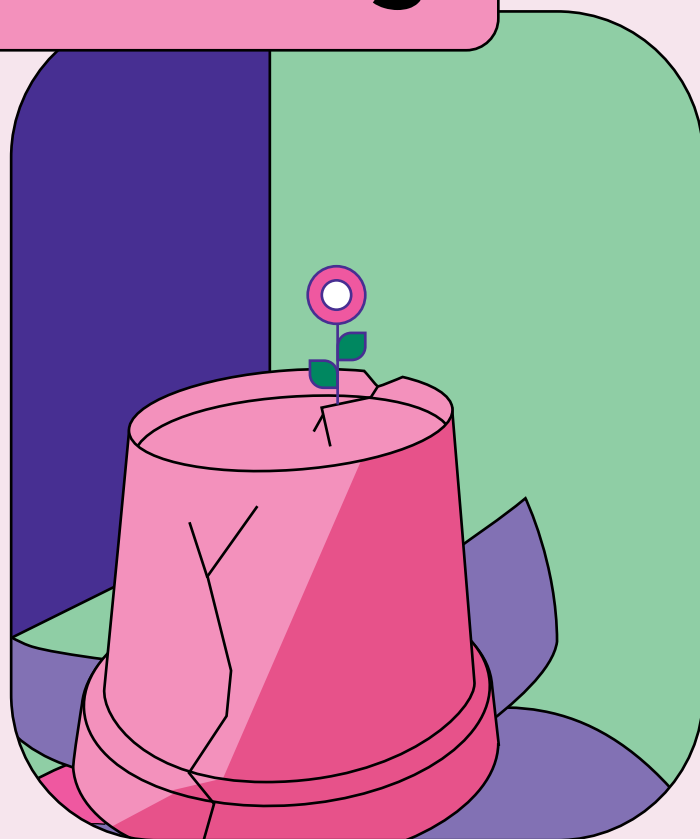
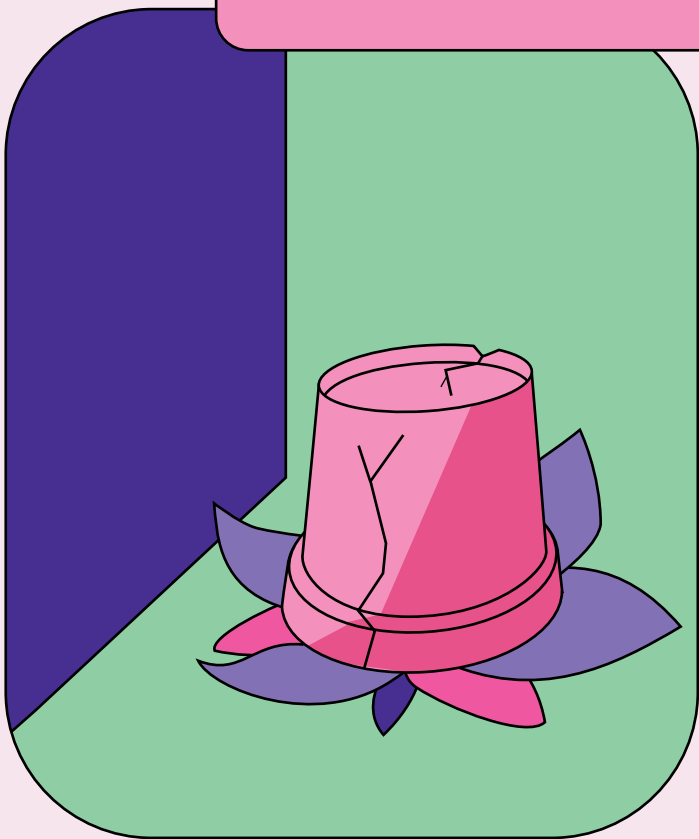
You can take the teacher out of the classroom, but can you take the mentor out of the retired teacher? Not if you go by the experience of Fred and Rosey Guidolin (District 12 Norfolk).

Both retired teachers, the Guidolins helped out Rosey's sister, Donna Quinn. They have visited Quinn's Grade 7 classroom in person or over Zoom multiple times, offering helping hands to deliver special activities that would bring to life the curricular lessons Quinn developed. Taking her lead, they worked one-on-one or with groups. They helped students create T-shirts, listened to students read, helped with math and offered constructive feedback as students crafted and practised speeches.

"It was gratifying to see the students' skills and confidence improve, and we highly recommend offering your service to a school," Rosey says. 🌟



I didn't see it coming



Letting go of how it's supposed to be
can unlock the potential of what is

by **Alison LaMantia**

Real-life stories are peppered with plot twists, aren't they? Tragic losses, illnesses and injuries, unexpected money, infidelity, love found and lost, children with disabilities . . .

No matter how carefully we plan our today and tomorrow, life happens and we find ourself somewhere — physically or emotionally — we sure hadn't planned to be.

And while our life experiences are personal, the simple fact that we'll encounter a shift is almost universal. In small, large and often unfathomable ways, life throws us curveballs. But life also gives us a glove to catch them, and if we pay attention, these experiences can open up new opportunities to learn, grow and sometimes live a richer life than we had thought possible.

Meet three RTOERO members who share the curveballs that got them to where and who they are — unexpectedly — today.



Chandra LaFitte (District 16 City of Toronto) was on a road trip in her 20s when medical test results caught up to her.

She wasn't well, and the doctors thought her condition might be terminal.

"It shook me to the core," LaFitte says. "Twenty-two-year-olds don't have the maturity or the foresight to see life, and all you need is something like that to make you change your priorities."

LaFitte had plans. And having to grapple with the fear of dying before she had a chance to realize those plans helped shape her approach to life. "I realized you can plan your entire life and just get hit in the teeth," she explains.

So, she taught herself to hold her plans and goals loosely. "If I achieved them, great. If I didn't, it wasn't a disappointment, and it wasn't going to kill me," she says. "The hardest lesson I had to internalize is how to fail and what to do when I fail."

LaFitte also recognized the need to shift plans. She had always wanted to spend time abroad and had applied for exchanges but never got one. After she finished teaching full-time — she doesn't like the word "retiring" — she took an opportunity to live in the U.K., working at the University of Sheffield as a teaching aide, and had a blast.

While LaFitte has gone on to accomplish great things, including recently completing a doctorate in theology, what stands out for her isn't the individual gains but the collective life experience.

"The theme through my life is how wonderful people have been," she says. "You discover that you're not Superwoman. And then you become more realistic about other people as well. If it can happen to me, it can happen to anybody. So, let's think about everybody else and what demons, illnesses or weaknesses they face."

When John Rager (District 51 Echo) met Claude Mathieu about a year ago, he decided he would be candid with her.

Rager had recently lost his wife, Barbara, to Parkinson's, having cared for her for more than two decades. After her death, he spent a lot of time reflecting on their life together, and the pandemic's closures meant there was little to distract him.

He began to see himself and his late wife as individuals more clearly — and to forgive.

"All of the things I couldn't tell my wife because I was embarrassed and ashamed, I finally accepted myself, so I didn't have that fear anymore," he says. Mathieu didn't turn away from his vulnerability. She leaned in, and their companionship is unfolding: They take classes, work out and go to concerts together. Rager says there's a sense between them that they'll support each other for the rest of their lives.

The gift of self-acceptance pays dividends.

"Sometimes we have a simplistic notion that pleasure is good and pain is bad, when in fact some painful things are really important teachers," says Rager. Grappling with the pain of his late wife's illness and death, Rager could explore himself and recognize the historical moments in his past that contributed to who he is today — his most authentic self.

"Think about yourself, your life and the things you wish you hadn't done. Forgive yourself. Find a way to let them go. Be as honest with yourself as you can be. And let yourself enjoy the rest of your life," he says.

Claude Mathieu and John Rager take art classes together.

John Rager and Claude Mathieu on holiday in Barbados.



PHOTOS, COURTESY OF JOHN RAGER

“You can sit at home and feel sorry for yourself or get out and get involved in some things.”

—
Dave Giles



Every week, Dave Giles (District 41 Elgin) drives people living with cancer to their treatments. He’s a volunteer with the Canadian Cancer Society, a role he took on after losing Diane, his wife of 37 years, to cancer.

“You can sit at home and feel sorry for yourself or get out and get involved in some things,” Giles says. Volunteering was one of the ways Giles found to connect with others.

But it was a connection that came through Facebook that blindsided him, in the best of ways. A friend request popped up from Darlene Dorey, a name etched in his heart. Giles and Dorey had been engaged in the early 1970s but eventually went their separate ways.

They hadn’t seen each other since their split, and Dorey had moved on to another marriage, too, which had recently ended.

Now Giles and Dorey share a home and are charting their future, together.

Giles has much to reflect on, including his financial security, which makes it possible to pursue his interests. “We are very secure in our pension. I’ve learned to be thankful for how life has treated me. You don’t have to look very hard to find people in a worse scenario than you.”

Dave Giles and his wife, Darlene, at an RTOERO event.

TIPS FROM A LIFE COACH

Sue Maitland, a B.C.-based professional life coach, has been helping people make inspired transitions for more than a decade. Here’s her advice for dealing with unexpected change:

- Give yourself time to process what’s happened. If you’re dealing with the loss of a loved one, a job or an opportunity you were hoping would materialize, understand you’ll need time to grieve.
- Recognize that advice you receive from friends and family is from their perspective, based on their experiences, beliefs and values. What they would do in your situation may not be right for you.
- Try to stay connected with others in your life who are a positive influence and can support and uplift you.
- Take time to clarify your priorities. They may be different than in the past.
- Avoid taking on lots of new commitments to fill up your time. Align new commitments with your priorities, values and interests.
- Create a vision of what you want for the next phase of your life and set one or two goals with realistic dates attached and a plan to achieve those goals.
- Appreciate that this unexpected transition presents you with a chance to make positive changes in your life. Things will be different, and after taking time to reflect and envision a new future, you may find that all kinds of new and exciting possibilities begin to open up for you.

Maitland has turned her successful one-on-one coaching program into a workshop called What’s Important to Me NOW? to help people uncover their top priorities. Learn more on her website at suemaitland.com. 🌱

what I know now

My life's journey and lessons
learned along the way

by **Bernice Marsland**
(District 37 Oxford)

A few years ago, I read a Maya Angelou quote: "When we know better, we do better."

She gave me something to think about.

The more we know, the more we grow. Sometimes that knowledge comes from an experience, other times from a thought that simmers somewhere in our subconscious and then surfaces, changing us in the process. It is a bit like struggling with the last three or four words of a crossword puzzle — eventually the answer will pop right into place as if by magic.

Children rely on intuitive wisdom; they sense danger and so — usually — make careful choices. I wonder whether kids with helicopter parents get a chance to try different things, fail or succeed, and learn to be better in some way.

Let me explain what I mean through the lens of Maya Angelou's remark.

In the 1940s and '50s, my brothers,

Glen and Fred, and I grew up on a farm in South West Oxford Township, known then as Dereham. Our parents were very busy working at least 12 hours a day, seven days a week. We crossed paths during mealtime and at the end of the day in the earlier years. The rest of the time we were free-range kids running loose everywhere and anywhere, just like the chickens in the yard.

Here are some examples of what we did that our parents either did not know about or learned about later. We loved to climb. My older brother Glen was about three when he climbed to the top of the empty silo and eventually made his way back down while adults watched in horror. I climbed up the inside of a hollow tree and carefully worked my way back down. The three of us at different times climbed up the hay chute to the window at the peak of the hip-roofed barn to see what the countryside looked like from up there. Brother Fred even brought a camera with him to take a few photos. As I recall, it was rather scary as the pieces of wood where we had to place our feet were quite a distance apart for little people. I chose wisely to never do that again.

We rode our horses bareback, unsupervised; one time my brother was found sleeping on the back of a horse after one of the many times he went missing.

There were other times we pushed our luck a bit too far and had not really thought about knowing better, even though that was in the back of our minds. After helping ourselves to the nails in Dad's garage for a building project, we got caught and learned there was a better choice. We were given permission to walk a few miles to where an old barn had collapsed to pull out reusable nails. This was one more lesson, teaching us that if you want something, you work for it.

Just after we had our first telephone installed, my brother Fred and I decided it would be fun to utter a few unsavoury words on the phone for the benefit of the folks using the party line. We were caught, spanked and sent to bed without supper. Another time, Fred and I were so very curious about what made the doll squawk that we performed surgery on her. When we discovered the cylinder in her torso, we ran excitedly to the kitchen to show Mom what we'd found. She blew (a rarity)! The doll, squawker, clothes and all were tossed into the stove and burned to cinders. This doll, among other things, would have been purchased with the egg money, so I get her disappointment.

A few years later, I was beginning to see the benefit of doing better in a kinder way. When Fred fell on the ice, I pointed at him and laughed, then suddenly felt my feet go out from under me. I fell and broke the buckle on my coat. At that moment I knew I must do better than this: Show empathy instead.

Life on a farm was a closed and sheltered environment. We weren't exposed to the outside world: I was a young adult when I learned that we were referred to as WASPs. So when a



Above: Bernice Marsland.
Top: Toddler Marsland running free on the farm.
Right: Marsland, left, with two other student teachers in 1960, the year she graduated.

self-employed man of colour arrived at our farm to do some cement work, we were dumbstruck: We had never seen anyone who looked different from us.

Mom solved that problem. She invited him to share lunchtime with us, and we learned a valuable lesson: We are all people with the same needs and goals. We are one.

This next experience is about our family tragedy. It still lives in my heart and soul and was the most impactful of all. At the end of my first week of teaching, I lost my brother Glen when he was killed on his motorcycle near Delhi, Ont. The shock and numbness were extreme. Dad and Fred came to where I boarded to break the news and take me home. When we arrived, I was shocked even further to see the community rallying around us. One lady was already at our house ironing shirts. Others sent food in abundance. Still more came and went before, during and after the funeral.

It is all a blur in my mind now, except I do remember, clearly, standing outside looking down at the ground and seeing a dandelion alive and well, looking up at me from the grass, and thinking that likely Glen saw that very same dandelion the day before.

Along with all this immediate support, I was amazed to read all the cards and letters we received in the next couple of weeks. So many people wrote thoughtfully about their wonderful memories of Glen. We were touched and never forgot all of those kind gestures and words of comfort. I do my best to reciprocate the community kindnesses in like fashion. I learned about grief and how to respond to others in similar circumstances. It is not good enough to simply add my signature to a card.

When we know better, we do better! Education combined with personal experiences should make us the kinder people we are meant to be. ☘

Off-peak, out-of-the-way Europe

Beat the summer crowds with a cosmopolitan week away – off the beaten path and off-peak season.

by **Doug Wallace**

Book one of these European hot spots before school breaks, the prices jump, the temperatures rise and the museum queues snake around the block, and enjoy sandy beaches, city promenades, hiking trails, historic landmarks or a cool combination thereof!

Český Krumlov, Czechia

The medieval Czech Republic town of Český Krumlov in South Bohemia delivers 600-year-old streets weaving around incredibly well-preserved Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque buildings. It's home to one of the most famous chateaus in Europe, complete with 40 buildings, five courtyards — and bears living in the moat.

Extracurricular: Locally, the town is noted for its water sports centred on the Vltava River. Find a rafting experience that matches your skills or opt for an evening boat tour.

Taste to try: This one's easy: boiled Czech dumplings soaked in pork gravy. Diet be damned. Try to sneak in a taste of the famous Jihočeská Niva blue cheese, too.

Bonus tip: There are a number of excellent small art galleries that aren't obvious. Google the local entertainment websites for info on current exhibitions.

CKRUMLOV.INFO

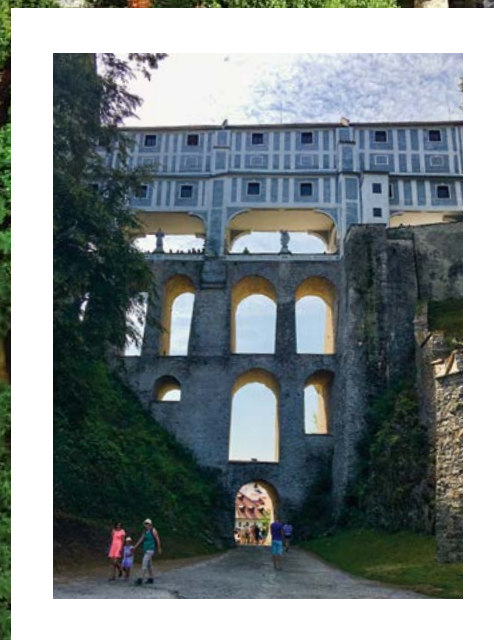


PHOTO OF CITY VIEW, MIKE SWIGUNSKI
PHOTO OF ARCHWAYS, DOUG WALLACE



PHOTO: DOUG WALLACE

Porto, Portugal

Easygoing Porto at the mouth of the Douro River is a wonderful jumble of architectural styles, ancient alleyways, colourful tiled townhouses and bright murals, almost everywhere you look. A trading hub for hundreds of years, it's easy to explore on foot, particularly the Ribeira neighbourhood.

Extracurricular: Head out of town on at least one wine tour. Plan on drinking your way around the Douro Valley, in Peso da Régua or in Vila Nova de Gaia, the hub of the port wine region.

Taste to try: Traditional *tascas* — affordable eateries that specialize in classic Portuguese cooking — yield grilled sardines, cod croquettes and incredible ham.

Bonus tip: Porto has a number of *miradouros*, little lookouts that offer incredible vistas. Check out Miradouro da Vitória, Torre dos Clérigos and Jardins do Palácio de Cristal.

[VISITPORTO.TRAVEL](#)

Cádiz, Spain

One of Europe's oldest cities, Cádiz has been a commercial hub for almost a thousand years, and was settled long before that. Its history as a naval base — for ships sailing off to “discover” North America — makes for excellent museum-going. Add in little neighbourhoods to wander through, great restaurants and plenty of acres of sand to stretch out on, and you've got a week in heaven.

Extracurricular: Getting your steps in? Easy: Climb the east tower of the Baroque-Neoclassical Catedral de Cádiz for an incredible view.

Taste to try: Pastry shops are everywhere in this town, each with its own specialty. Try the tapas dish *tortillitas de camarones* — crispy shrimp and chickpea crackers — a regional snack.

Bonus tip: Split your time between the Old City, the Playa de la Victoria strip in the “new” part of town and the secluded beaches a short drive south. They don't call it the Coast of Light for nothing.

ANDALUCIA.ORG/EN (“CÁDIZ”)



Calvi, Corsica

Summer tourism is the biggest money-maker for Calvi, a town on the northwest coast of the French island of Corsica. The population swings from 5,000 to 50,000 — ergo, you're visiting spring or fall. Outdoor sports and hiking are main attractions, with the thousand-kilometre shoreline of clear turquoise waters offering great snorkelling and scuba diving.

Extracurricular: Touring the port citadel and people-watching at the beach are must-dos, but try to take a winding drive up the mountains to the villages of Sant'Antonino, Corbara and Pigna.

Taste to try: The charcuterie and cheese here are on another plane. Corsican pork and cured meats like *coppa* and *lonzu* are island icons, particularly because the animals are fed on chestnuts. Similarly, the goat's milk cheeses are out of this world.

Bonus tip: Napoleon famously said that he could smell his homeland before he could see it. He was referring to the *maquis*: the aromatic herbs and plants — including lavender, rosemary, heather, myrtle, mint and thyme — that grow wild on the hillsides. Look for incredible essential oils in all the shops.

VISIT-CORSICA.COM

Bodrum, Turkey

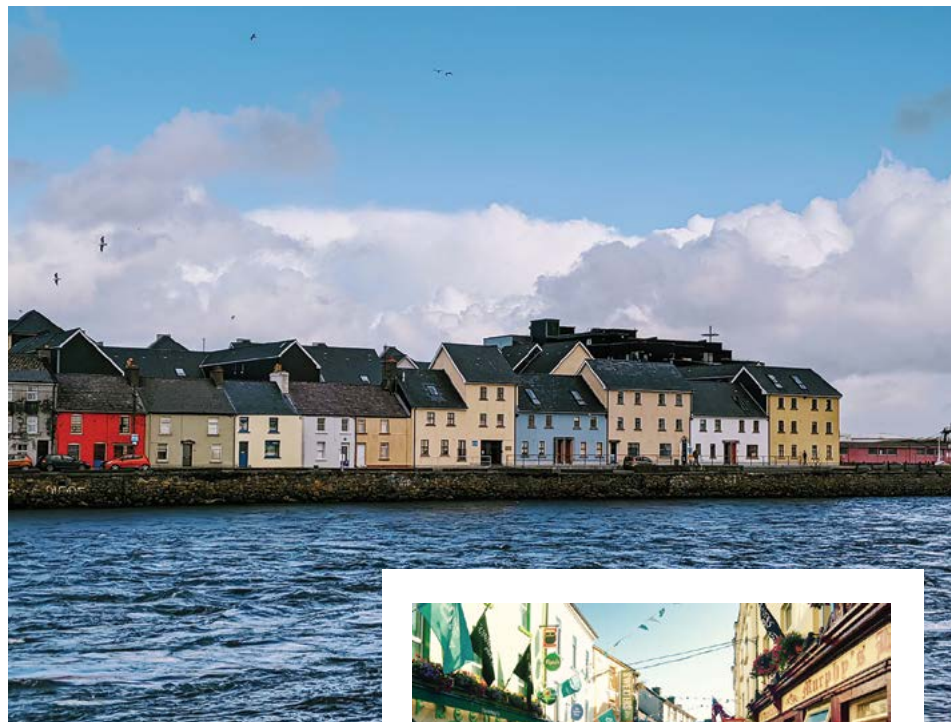
Technically not Europe but close enough, Bodrum, in the southwest corner of Turkey, sports a glistening marina, elegant boutiques and gorgeous beaches. Off-season, you get a sense of the jet-set aura here, minus the crowds.

Extracurricular: Once you're through with the courtyards, gardens and dungeons of the 15th-century Castle of St. Peter, visit the adjacent Museum of Underwater Archaeology. The tombs at the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus date from the fourth century BCE.

Taste to try: While the typical Mediterranean diet rules here, sidestep into a plate of *cokertme kebab* — marinated veal over fried potatoes with garlic yogurt.

Bonus tip: Bodrum is the gateway to other resort towns farther west. You can even take one of the ferries over to the Greek island of Kos for beach time with a different view.

ENJOY-BODRUM.COM



Galway, Ireland

This university town has a youthful, bohemian vibe yet is firmly anchored to its colourful marine heritage. A favourite of artists, poets and musicians for decades, it's chock full of busy markets, engaging galleries, great food and all the Irish folk music you can handle.

Extracurricular: Galway is one of the stops on Ireland's Wild Atlantic Way, a 2,500-kilometre driving route along the west coast from Donegal to Cork.

Taste to try: Cockles and mussels, alive, alive-o! The Galway oysters are the freshest you will ever taste. Fancy mashed potatoes? Yes, colcannon and champ is a hearty dish of potatoes with spring onions, cabbage and herbs.

Bonus tip: The Aran Islands at the mouth of Galway Bay make for a great day trip. Find historical Bronze and Iron Age forts, a 14th-century castle, the scenic Cliffs of Aran, a colony of seals and the secluded Kilmurvey Beach.

GALWAYTOURISM.IE

Where no one is left behind

“Some of the people in my travel group have mobility issues. How do I map out a hybrid itinerary that works for everybody?”



Interesting problem, and one I’m sure many of you can relate to.

Wherever you’re headed, honesty is the best policy: Talk about the getaway before you book — the activities, the route, the degree of difficulty, the inclines and the hills — so together you can design a holiday that everyone will enjoy.

Encourage the most fit of your group to do their hiking, biking and weight-lifting in the morning, working out early to get it ticked off their list. Then, they likely won’t mind coasting along with the others for the rest of the day.

You can also plan to visit attractions that offer both long and short tour-route options, or those that include trains or trolleys if some would rather ride along. For example, bring everyone to the base of the fortress, and those who want to climb to the top of the tower can, and the rest can linger with the tour guide or hit the gift shop.

Build in air-conditioning stops along the way to perk everyone up if the humidity or heat is dragging you down. As well, keep luncheon light to stave off the need to nap. Limit your excursion to four hours max.

HOW TO PICKPOCKET-PROOF YOUR VACATION

1. Carry your wallet in a front pocket, with the opening facing down. This feels bulky and looks weird, but who cares?
2. Be alert in busy areas. Pickpockets target train stations, bus stops, crowded street corners and people stopped to watch street performances.
3. Turn backpacks into frontpacks — not for the whole day, just when you’re encountering the crowds.
4. Go with a cross-body handbag, holding it under your arm with the flap facing inward. Ask yourself: Do I even need a bag? Maybe you can just stash bills and cards into secure pockets.
5. Be wary of strangers trying to divert your attention. Have your wits about you if someone tries to speak to you or brush up against you. My phone was once stolen by three people working together — one to touch my shoulder to say my bag was open (it wasn’t), a second to stealthily open my bag and steal the phone, and a third to further distract us, ironically warning me about the dangers of pickpockets in the area!
6. Speaking of phones, consider using your old one as a “burner,” with an inexpensive SIM card.
7. Report pickpocketing incidents to the police — they want to know. Authorities can only patrol areas where they know crimes are being committed.
8. Snatch-and-grabs are considered violent crimes. Just let them take what they want.



Doug Wallace
Editor & publisher,
TravelRight.Today,
and your in-the-know
friend for travel tips
and trends.

ILLUSTRATION: ZUPERIA



Sharing heritage through cooking

Passing on recipes lovingly celebrates family and culture

by **Elizabeth Baird**

THE MORRIS ORANGE CAKE

No one in the Fullarton, Ont., Morris family invented this pleasingly moist cake with an intense orange glaze, but after Jane Morris found and tried the recipe almost a century ago, it became a family classic. Her daughters and daughters-in-law continued to turn to this cake, each one writing the recipe in her personal recipe book. It became a go-to treat in the third generation's kitchens, with granddaughter Edythe Diebel, a retired kindergarten teacher in Kitchener, star baker and enthusiast.

1 navel orange, approximately
7 oz (200 g)
1 cup (250 mL) raisins
½ cup (125 mL) butter, softened
1 cup (250 mL) packed granulated
or brown sugar
2 large eggs, at room temperature
2 cups (500 mL) all-purpose flour
1 tsp (5 mL) baking powder
1 tsp (5 mL) baking soda
½ tsp (3 mL) salt
1 cup buttermilk, at room
temperature

Glaze:

½ cup (125 mL) granulated sugar
¼ cup (60 mL) orange juice

Butter 8- or 9-inch (50- or 60-cm) square metal cake pan; place oven rack in centre of oven. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C).

Scrub the orange and peel off any blemishes only – don't peel the entire orange. Cut into 8 chunks, remove seeds, and whirl orange in food processor until almost smooth, leaving bits of the peel. Add the raisins and pulse about 8 times to combine with orange; set aside.

In large bowl, beat butter and sugar until light; beat in eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. In separate bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder and soda, and salt. Using a wooden spoon, or mixer on low speed, mix flour mixture into butter mixture alternating with buttermilk, making 3 additions of dry mixture and 2 of buttermilk. Stir in orange/raisin mixture.

Scrape into prepared pan; smooth top. Bake until golden and a cake tester inserted into the centre comes out clean, about 40 minutes.

Glaze: Bring sugar and juice to a boil. Simmer until syrupy, about 3 minutes. Poke 20 holes in cake; brush syrup overtop. Let cake cool on rack.

Make-ahead: Cover and store at room temperature for a day or two. Or place cake – pieces or whole – in freezer container and freeze for up to 2 weeks. Makes 16 quite respectable pieces. Nice for brunch.

Alternate: You can replace the glaze with a dusting of icing sugar.



PORCHETTA CON PATATE (ROAST PORK AND POTATOES)

Home economist Emily Richards is an inspiring example of passing on much-loved cooking traditions. The author of the bestselling *Per La Famiglia: Memories and Recipes of Southern Italian Home Cooking*, Richards grew up in “The Soo.” Even as a young child, she helped her nonna in the kitchen, where recipes like this were passed from grandma to eager-to-learn little girl.

1/3 cup (80 mL) finely chopped parsley
6 large cloves garlic, minced
3 tbsp (45 mL) grated Parmesan cheese
5 tbsp (75 mL) extra virgin olive oil, divided
3 lb (1.4 kg) bone-in rib-end pork roast
2 lb (900 g) oval baking potatoes (6 medium-large), quartered lengthwise
1 tsp (5 mL) salt
½ tsp (3 mL) freshly ground pepper
Extra grated Parmesan

Place oven rack in bottom third of oven; heat oven to 375°F (190°C).

In medium bowl, combine the parsley, garlic, cheese and half the olive oil. Place pork roast on rack in medium-large roasting pan; rub garlic mixture all over roast.

Toss potatoes with salt, pepper and remaining oil; spread around roast. Roast for about an hour and a half to an hour and three-quarters or until thermometer inserted in centre of roast reaches 155°F (70°C) and a hint of pink remains.

Transfer roast to cutting board and let stand 5 minutes before slicing. Arrange slices on warmed platter and surround with potatoes sprinkled with extra cheese. Makes 8 servings.

Tip: Add chunks of peeled carrots or squash to the potatoes.

JAMAICAN PATTIES

When Shannon Ferrier taught family studies at Toronto's Lord Dufferin Public School, she made sure that the dishes her students cooked in class reflected the many communities that made up the student body. So it wasn't a surprise when, at a planning session, one student called out, "Mrs. Ferrier, teach us how to make Jamaican patties." A great cook and keen learner, that day she had to admit that she didn't know how. No sooner said when a second student chimed in: "My mother makes them all the time. I'll get her to write her recipe down." And she did. And the kids made – and loved – the patties. Perfect pass-along.

Pastry:

- 4 cups (1 L) all-purpose flour
- 4 tsp (20 mL) baking powder
- 2 tsp (10 mL) curry powder
- 1 tsp (5 mL) salt
- 1 tsp (5 mL) ground turmeric
- 1 1/3 cups (330 mL) cold lard or butter, cubed
- 1/2 cup (125 mL) cold butter, cubed
- 1 cup (250 mL) ice water

Curried beef filling:

- 2 tbsp (30 mL) vegetable oil
- 2 large onions, finely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 lb (900 g) lean ground beef
- 1 tbsp (15 mL) mild curry powder or paste
- 1 1/2 tsp (8 mL) salt
- 1 1/2 tsp (8 mL) dried thyme
- 1 tsp (5 mL) freshly ground pepper
- Pinch cayenne pepper
- 1 cup (250 mL) fresh bread crumbs

Pastry: In large bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, curry powder, salt and turmeric. With pastry blender, cut in lard and butter until mixture resembles fine crumbs. Pour in water, stirring with fork to make soft dough. Knead gently to pull dough together. Divide and form into two logs, each about 12 inches (30 cm) long; wrap and chill for 1 hour or up to 2 days. Let come to cool room temperature before rolling.



Curried beef filling: Meanwhile, in large heavy-bottomed pan or large deep skillet, heat oil on medium and cook onions and garlic until softened, 5 minutes. Set aside. Increase heat to high, add beef and cook, stirring to break up meat, until it's crumbly and no longer pink, 8 to 10 minutes. Spoon off fat. Stir in onion mixture, curry powder, salt, thyme, pepper and cayenne. Add 2 cups (500 mL) water and bring to a boil; reduce heat and simmer until most of the liquid is absorbed, 5 to 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Stir in breadcrumbs; cook, stirring, until mixture is no longer runny but still moist. Let cool. (Make-ahead: Refrigerate for up to 2 days.) Divide filling into 24 equal amounts.

Arrange oven racks in upper and lower third of oven. Preheat oven to 375°F (190°C).

Pastry: Cut each log into 12 equal pieces. On lightly floured counter, roll each piece, one at a time, into 6-inch (15-cm) rounds. One at a time, spoon filling onto centre of pastry. Lightly brush water in 1/2-inch (1.5-cm) border around lower edge of each round; fold over, making edges meet. Press edges together with fork. Place on baking sheets. Bake until crisp and golden brown, 25 to 30 minutes. Makes 24 patties.

Tip: You can freeze patties unbaked or baked. For a half batch of 12 patties, divide all quantities by two. Choose mild curry or spicier blends, as you like. 🌶️



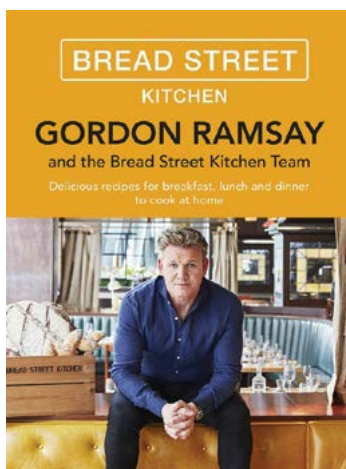
Dream Pops

Plant-based ice cream coated in chocolate!

by **Andrew Dobson**

Made-in-Canada Dream Pops, made from 100% plant-based ice cream, reimagine your favourite frozen treats, offering all the creamy taste you crave with none of the other ingredients you don't — think corn syrup, soy lecithin and artificial flavours. Each Dream Pop has fewer than 100 calories and less than five grams of sugar.

These tasty vegan bite-size treats come in a variety of flavours, including Cookie Dough, Birthday Cake, Berry Dreams, Vanilla Matcha and Chocolate Lion. dreampops.com



Gordon Ramsay Bread Street
Britain's favourite celebrity chef kicked off the year with his latest cookbook, *Gordon Ramsay Bread Street Kitchen*.

This engaging yes-you-can cookbook features 100 fresh new recipes for breakfast, lunch and dinner from the award-winning team at Bread Street Kitchen in London.

Gordon Ramsay Bread Street Kitchen is all about relaxed and sociable eating, using fresh ingredients and simple techniques, delivered with Ramsay's personal stamp so you know the dish is going to be good. chapters.indigo.ca

Hamilton Beach Electric Pasta Maker

Looking to impress guests by serving fresh homemade pasta at your next dinner party?

If you're a foodie keen to try out a new kitchen gadget, Hamilton Beach's recently launched Electric Pasta Maker is an affordable option with plenty of bells and whistles.

The easy-to-use machine prepares two to three servings of fresh pasta in 15 minutes or less, from start to pop-into-the-pot. It includes seven discs that allow you to make a variety of pasta shapes like penne, spaghetti, fettuccine, lasagna and angel hair.

An internal scale weighs ingredients and helps calculate the ideal ratio of flour to liquid.

hamiltonbeach.ca.



Ginger People

You'll always find a bottle of Fiji Organic Ginger Syrup by The Ginger People in my fridge, for good reason — versatility!

It's a creative alternative to traditional breakfast syrup and is delicious poured over stacks of pancakes, waffles, French toast or a hot bowl of oatmeal porridge.

And it's a perfect substitute for cocktail recipes calling for simple syrup, salad dressing requiring honey, or as a sweetener for tea or coffee.

gingerpeople.com/products/organic-ginger-syrup



Humble Potato Chips

Humble Potato Chips, certified organic, are cooked with their skins on — tastier and zero waste. They're not batch cooked; rather, they're cooked in the traditional way, on a conveyor belt, using a light, high-oleic, organic sunflower oil. And now, this sustainable Canadian brand sells the crispy chips in certified plastic-free, compostable bags.

Pop open a bag of The Original, Sea Salt & Cider Vinegar, Smoky BBQ, Creamy Dill or Honey Mustard. humblechips.ca

PHOTOS, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT, COURTESY OF DREAM POPS; COURTESY OF HAMILTON BEACH; COURTESY OF THE GINGER PEOPLE

It's easy drinking green

Celebrate spring – with a nod to Earth Day – with these eco-friendly options

by **Charlene Rooke**



Located in Prince Edward County, Wilda makes low-alcohol, “bee-friendly natural spritzers” with real juice in flavours like Cherry, Cucumber & Lime, Blueberry & Lavender, and Lemon & Ginger.

Drinks that love the planet

Nova Scotia’s L’Acadie Vineyards has been an organic pioneer since 2005. B.C. wineries La Stella, Le Vieux Pin, Stag’s Hollow, Tantalus and Tighrope are certified sustainable, as are two dozen Ontario wineries (see sustainablewinegrowingontario.ca).

In Ontario, Vodkow vodka is distilled from waste-product milk permeate, and King’s Lock Craft Distillery uses 100 per cent green energy. Nova Scotia’s

Ironworks Distillery saves 50,000 litres of water a year through heat-recovery and other practices. In the West, farm-to-flask distilleries, from Black Fox in Saskatchewan to Shelter Point and DeVine on Vancouver Island, operate on a sustainable-agriculture model.

ArBru in Mallorytown, Ont., is Canada’s first entirely solar-powered brewery, and Karbon Brewing Co. in Toronto is striving to become the country’s first carbon-neutral brewery by 2024. Persephone Brewing, located on a farm on B.C.’s Sunshine Coast, is a B Corp (a global sustainability certification) company, as is Ontario’s Beau’s — its Local Organic is Canada’s only certified organic and carbon-neutral brew.



From trash to treasure

While working in the U.K., Toronto bartender Kelsey Ramage became a global pioneer in cocktail and bar sustainability. Her Trash Collective consultancy is known for upcycling food waste into “citrus stock,” a sour solution that lasts in the freezer for months. Use it to replace the combination of simple syrup and fresh citrus juice in almost any cocktail!

Citrus Stock by the Trash Collective (thetrashcollective.com)

- 6 cups (1.5 L) water
- 2.2 lbs (1 kg) citrus husks (rinds left over from juicing lemons, limes, oranges, grapefruits)
- 1/3 cup (80 mL) white sugar
- 4 tsp (20 mL) citric acid*
- 2 tsp (10 mL) malic acid*

In a large pot, boil water. Add citrus husks, cover pot and boil for 5 minutes. Remove from heat and squeeze citrus husks with tongs before removing from pot. Return liquid to boiling and reduce to 1 litre in volume. Add sugar and acid powders, stirring until dissolved. Remove from heat and cool. Seal in freezer-safe bottles or jars, and refrigerate for up to 3 days or freeze for several months, thawing as needed. Use to replace simple syrup and citrus juice in cocktail recipes.

*Citric acid is available at Bulk Barn and many grocery stores, especially during canning season. Malic acid is available from home-brewing stores, or find both powders online at amazon.ca. ☞

My mom remembered

Sometimes, the best lessons aren't learned at school

by Terry Chattington (District 8 London, Middlesex), as told to **Martin Zibauer**



Left: Nellie and her brother Jimmy in France, 1916 or 1917.
Right: Nellie with Terry's father, Clarence Chattington.



“My mother, Nellie, had little education. But the life lessons she taught my siblings and me shaped us as much as, or more than, our schooling did, I think.

“Mom was born in 1914, north of Paris, and some of her earliest memories were of the First World War. ‘I can remember the many nights we had to spend in our dirt cellar,’ she wrote in a memoir letter many, many years later, ‘with food and candles and a pick and shovel, for we never knew if the next day we would find ourselves buried alive.’

“In 1922, the family of four — my mother and her brother Jimmy; her father, who was English; and her mother — sailed to New York, and then took the train to Montreal. Six months later, they took another train west. My grandmother missed her sister, who lived in Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan, but I think if my great-aunt had told them the truth about the life they faced, they would have never chosen to come. It took a week for the family to get from North Battleford to Meadow Lake by horse and wagon, in minus-40-degree weather.

“Eventually, my granddad obtained some land and built a log shack, filling the cracks with mud and laying sod on the roof. Apparently my grandmother cried and cried because she really wanted to go back to France, but they had used up all their money to get to Saskatchewan.

“Children are good at adapting to the environment they grow up in. I don't know many people, though, who could do what my mother did to survive, especially at such a young age. She had a trapline, which she travelled along by dogsled, and she skinned the animals she caught. Because she didn't have socks, she wrapped rags around her feet. She writes about collecting what she called ‘Sinacaroot’ — or Seneca root, a plant used to make iodine — and selling it for four cents a pound. Later she helped her brother saw log timbers and build a barn.

“My mother only really had a Grade 3 education. When she arrived in Saskatchewan as an eight-year-old, she only spoke French. The first day she went to school, everyone spoke

“The first day she went to school, everyone spoke English and she couldn’t understand anybody. She told me she got back on her horse and went home.”

Terry Chattington



Above, Terry Chattington.
Right, Nellie Chattington.

English and she couldn’t understand anybody. She told me she got back on her horse and went home.

“Mom had a mind of her own. She was, in a way, confident in her abilities to sew, make clothing for her growing family and cook. She could make a meal out of almost anything, although I do recall that we ate a lot of bread pudding. She later became a nurse’s aide, which was hard work and a real accomplishment.

“But that lack of formal education always bothered her. I remember once showing her how to use the phone book. She took notes about how to find numbers. She could have done well in school, but not having access to the kind of education that we now take for granted affected her confidence and her self-image.

“Mom wasn’t what you would call religious, but she believed in God and made sure that we went to Sunday school. She was ethical — there was no arguing with her: Right was right and wrong was wrong. She made sure that we behaved ourselves. When we got out of line, she would let us know what

she thought; at one point she chased me around the house with a broom and poked me as I hid under a bed.

“My mother’s independence and self-confidence always belied her feeling of inadequacy when it came to reading, mathematics and book learning. She was a natural when it came to writing, and in another life probably could have authored some interesting stories. She was plain-spoken and sincere. There wasn’t a mean or phoney part of her personality.

“I taught for 26 years, in a wide variety of subject areas that I wasn’t necessarily a specialist in. Some of that flexibility comes from seeing my mother tackle so many challenges head-on.

“Schools are excellent at teaching all sorts of skills. But some of life’s most important lessons aren’t learned in the classroom: strength, ingenuity, resilience, ability to adapt to new circumstances as they come your way.

“My mom taught us all that and more, and I am forever grateful.”



HOW I MET YOUR DAD

By Nellie Chattington, in her own words

"Your dad and I lived on two different farms. Your dad wanted to become a boxer, so he stayed with my dad to learn how. Anyways, my dad did not tell him that he had a 19-year-old daughter, but one day, your dad brought his two horses to water at our well, for his had gone dry. So this one day I see this guy coming to our well, for I was already there pulling water for our cattle. I had a pail at the end of a rope and let it down through a small hole and lowered the pail about 20 feet. Anyways, here was your dad with these two horses, and I remember being so embarrassed, for I was wearing an old coat down to my rubber boots, with no makeup and my hair in

little curls all over. He says he took to me that day, and after he left I said to myself, *It would be funny if he became my husband.* So that was our first visit. But to go out with your dad, I had to get rid of another boyfriend that I happened to go with at the time. That's always hard to do, for you hate hurting anybody's feelings. So that is when we started dating, for he was at our place nearly every day. We went together three months. My mother was pushing me to get married, for she was afraid something would happen, and also I was losing my reputation, for she's always so scared about what the people would say.

"And so we did get married." 🍷

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PHOTO, COURTESY OF TERRY CHATTINGTON

Spring clean your finances

Six ways to make sure you're on the right track

by **Lesley-Anne Scorgie**



Tidying up our home and garden, getting rid of stuff we no longer use and welcoming spring as a fresh start is rejuvenating.

But don't limit spring cleaning to your home, garden or closet! Your finances could use a refresh, too.

1. Dust off important paperwork that's been used to prop up your laptop and tiny succulent the past three years. Review your will to ensure it's up to date and truly reflects your wishes. Chances are, if you've had a major life change, it needs to be updated. Review your life, disability and critical illness insurance as well as your home and auto insurance. Your needs can change from year to year and your policies become outdated. Now, file these documents away in a place you (and your family) will remember.

2. Take the time to go through your home, room by room, and get specific about what you don't need anymore – and sell it. There are many location-based, popular buy-and-sell apps (for larger items like furniture, too) like VarageSale. Take gently used clothing and shoes to a consignment shop. Or post your items, including electronics, for sale through Facebook Marketplace or Kijiji. Donate or recycle leftover items. With what you make, you can pay down debt, save or give some money away.

3. It's a couple months into the year, so take a look at your spending habits. Does your budget now include unplanned increases? If yes, now's the time to adjust for those. Or, if you've seen a decrease in expenses in certain categories of spending, reallocate some of those extra dollars to your savings goals.

4. While not everyone has a green thumb, growing your own herbs inside, in small pots, is fairly easy and can save you in the long run. Start by figuring out which herbs you use most often, and then get planting. And, if you have a garden, consider planting vegetables to offset high grocery costs.

5. The market has been unpredictable, and this calls for extra vigilance around monitoring your investment performance. How strong are your long-term returns (seven to 10 years)? Over many decades and market cycles, the markets have appreciated between six and 10 per cent. Are you stacking up? Next, take a look at your fees. Common fees are management and trading fees, but there can be others. Anything under one per cent is very inexpensive. And if your fees creep over 2.25 per cent, they are on the higher end of the spectrum. Now put the two pieces together. The sweet spot is when you achieve at least on-par market performance with below-average fees.

6. Live with fewer things. Fewer, more streamlined accounts, with fewer, better banks, for example, or doing fewer, more fulfilling activities, make your home and head feel cleaner and clearer, reduce environmental waste, and spur on feelings of gratitude for what you do have. And living less-is-more can have a positive effect on your finances. And interestingly, research also shows that organized people simply have more money. 🌸



With age comes wisdom

What is the most surprising thing you've discovered about life as you get older?

Life is full of surprises. Use each surprise to live a better day.

Bill Doyle (District 14 Niagara)

I have more strength and value than I thought.

Edna Konrad (District 7 Windsor-Essex)

What we know is important, and what we understand is significantly more important.

Richard Goodbrand (District 31 Wellington)

Every day is always a good day.

Brock Robinson (District 4 Sudbury, Manitoulin)

It doesn't matter at what age you fall in love, it always makes you feel like you are 18 again!

Cindy Ranieri (District 34 York Region)

Don't worry about what others think of you. They are more interested in what others think of them.

Deborah Rodaway (District 14 Niagara)

Living with parts that are past their best-before date.

Donald Joe Irvine (District 27 Ottawa-Carleton)

Democracy requires diligent and courageous citizens.

Douglas Martin (District 2 Thunder Bay)

Lots of things that I used to care about don't bother me anymore. I don't need makeup or fancy clothes. I only need to be myself and laugh every day. And be grateful for every sunrise and sunset and the beauty of birdsong or a friend who smiles and enjoys my company!

Vivienne Young (District 9 Huron-Perth)

That most problems resolve themselves. Today is the tomorrow you worried about yesterday.

Esther Mair (District 16 City of Toronto)

No one can make me feel or do something I don't choose to feel or do. A true understanding of this brings much greater peace.

Gloria Darroch (District 47 Vancouver Island)

Each stage in life is a great adventure. I was fearful of moving on to a new stage, but I didn't need to be.

Karen Bimm (District 17 Simcoe County)

That I'm not as nice as I thought I was!

Kathryn Derby (District 20 Frontenac, Lennox & Addington)

I have discovered how little I know the older I get.

Rosemarie Walsh (District 14 Niagara)

One tends to outgrow some friends whom one thought were "bosom buddies."

Edna Baker-Graf (District 23 North York)

The shift from being certain about things to being uncertain, and being OK with that.

Susan HooKong-Taylor (District 16 City of Toronto)

I just don't care what people think, so I will do what I want and not worry about it.

Terry Hamilton (District 11 Waterloo Region)

I don't need to worry about every detail and everyone's problems. Things will eventually work out — maybe not for the best, but it will be completed.

Pauline Brown (District 31 Wellington)

I have learned I'm actually an extrovert, NOT an introvert!

Theresa Tasse (District 43 Nipissing)

I have a voice. Everything can be solved peacefully. People don't really want to hurt each other.

Sharon MacNeice (District 34 York Region)

The belief that you are in control of your own destiny is a myth!

Phyllis Lanham (District 18 Haliburton, Kawartha Lakes)



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