

# STONY Bridges

November 2023 | Issue 139

## belonging

*2 Choirs! Seniors and Music  
Sojourn in Sorrento  
Have-a-Java  
Nordic Pole Walking*



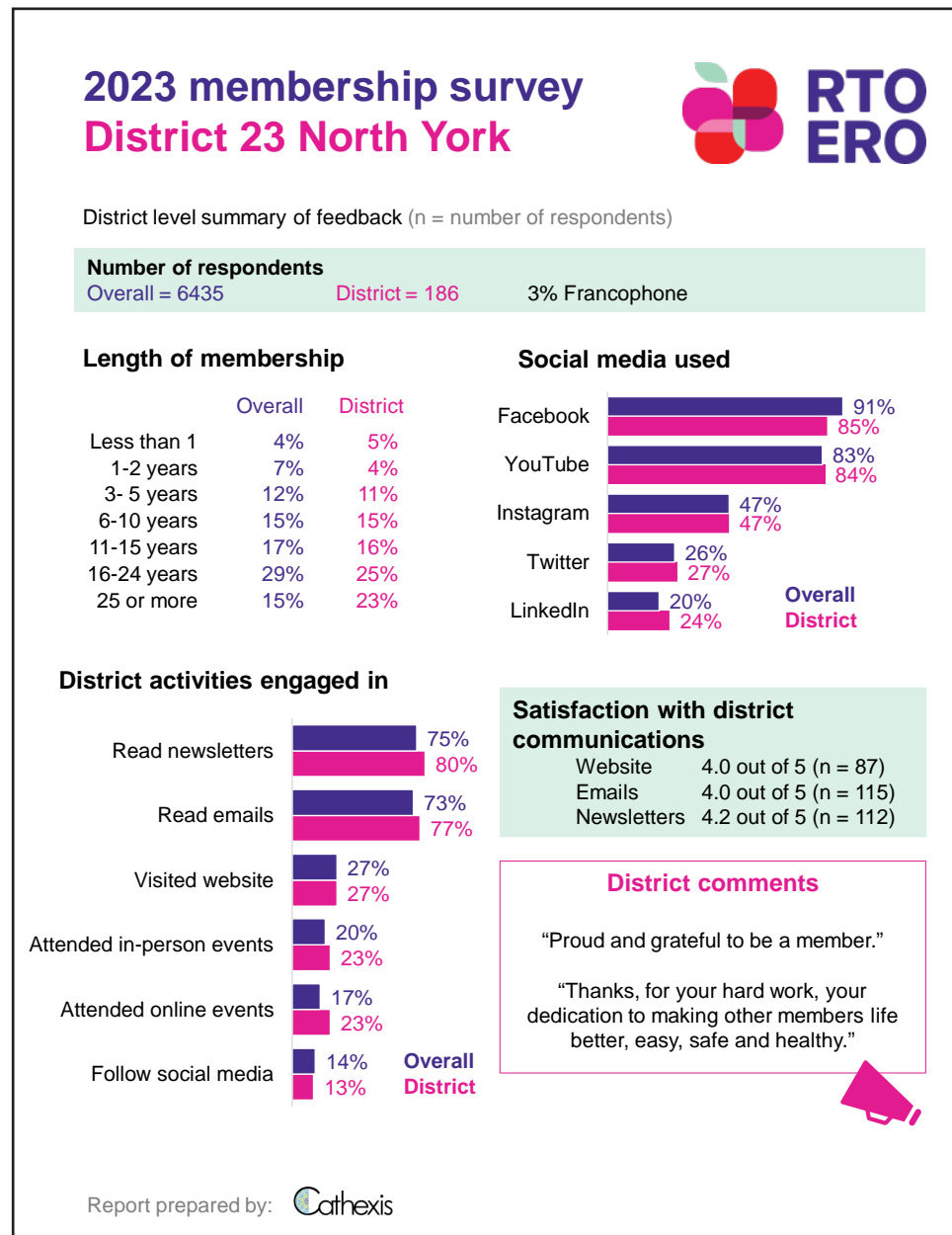
**RTO  
ERO**

District 23  
North York

<https://district23.rtoero.ca>



# District 23, North York's Membership Survey Results



We are excited to share with you the insights that have emerged from the 2023 RTOERO member survey for District 23. Your feedback is the cornerstone of our commitment to continuous improvement. The results give us an understanding of your preferences. We learned how many of you use social media, read our newsletters and emails, visit our website, attend events in person and online, and how

satisfied you are with the district's communication to its members. Your participation has been invaluable, and it is our pleasure to provide you with a snapshot of the survey results. In the graph you can compare our District's percentages to those of RTOERO overall. Thank you for being an integral part of District 23.

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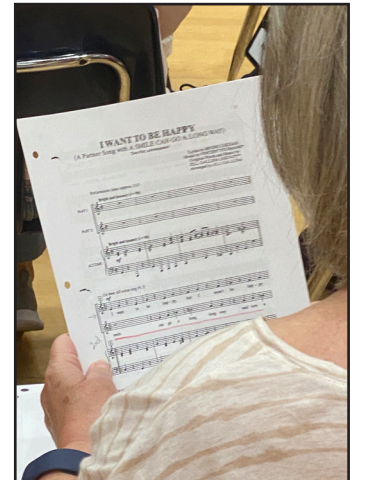


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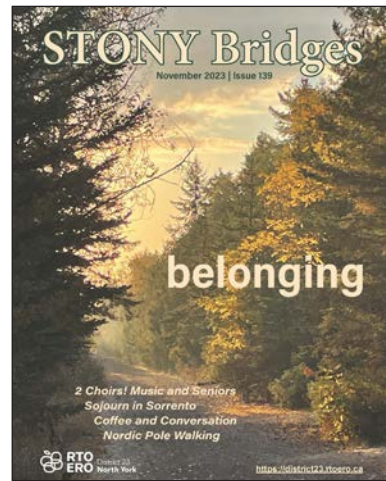




# From the Editors

by Maureen Capotosto, Valerie Sterling and Jane Matthews

We are thrilled to present to you the latest edition of STONY Bridges, your District 23 world of captivating activities, experiences and features. Whether you are a longtime reader or a first-time explorer of STONY, we welcome you to embark on a journey of discovery and engagement.



Whether you are involved a lot or a little, you know that you belong to a very special organization. That's why we chose *belonging* as the theme for issue 139. In RTOERO's vision statement, four of the seven key values are: community connection, inclusion, service to members and well-

being. Belonging underpins each one of those and is woven throughout the articles in this issue of STONY. We hope you find inspiration and connection.

Before the ink was dry on this issue, we were already planning issue 140, due to arrive in your mailbox in March 2024. The theme will be *healing* and that was chosen based on two of RTOERO's advocacy themes: geriatric healthcare and environmental stewardship. There are many other approaches to the topic of healing and we welcome your comments and contributions. If you would like to write a response to the question, "What does healing mean for you?" in 100 words or less, we will create a page of your collective thoughts on the topic.

Now, flip through these pages, mark your calendars, and get ready to embark on a journey of discovery and fulfillment. Let STONY be your guide to wellness, connection, and knowledge.

Thank you for being a part of our vibrant community. We look forward to sharing this incredible journey with you.

## Submissions Guidelines

STONY Bridges is published for and by its members in March, August, and November by RTOERO District 23, North York.

We welcome submissions from members for inclusion in your magazine. Do you have a passion you'd like to share with our readers? Your voice matters, and we're here to amplify it. Consider submitting your work for publication.

Contributions may range from less than 100 to a maximum of 1000 words in length. If you would like to include digital images, we need to have permission from the copyright holder before we can publish them. For images showing people, we need a release from each individual.

We reserve the right to edit, condense or reject submissions. See the full guidelines: <https://tinyurl.com/RTO23guidelines>

Please send submissions to: Maureen Capotosto at [mpcapotosto@sympatico.ca](mailto:mpcapotosto@sympatico.ca).

The theme for the next issue, coming out in March 2024, will be Healing. The due date for material is Monday, January 15, 2024.

**Make Sure You Stay Connected**  
 If your contact information changes, please notify the RTOERO office to continue receiving the communications you expect from us.  
 Phone: 416-962-9463 or 1-800-361-9888  
 Email: [membership@rto-ero.org](mailto:membership@rto-ero.org)  
 e-Newsletters are emailed to our registered members before the beginning of each month, September to June. As needed, new issues may be sent out during July and August.  
 e-Newsletters may also be sent when events are updated, new activities are added or important information from RTOERO needs to be shared.  
 If you are a member of District 23, North York but are not currently registered for your monthly e-Newsletters, please contact Karen Quinn at [kquinn56@gmail.com](mailto:kquinn56@gmail.com)

# From the Presidents

by Sara Di Nallo, Sylvia Skippen, Sandra Fillicetti, Maureen Capotosto

Belonging is what we are all about. District 23, North York places a high value on our members finding a sense of belonging in the district's activities and events. We want you to feel accepted, included, and proud of the values and purpose of RTOERO. Engage in an activity or participate by attending our events. We strive to create a sense of acceptance and inclusion for each member. Your effort to connect with others can renew friendships or create new ones. It's a safe place to move into belonging with others who have shared experiences or open you to new insights and adventures.



At a recent Have-a-Java, one member ran into a former teacher; another met their colleague from years before and a third member, chatting with someone they hadn't seen for 25 years, learned about a reliable place to have her sewing machine serviced.

In the Needlework & Crafts group, there are members who contribute charity items they knit at home with yarn provided by the group. Opportunities abound!

Say yes to these opportunities to connect with others for your (and their) well-being and mental health. What else could District 23 do to make members feel more like they belong? Please let us know.



# New Members

by John Giannone

The Executive welcomes all the members listed below who have recently joined RTOERO District 23, North York and invites them to participate in all our activities.

As of September 30, 2023, RTOERO D23 has a total membership of 2722 including 57 actively employed members. The members below joined between June 1, 2023 and September, 30 2023.

## June 2023

- Anna Arciero
- Frank Aziz
- Maria Bernardi
- Anna Bonanno-Sofras
- Elaine Brooks
- Christine Calhoun
- Elaine Caruso-Muccin
- Dana Cohen
- Steve Filice
- Lorna Hogg
- Glen Holmes
- Carol Klarman
- Maria Koczkodaj
- David McMullan
- Annemarie Muir
- Amerigo Panici
- Barbara Pocock
- Hardy Pohani
- Mary Jean Ricci
- Janice Roe-Coles
- Bracha Sabari
- Carol Ann Slipetz
- Kelly Weaver
- Nancy Zia

## July 2023

- Tania Di Zio
- Sandra Filicetti
- Allen Himelfarb

## Kari Hudson

- Linda Kremer
- Elizabeth Lau
- Liliana Lunetta
- Thomas Thompson
- Parvine Yaltchi
- Lynda Yielding

## August 2023

- Wayne Allen
- Janet Byford
- Alison Covert
- Barbara Hodge
- Bogdan Marzewski
- Lyne Monkhouse
- Antonia (Joanne)Palermo
- Alberto Sasson
- Carol Scaini
- Benjamin Schtang
- Morden Shapiro
- Melvin Wasserman

## September 2023

- Nita Cohen
- Sandra Fraleigh
- Donna Gustafson
- Louisa Ng
- Carolyn O'Malley
- Doreen Pierini
- Lena Pletsch



# Benefits – Fall 2023

by Gwen Scriven, Benefits Convener



**You have given our insurance plans very strong ratings!**

The RTOERO Membership Feedback Report for 2023 gives us insight into our health plans. This report is based on your survey responses. Eighty-five percent (85%) of RTOERO members subscribe to RTOERO Insurance Plans. Your satisfaction has increased with all health plans in 2023 compared to 2021. Eighty-four percent (84%) agree there is a good balance between coverage benefits and affordability. Over seventy percent (70%) recommend maintaining the current plans with minimal increases. You have given the insurance booklet a 4.5\* rating.

## It's a matter of eligibility!

Here are some commonly asked questions and answers regarding eligibility for our insurance plans.

### If a retired teacher wants to switch from RTIP Health coverage to RTOERO, is a medical exam required?

No, a medical questionnaire is not required to switch from RTIP to RTOERO.

### I am covered under a group plan with my spouse's employer. Can I apply for couple coverage under the RTOERO Group Insurance Plans and coordinate the benefits between both insurance plans?

Yes. You can apply for couple coverage under the

RTOERO Group Insurance Plans and coordinate your benefits with your spouse's group plan to ensure you receive the maximum reimbursement from your claim.

### My spouse and I are both independently eligible for coverage with RTOERO. Is it possible to coordinate benefits within the RTOERO policy?

Coordination of benefits within the RTOERO plan is not possible. However, benefits may be coordinated between RTOERO and another insurance plan.

### Will coverage be continued for my spouse and dependent children upon my death?

Yes. Coverage can be continued for your spouse and dependent children following your death, provided they are already enrolled at that time in the RTOERO Group Insurance Plans; they continue to qualify for coverage, and premiums continue to be paid.

### Can I cover my spouse and dependent(s) only? I have full dentures and do not want dental coverage for myself.

Provided the RTOERO member, as the primary participant, is enrolled in at least one plan, the spouse/dependent may enroll in another plan independent of the member.

### Getting the full benefit of your insurance coverage

As your Benefits representative, I am frequently asked: "My claim for .... has been denied! What should I do?"

I recommend the following steps:

- Understand why the claim has been denied. The reason is indicated on the response form from the insurance company.
- Check your coverage in your Entente booklet. <https://rtoero.ca/insurance-plans-booklet-flipbook/>
- If you believe the claim is covered under our policy, always follow up with a phone call to Johnson or Global Excel. They are there to assist you. You may be surprised at the results of a simple phone call.

# District 23 Website? What's in it for me?

by Mervyn Mascarenhas, Webmaster & X (formerly Twitter) Admin

*"If you don't know history, then you don't know anything. You are a leaf that doesn't know it is part of a tree."*

- Michael Crichton

### Where did I save that email? Or did I delete it? Who do I call for a copy?

I am sure that these questions have popped up in your mind from time to time as you frantically look for information that you urgently need just as you are about to drive off to the appointment you are late for.

Thankfully, if it is related to RTOERO District 23, North York, the answer can usually be found on our website.

<https://district23.rtoero.ca>

We try hard to make it the one-stop place for all information related to District 23. We do not duplicate information on the parent RTOERO website but make navigation a seamless experience.

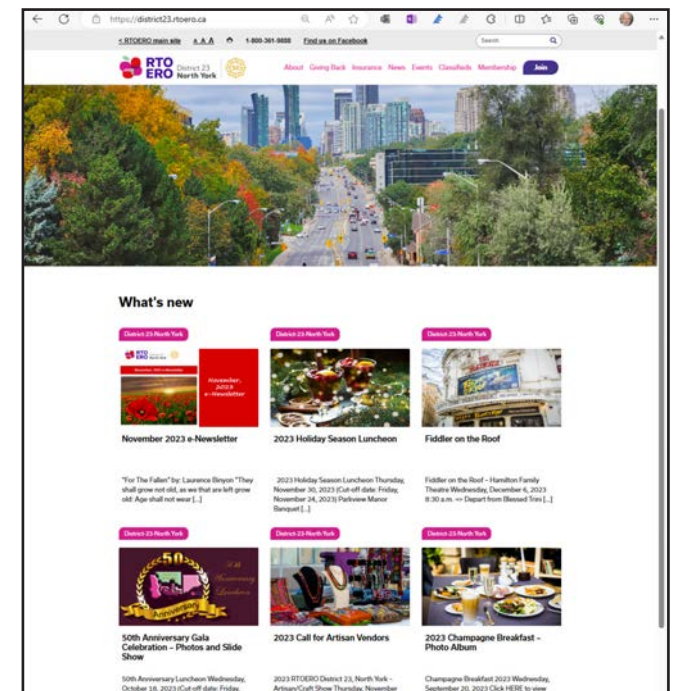
While we dabbled with online event registration and payment over the past year, we have placed a moratorium on that practice until we resolve issues.

Meanwhile, events are posted on the website with fillable PDF forms that can be completed on your device, printed and sent with a cheque to the event coordinator. You do not need to tear out registration forms from STONY to complete them.

On our website, we post:

- Contact information for executive members
- STONY Bridges – electronic versions of current and past editions
- eNewsletters – current and past editions
- Monthly calendar of events
- Web archives
- Annual reports
- Community Service Projects
- Presentations (slide decks and videos)
- List of executive members – past and present

- Historical information
- Photographs of events
- Technical resources



The website also has powerful search functionality.

## Death of Blue Bird

On July 23, 2023, Twitter was suddenly rebranded to X by its quirky owner, Elon Musk. Twitter CEO Linda Yaccarino said, "X is the future state of unlimited interactivity – centred in audio, video, messaging, payments/banking – creating a global marketplace for ideas, goods, services, and opportunities." That's a pretty tall order.

As we wait for X to unfold, we continue to use it to notify our members about District 23 breaking news and provide a curated stream of content related to us – senior issues, geriatric healthcare, environmental stewardship, and pedagogy.



# Retiring Happy

by Anne Marum, Convener

With over 80,000 members across Canada, RTOERO is the largest national non-profit group health insurance provider for education retirees. Our group plans are member-owned and run, therefore RTOERO's top priority is you and your well-being.



Our members come from the broader education community. Whether you are already retired, preparing for retirement, or it is years away, there is a place for you at RTOERO. The organization will support you with the best comprehensive insurance plan; provide you with generous member perks

and, numerous opportunities to participate in social activities, volunteering and much more.

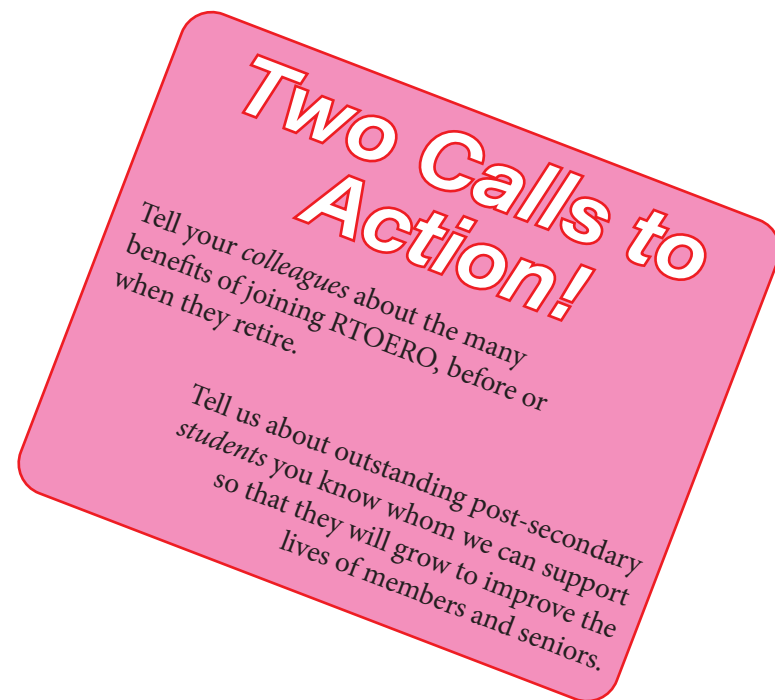
I echo Mary Valtellini's challenge to the attendees at the recent Champagne Breakfast, calling on all members of District 23 "... tell at least one person to come and find out more about RTOERO."

Those working in education can attend a free retirement planning workshop in your area and learn what you need to know, connect with peers at the same stage as you and walk away with answers, resources, and clarity on your next steps.

The comprehensive session covers what you need to know to prepare for retirement

- Benefits of activating your free RTOERO membership while they are still employed
- Planning for your financial future
- Your pension
- Health benefit for retirees, including the advantages of group insurance
- How RTOERO benefit plans can help secure your future
- Retirement insights from your peers

To reserve a spot: <https://rtoero.ca/events/search-for-a-workshop-near-you/>



# Recommend Students for Scholarships

by RTOERO

RTOERO believes in the power of our community to secure a better future, and we are committed to helping secure better futures for students, for each other, and for seniors in Canada. One of the ways we work towards achieving this goal is through our post-secondary scholarship program, established with reference to our strategic goal: To improve the lives of members and seniors.

This year, RTOERO is awarding 20 scholarships valued at \$3000 each to post-secondary (college or university) students enrolled in programs that lead to careers in either seniors' health and wellbeing, education, environmental stewardship; or that reflect a strong commitment to diversity, equity and/or inclusion.

RTOERO members are encouraged to recommend students in their lives, including family members, who meet the criteria.

Applications are due by January 13, 2023.

For more information, contact [scholarship@rtoero.ca](mailto:scholarship@rtoero.ca)

# How To Be a Changemaker - Advice from a Career Activist

from RTOERO, News You Can Use



Many of us want to create change in our communities and beyond, but we get stuck on the how. The issues seem too big. Systems are too confusing. And cynicism feels rampant.

But there's a path forward. The following considerations are from Dave Meslin, best-selling author of *Teardown: Rebuilding Democracy from the Ground Up*, who offered guidance to RTOERO members and guests as part of the Vibrant Voices advocacy webinar series.

**Change is possible and takes time.** Throughout history, humans have imagined what's possible and pushed for change. You can, too.

**Start local.** Municipal change can be a catalyst for provincial and federal change.

**Narrow your focus and make sure you care about the issue.** Advocacy is a marathon, not a sprint. Focus on something you're passionate about.

**Start small and build an inventory of victories.** "Take on something that seems small and winnable. Win that. And then do something more ambitious."

**Make it fun.** The best way to harness people power is to make sure it's fun.

Watch Dave cover these five considerations and four more on RTOERO's YouTube: [youtu.be/vXoqnoa\\_YsS](https://youtu.be/vXoqnoa_YsS)

Highlights from the talk are also available on RTOERO's blog at [rtoero.ca/how-to-be-a-changemaker-advice-from-a-career-activist](https://rtoero.ca/how-to-be-a-changemaker-advice-from-a-career-activist). The full webinar recording is available on RTOERO Learning: [rtolearning.rtoero.ca](https://rtolearning.rtoero.ca)





## 2Choirs! Seniors and Music

District 23's Community Service Project - 2023 - 2024

Community grants are designed to encourage all CRTOERO Districts to support and partner with local organizations to promote projects that will help our organization meet our strategic goals of improving the lives of members and seniors, being the trusted voice for the broader education communities and broadening our membership base. Since the inception of this grant 24 years ago, District 23 has successfully received grants for numerous projects.

This year, we are supporting The Choralairs of North York and the McConaghy Centre Seniors' Choir with grants of \$2000 each. The objective of this project is to augment the sheet music available to the choirs with inclusive material representing the community. In addition, some needed equipment, such as music stands, will be purchased.

Both choirs focus on welcoming seniors. Read about each of the choirs in the articles below.



Maureen Capotosto presents cheques to Jessica Kun of the McConaghy Seniors' Centre Choir and Yorum Beer of the Choralairs of North York.

## The Choralairs - Sharing the Gift of Music and Connection with Seniors

by Yoram Beer, President of the Choralairs

The Choralairs of North York, commonly called "The Choralairs," are a source of joy, comfort, and connection within our community. With a heartfelt focus on bringing music to seniors, this choir creates beautiful harmonies that resonate within the hearts of all who listen.



This choir is a testament to the idea that music is a universal language. Comprised mostly of senior members, the Choralairs have cultivated an environment where everyone is welcome and every voice matters. Their weekly rehearsals are designed with seniors in mind, offering listening tracks that provide a lifeline to those with visual impairments and a way for those with cognitive or memory concerns to continue learning and singing.



Accessibility isn't just a buzzword for the Choralairs; it's a guiding principle that allows all members to shine. During rehearsals, the choir's conductors utilize wireless microphones to ensure that every member fully immerses themselves in the music. The keyboard's volume is thoughtfully adjusted to cater to those with auditory sensitivities.

The wheelchair-accessible rehearsal venue, located in the heart of North York (Finch Avenue between Yonge and Bathurst), has plenty of parking at a TTC stop. Furthermore, the choir encourages and helps arrange carpooling for rehearsals and concerts. We know that transportation can be a challenge for seniors, but this choir has it covered, ensuring the love of music remains accessible to all.

Beyond their rehearsals, the Choralairs are known for their captivating performances in retirement residences, long-term care facilities, and a public concert to end their season. Sometimes, additional musical instruments are used, and small groups perform. Through these concerts, they can bring their little magic to enliven the seniors' daily routine. The choir's music reconnects seniors to some of the happy times in their lives, evoking smiles, sometimes tears, and bringing back cherished memories. In addition, the choir's camaraderie and warmth extend out to the audience.

The Choralairs are not just about singing; they are about touching hearts. They are about creating a shared experience transcending age, background, and circumstance. They are about

bringing joy to those who may have felt forgotten or alone. The Choralairs' primary focus is on sharing the gift of music and the warmth of human connection. New members are welcomed each September and January, providing an opportunity to everyone who yearns for the healing power of song and the shared moments of harmony that can bring us all closer together.

The Choralairs of North York are more than a choir; they are a conduit for emotions, a beacon of hope, and a testament to the enduring power of music to heal, connect, and uplift. In their melodies, they find purpose, and in their audiences, they find kindred spirits. Together, they create a harmonious tapestry of human connection that is a testament to the enduring spirit of community and the joy of music.

If you would like to learn more, visit [Choralairs.com](http://Choralairs.com), email [choralairs@gmail.com](mailto:choralairs@gmail.com), or call 647-692-9213.





# The Cherry on Top

by Dr. Jessica V. Kun, Conductor of the McConaghy Centre Seniors' Choir

What a magical gift to be able to communicate to people, through people, the music that initially lived in a composer's imagination. A lifetime of study, practice, and a long run of living my dream of being a conductor came to a halt when the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020. After a year of trying to make music through a computer, I lost hope of possibly conducting it again. As the magic was vanishing, I struggled with the daily observation of a devolution of society and heartbreak that people in my community were passing away because they were giving up on life. In the second year of waiting for the "new normal", I decided to help people, in any way I could, to get out of their homes, loneliness, isolation, and lack of things to do, especially in areas that are at the heart of being human.



Last summer, I was offered a job to conduct a 55+ choir in my community. I was skeptical about a few things, particularly the idea of putting seniors (the most vulnerable) together, singing, and breathing air in a room, with COVID constantly skulking for new victims. However, I knew this was a massive opportunity for the health and wellness of anyone who wanted to gather to make music together.

I was not interested in leading just another community choir. If I was going to do this, I wanted to bring these folks into the 21st Century and provide a balance of challenge and success, to cover a massive range of musical taste, build a strong team, and an opportunity

for them to share their love of music in a way that they would be proud of. But, first and foremost, it all had to happen in a healthy, positive environment fostering self-expression, teamwork, and opportunity to connect. So, I accepted the post and pitched the idea to the group of folks who showed up to a gathering to hear about potentially re-launching the McConaghy Centre Seniors Choir for the first time in two years. I was astonished that they were interested in my notion of a 21st-century performance paradigm for their choir. After the terrible years of isolation and listening to the universe cry, I knew this was the right place to make a more meaningful difference in the community.

The first challenge was to choose repertoire for a choir of singers and "singers" that range from complete novices in singing and reading music to some with years of experience in choirs at all levels, some who are fine musicians of other instruments, and of course, a wide range of musical taste. I gathered that this choir had been around for a long time when I perused the old filing cabinets full of outdated and "churchy" musical selections. Clearly, there was a need for an update here. Fortunately, the Seniors' Program Coordinator at McConaghy Centre, who wholeheartedly supports this choir, rustled up a small grant to purchase some new music to get us through the first year. Between this and some music donated by one of the choir members, I was able to freshen up the programming.



Using technology has helped to bridge the diverse levels of ability in the choir while serving as a tool in rehearsals and performances and for the members to grow individually. Providing the singers with practice tracks improves the quality of the choir's music-making experience. It also provides individuals who



enjoy practicing at home a more fun platform, helping them understand their role in context without having everyone in the room. While it is very exciting to get to rehearsal each week and sing together, many members feel that singing daily is a healthy and enjoyable habit and putting it together at rehearsal is the icing on the cake.

And now for the cherry on top. The cherry may seem small, but it is packed with everything one can provide to people that burst with flavour and excitement. Each program is focused on inclusivity and diversity on all levels, with meaningful music reflected by a program theme. Using orchestration skills and technology to accompany the music has vaulted the choir into a unique performance paradigm that is enjoyable for all. They sing with all their heart when they hear something that sounds like it loves them. These tools have offered a heightened experience to the singers, and they can immerse in the total singing experience that provides a plethora of health benefits.

It is no secret that music is good for the heart (literally and figuratively), body, brain, and mood. Music is the only activity that stimulates the whole brain. Music

works our brain's mathematical, lingual, physical, emotional, and spatial parts. Research has shown that blood flows more easily when we hear music. Singing uses diaphragmatic breathing, allowing for natural, deep breaths that strengthen our lungs and respiratory system and increase overall activity levels. It can also reduce heart rate, lower blood pressure, decrease cortisol levels and increase endorphin and serotonin levels in the blood. Music also boosts the brain's production of dopamine, which helps reduce feelings of anxiety and depression. Music relieves stress by triggering biochemical stress reducers. Music can assist pain management and increase energy levels by reducing stress. Music therapy has seen success in relieving some symptoms of Alzheimer's disease and dementia, and a recent study has found increasing evidence that making music enhances the immunological response that enables us to fight viruses. Music enhances hearing (even for those with severe hearing damage). Proper posture is necessary for musical performance, and the benefits pay off in every area of life.



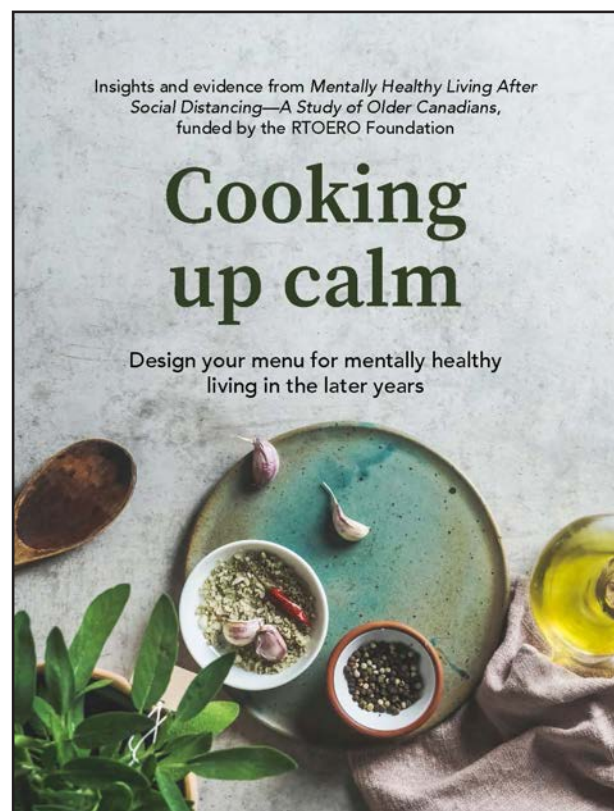
So, the cherry on top of the cake includes everything that can give each choir member enormous benefits to sing and find joy in their lives. The world would be less colourful, meaningful, and inspiring without music. Music is not a luxury. It is a necessity and truly the Heart of Humanity.



# Cooking up Calm

from RTOERO Foundation

The RTOERO Foundation is thrilled to announce the results of a donor-funded grant, *Mentally Healthy Living After Social Distancing—A Study of Older Canadians*, which are now available as a free download for all RTOERO members. This project was carried out by the Living Well Research Team and led by Dr. Gail Low, associate professor of nursing at the University of Alberta.



Funded solely by the RTOERO Foundation, *Cooking up Calm* was designed to promote mentally healthy living in the later years. The booklet highlights findings from the team's research study and pairs the results with easy-to-make, nutritional recipes to support good physical and mental health.

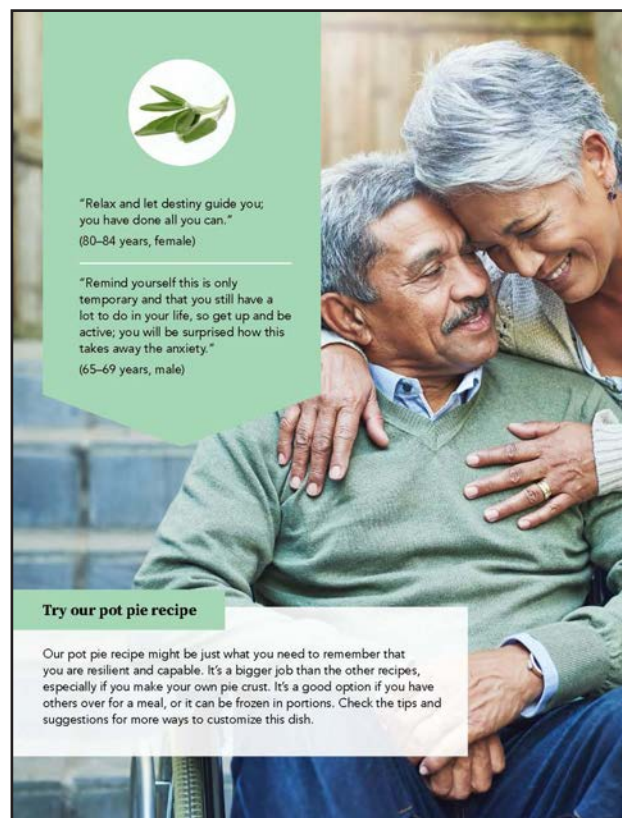
Included in the [cookbook](#):

- Overview of the study
- Benefits of cooking beyond nutrition
- Five easy-to-make recipes

- Actionable tips based on the six most effective mentally healthy living strategies to emerge from the study
- Quotations from study participants
- Guidance for accessing more help when needed

As part of a follow-up research study, the Living Well Research Team will be surveying RTOERO members to gather their feedback on the booklet. So, make sure to [download and share the cookbook](#) with family and friends today - [rtoero.ca/mentally-healthy-living](http://rtoero.ca/mentally-healthy-living).

In an effort to achieve our mission of a society in which all seniors live with dignity and respect, the projects the Foundation funds address the complex needs of older adults. Projects supported by the Foundation are made possible by the generosity of our donors, many of whom are RTOERO members. For more information about the RTOERO Foundation's granting program, please visit our website - [rtoerofoundation.ca](http://rtoerofoundation.ca) - or email Deanna Byrtus at [dbyrtus@rtoero.ca](mailto:dbyrtus@rtoero.ca).



# Moving to a New Home – Leisure Helps Us Adapt

from McMaster University, Institute for Research on Aging

The majority of older adults live in private residences, but as they age, many turn to other housing options. Adjusting to a new home is not easy. Leaving your home, your memories and your habits is anxiety-provoking. Many fear having to rebuild everything elsewhere: create a new social network, develop a sense of belonging, maintain independence, find new activities. There is a reason why assisted living facilities or nursing homes offer a range of activities to their residents: leisure makes it possible to adapt to difficult life transitions, such as widowhood, retirement or moving and adapting to a new living environment.

A recent systematic review identified 24 studies examining the relationship between leisure and older adults' adjustment to a new home. Although the studies considered only older adults living in nursing homes, it goes without saying that leisure can promote the well-being of everyone, regardless of the type of residence.



Indeed, structured leisure activities and the opportunity to learn new skills allow participation in social life and promote a sense of belonging. Studies show that leisure provides a sense of continuity and helps maintain your identity and independence. In addition, the results show that adaptation happens more quickly if you participate in activities regularly and are motivated. Thus, the positive experiences in your new residence will allow you to consider this new environment as a real home.

However, some physical, institutional and social

features of your new home could hinder your participation in leisure activities, hence the importance of choosing the right type of housing according to your interests. For some, an environment where the rules are very rigid, where there are no private spaces to receive friends and where it is impossible to cook as you please may not allow you to flourish and to feel at home, which can interfere with your adjustment.



Volunteering and leisure activities allow you to stay active, socialize, stimulate a sense of belonging and usefulness. Determine what is important to you and take the time to learn about the different housing models to find the one that meets your health and social needs: retirement communities, cohabitation, adapted housing, long-term care facilities, etc.

Depending on your needs and preferences, you may want to get involved in the social committee and organize welcoming activities for new residents, participate in community meals to learn about other cultures, contribute to the community garden or literary circle, or attend educational workshops on topics that affect many residents like you, such as widowhood, retirement, diet, exercise and fall prevention. If you have cognitive or physical limitations, seek an environment that supports and facilitates your participation in various leisure activities. Don't hesitate to get involved!

Source: McMaster Optimal Aging Portal, March 2023  
Moving to a new home: bet on leisure to adapt quickly!  
[mcmasteroptimalaging.org](http://mcmasteroptimalaging.org)



# Avoid Back Pain When Raking and Shoveling

from Sun Life, Lumino Health

It's easy to forget how strenuous raking and shoveling are. Every year Canadians strain their back, pull muscles and get other injuries from these activities, says Jennifer Hutter, a physiotherapy resident at CBI Health in Richmond Hill. "Raking and shoveling snow are both activities that if not done properly, can pose some of the major risk factors for developing musculoskeletal injury," says Hutter. "These include repetitive movements, awkward postures and frequent bending and twisting"

Hutter says to use these tips to prevent or at least reduce the impact of these risk factors:

1. Start with a proper warm up - Think of raking or shoveling snow the same way you would think of a workout. Research has found that static stretching is not helpful in reducing injury. This is where you hold a stretch in the same position for several seconds or longer. To warm up, a five to 10 minute dynamic warm up should be performed. This could be: go for a quick walk, marching on the spot, going up and down the stairs or moving repeatedly through a variety of stretches
2. Use the right equipment - Select a rake that goes up to your chin and select a shovel that reaches mid-chest height. "A shovel or rake that's too short results in increased bending of the back." Use a wide shovel to push the snow, and a small shovel to lift. This will ensure when you're lifting a load of snow it's not too heavy.
3. Work in chunks - Repetitive movements put us at a higher risk of injury. Knowing this, Hutter says to change up the specific task that you're doing frequently. So, instead of raking the whole backyard into piles at once and then doing all the lifting after, rake a small pile, bag it, and then continue. The same with shoveling. Push a small section of snow to the edge, then do the lifting for that section.
4. Set the right pace - Slow and steady wins the race. For raking, perform the job over a couple of hours or even days. For snow, clear it early and often. "If snow is expected throughout the day, it's better to clear a few inches multiple times. Fresh snow is fluffy, light, and easier to move than heavily packed or wet snow."
5. Take frequent breaks - Continuing to push through when our muscles are tired increases our risk for injury. A good rule of thumb is to take a 30 second "micro-break" every five minutes. Then take a two-to-three-minute break every 15 minutes.
6. Use a good body-healthy technique - Limit prolonged reaching. "Keep the rake close to your body. Reaching the rake to grab leaves further away can cause you to strain the muscles in your back. Point your feet in the direction you are pushing, throwing, or reaching to avoid twisting. With raking, many people will rake in a circle pattern around them, says Hutter. "This is a fine strategy,



but make sure you keep your feet moving with each 'sweep'. You don't want to be twisting your spine repeatedly." The same principle applies for clearing snow. "It's best to walk to where you want to place the snow rather than forcefully twisting our backs to throw it a distance. Lift with your legs and keep your back straight. "Using a wider stance, keeping one leg in front of the other and bracing your core can also help protect your back." Use a wagon or wheelbarrow when moving loads such as carrying the bags to the curb.

7. Lift small loads at a time - If it's a heavy snowfall day, shovel small amounts frequently. But if you find yourself having to shovel a high volume, try pushing and lifting in small layers.
8. Equalize the stress on the spine - Frequent bending is a risk factor for musculoskeletal injury, says Hutter. To counter this, you can help equalize the pressure on your back by periodically standing up tall, placing your hands on the back of your hips and arching backwards for a moment.

Hutter shares these tips if you hurt your back shoveling or raking:

- Take a hot shower or soak in a hot bath.
- Use hot and cold compresses. Over the next few days, you can alternate between applications of heat and ice over the sore area for 15-20 minutes each, several times throughout the day.
- Keep moving. Continue to stay active within your pain tolerance. Contrary to popular belief, bed rest is actually not recommended for acute back pain.
- Lay down. You may find relief from lying on your back and placing cushions under your knees. Or from lying on your stomach and using your arms to press your chest up (cobra). In general, if a certain stretch or movement helps you feel better, it's a good one to continue.
- Seek treatment from a physiotherapist if your pain persists beyond a few days or is a repeat occurrence. They can help with your pain and develop a program to help you strengthen your muscles to prevent re-injury.

Source: Lumino Health, October 2022

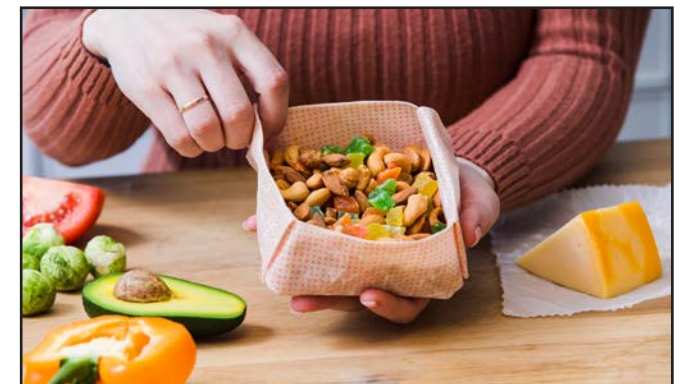
[https://luminohealth.sunlife.ca/s/article/How-to-shovel-and-rake?language=en\\_US](https://luminohealth.sunlife.ca/s/article/How-to-shovel-and-rake?language=en_US)

## Reduce Plastic Waste at Home

from RTOERO News You Can Use

Plastic pollution is a significant environmental concern. Small actions are part of creating big change. You can start by reducing your plastic waste at home.

- Choose products with plastic-free packaging. Making purchasing decisions based on the type of packaging sends a message to retailers and producers that consumers want more sustainable options.
- Switch from bottled hand soap to bars.
- Don't use plastic produce bags. Bring your own mesh bags (making these can be a great DIY project and gift if you're crafty!). Or, don't bag the produce – you will wash it thoroughly at home.
- Wash and chop your own lettuce, spinach and



other greens. Prewashed and packaged greens are convenient but not necessary.

- Use beeswax food wrap and other non-plastic options. Various reusable food storage options exist.



# Sojourn to Sorrento - Part One

by Gail M Murray, Member

*Serene Sorrento, land of the sirens who attempted to lure the wily Ulysses, is a friendly, walkable city with a dramatic coastline and Belle Époque hotels perched on cliffs one hundred feet above the sea.*

*Our local guide Roberta (Essence of Italy), who met us enthusiastically at the Naples airport, charmed us with her genuine warmth on the drive to Sorrento as she guided us through her city on a two-hour orientation. Then we boarded the ferry to Capri, secured a minibus to Anacapri amid a myriad of tourists and enjoyed a picturesque boat tour around the fabled isle. Roberta's knowledge and passion brought ancient Pompeii to life.*

The narrow streets of the historic center are a shopper's delight with leather goods, high fashion finds, ceramics and charming shops selling everything lemon. Gargiulo and Jannuzzi Artisans still practice the 150-year-old art of creating furniture and music boxes of inlaid wood. Now you know the treasure I brought home. It plays Torna a Surriento – Come Back to Sorrento.



We board the ferry at the busy harbour for the short sail to the fabled Capri. There are two towns on this resort island; Capri, with its high-end fashion boutiques and higher up the mountain; Anacapri, with artisan shops, an eagle's view gondola ride and a celebrated garden. Being a gardener, I set off to Villa San Michele.

Swedish doctor Axel Munthe designed a spectacular cliffside garden 1,100 feet above the Bay of Naples. The outer path runs along the cliff on three sides of his home. Layers of terraced plantings in lush tones of green, water channels tumbling to provide ambient sound, pink oleander, and scarlet begonia in the blush of bloom and wisteria climbing the pergola enchant. Paths around the perimeter wind through marble columns, and towering umbrella pines reach tall against an azure sky and sapphire sea. In 1929, Munthe wrote, "I want my house open to the sun and wind, the voice of the sea, like a Greek temple and light everywhere."

On the grounds at Café Casa Oliv, I sip a latte, in this respite from the bustling artisan shops. Later, on a small wooden ledge, I walk around the majolica tiled floor of Chiesa de San Michele – a masterpiece- depicting the Garden of Eden.

It is mid-September, known for sunshine. Unfortunately, it rains the next day, all day, as we drive the spectacular Amalfi Coast, the sea misty, Alessandro, our driver, weaves along the serpentine route. Fortune smiles as we reach the town of Amalfi, once a maritime giant to rival Venice, as church bells ring out from the cathedral in the center of the historic quarter. Time for a cappuccino and dolce at Bar Francese.

Ravello, high in the Lattari Mountains, is our final stop. The group heads to a bistro for pasta lunch, but what's a little rain to a gardener? Besides, I'd left part of my heart there. The Balcony of Infinity is calling. I walk the rain-drenched cobblestone streets, only four feet wide, more like alleys, passing charming private patios and bright ceramic shops, their pottery gleaming in yellow and cerulean blue.



Ravello boasts two unique villa gardens: Villa Rufalo and Villa Cimbrone. With only a two-hour stop, I'm forced to choose. That's the downside of a group tour. Luckily, I had spent three days in Ravello in 2004 immersing myself in both.

In the summer, concerts take place in this glorious garden. Opposed against the sea and the medieval Church of Annunziata, umbrella pines reach skyward on two levels. Villa Rufolo, with its Moorish towers and expansive views, inspired composer Richard Wagner's opera, Parsifal. Magical.

At Villa Cimbrone, the serene cloisters radiate a spiritual feel. I wander corridors of hydrangea, by ivy-clad stone walls and under arches of wisteria. The sea is no longer visible in the mist; gentle rain congers up an otherworldly feel. It's empty today. I'm sad in the rose garden, pale pink petals wax ethereal. The copy of Donatello's David stands tall and the statuary reminds me I'm in a Renaissance garden.

The rain abates in time for the passeggiata- evening stroll- along pedestrianized Corsa Italia on this balmy

evening to the impressive O Parrucchiano Ristorante. We dine under daring ceiling frescoes, surrounded on three sides by lemon gardens. Only one section has actual trees inside the restaurant; the ubiquitous tree surrounds the other larger sections. You are invited to stroll there. I'm reminded of Allan Gardens Conservatory back home in Toronto.

Twinkling fairy lights illuminate orange and lemon trees and bright pomegranates. Enormous orange impatiens, scarlet begonias and burgundy coleus add pops of colour. As I touch the rosemary hedge releasing the pungent scent, I notice tiny blue flowers on this herb. Cherry tomatoes cascade as do grapes. Fresh herbs and vegetables are grown here and add flavour to this restaurant's delicious dishes.

I'm looking forward to being with an Italian family in their home. A cooking class in Italy is a quintessential experience. Villa Ida was started by Roberta's grandmother Ida. There are twenty in our group keen to learn the basics of southern Italian cooking – fresh ingredients, herbs, and a good heart. What you cook depends on the seasons.

We use virgin olive oil, oregano, tomatoes, basil, mozzarella, and ricotta. We prepare cucumber/tomato salad, baked potatoes with garlic, cheese-stuffed meatballs, pasta stuffed with ricotta, lightly breaded zucchini flowers and lemon tiramisu. While everything cooks, we learn about winemaking. Samples are sumptuous here in Italy; there is more wine as we sit down to dine in the pergola of their heavenly garden among the lemon trees. This simple yet glorious experience is the highlight of the trip and sums up the essence of Italy.



*To be continued in Issue 140 of STONY Bridges ...*



# Activity Overview

*From September to June ...*

Below you'll find a treasure trove of activities that cater to a wide array of interests and passions. Whether you are a fitness fanatic, a book lover, a bridge player or simply seeking opportunities to connect with others, District 23 and RTOERO offer many activities throughout the year to help you make lasting friendships and expand your social circle.

# ... for District 23 Members

*Your Participation Matters*

We believe that the true magic happens when you actively participate in the activities we showcase. Below are your invitations to step out of your comfort zone, try something new, and make memories that will last a lifetime.

All of our activities are drop-in – come once and return as often as you like.

Check out the activities calendar on page 35 to help plan your schedule for the next few months.

In this issue we feature two Tuesday morning activities – Have-a-Java and Nordic Pole Walking. We also include all the details for the next four Book Club reads.

## Bridge Club

Convener: Alan Ward, 905-889-3687  
 Date & Time: Meets every Tuesday from 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.  
 Location: Willowdale Emmanuel United Church, 379 Kenneth Ave., north of Church St. and 2 blocks south of Finch

*We offer friendly company in pleasant surroundings with the opportunity for newbies to get into the games. Basic instruction can be provided on request for members. RTOERO members may bring a friend. We continue to wear masks.*

## Needlework & Crafts

Convener: Olga McKenzie, [omckenzie@sympatico.ca](mailto:omckenzie@sympatico.ca)  
 Date & Time: Third Thursday of each month from 9:30 - 11:00 a.m.  
 Location: Edithvale Community Centre, 131 Finch Avenue West

*Learn new skills, revisit skills, and work on individual or group projects. Members share their work and identify projects to work on. Yarn is provided. This is an opportunity to make friends or reconnect with them. Lovely items are created to raffle at our events, raising money for our Community Service project or the RTOERO Foundation.*

## Book Club

Convener: Sylvia Skippen, [sylvia.skippen@hotmail.com](mailto:sylvia.skippen@hotmail.com)  
 Date & Time: Meets the last Wednesday of the month (except December & June) from 2:00 - 4:00 p.m.  
 Location: Edithvale Community Centre, 131 Finch Avenue West or virtually by ZOOM. During the winter months of January and February, meetings are exclusively virtual.

*Books are listed in STONY Bridges and our monthly eNewsletter. A presenter provides information and questions to lead the discussion. Email the Convener for information about upcoming sessions.*

## Nordic Pole Walking

Convener: Kathy Shorney, [k\\_shorney@yahoo.com](mailto:k_shorney@yahoo.com)  
 Date & Time: Third Tuesday of the month (except January & February) from 10:00 - 11:30 a.m.  
 Location: Check STONY Bridges or monthly eNewsletter for locations.

*Walk with us using poles if you have them. You may bring a friend. Email the Convener if interested in participating and to keep informed.*

## Milk Bag Weaving

Contact: Sharon Gusz, [sharongusz@gmail.com](mailto:sharongusz@gmail.com)  
 Date & Time: The third Wednesday of the month from 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.  
 Location: St Gabriel's Church, 670 Sheppard Ave. East

*Participants weave recycled milk bags into sleeping mats for donation internationally or to outreach organizations serving people without housing closer to home. Contact Sharon for dates and times for Our Lady Queen of the World, Richmond Hill.*

## North York Strollers

Convener: Joanne Famiglietti, [jcfam12@gmail.com](mailto:jcfam12@gmail.com)  
 Date & Time: First Thursday of the month (except September & January) from 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. - with optional lunch after  
 Location: Check STONY Bridges or monthly eNewsletter for locations and meet at the designated subway stop.

*Dress according to the weather as the walk takes place rain or shine. Email the convener for monthly locations and further information.*

## Have-a-Java

Convener: Elizabeth Clarke, [clarkemeneguzzi@gmail.com](mailto:clarkemeneguzzi@gmail.com)  
 Date & Time: Third Wednesday of the month from 9:30 - 11:30 a.m.  
 Location: Bayview Village Plaza, in front of LCBO

*Join us! Each member who signs in receives \$5.00 towards the cost of a coffee & treat. Please check the monthly eNewsletter for updates on date and time.*

## Technology (eDevices)

Convener: Vernon Paige, [photoquy.2019@gmail.com](mailto:photoquy.2019@gmail.com)  
 Date & Time: Alternate Fridays from 10:30 - 11:30 a.m.  
 Location: On Zoom.

*A wide range of topics are discussed. Contact the Convener for dates, links to meetings and additional information.*



# Have-a-Java

by Elizabeth Clarke, Convener

Join us at Have-a-Java once a month for a lovely opportunity to meet with other RTOERO District 23 members and enjoy a special treat or coffee. Elizabeth Clarke, Convener, welcomes you to sign in to receive a \$5.00 subsidy towards your choice of a coffee, tea and a treat at Bayview Village Mall. Many tables are available for people to gather near the LCBO, and there are several possible places to make your purchase.

This event is a way to encourage members to connect with others and combat social isolation. Every meeting is full of surprises, people reconnect with former colleagues or long-lost friends, new friendships are forged and there is always lively conversation. It is easy to join others, sit with friends, and catch up on things. If you don't recognize anyone, you will find that you are immediately welcomed and can join in quite easily.



As a bonus, some of the group walk the mall before or after the event for shopping or exercise.

Make time to check out Have-a-Java. You will be pleasantly surprised at how much fun it can be.

**Join us**  
**from 9:30 - 11:30 a.m.**

Wednesday, November 15  
 Wednesday, December 20

Wednesday, January 17  
 Wednesday, February 21  
 Wednesday, March 20

# Nordic Pole Walking

by Kathy Shorney, Convener

*Our members asked ...*

**Can I come without poles?**

Of course, all are welcome. We are a social group enjoying walking/poling on nearby paved trails.

**I'm a slow walker. Will I be left behind?**

We walk at our own pace and in like groups. No one is left behind. We have a "shepherd" to be with anyone who needs an adjusted speed or to stop and rest.

**Are there any big hills?**

We keep the gradient somewhat level and mainly on paved walkways.

**How can I learn to use the poles correctly?**

YouTube has several videos and we will instruct you when you come. We can also adjust your poles to the correct levels.

**Can I bring a friend?**

All are welcome. We encourage socialization and friendship.



**Do I have to call ahead?**

No, just come dressed for the weather. I show up rain or shine. I usually send out a reminder email to those who have expressed interest.

**How long are the walks?**

Depending on the weather and the trail, we walk for about an hour to one hour and a half.

\*\*\* No walks in January and February \*\*\*

## Our Spring 2024 Schedule

**Tuesday, March 19, 2024 – York Cemetery**  
 Enter off Senlac west side of the park. Park near the gate and meet at 10:00 a.m.

**Tuesday, April 16 – York Mills Arena**  
 Bayview Avenue and York Mills Road. Park near the stands and meet at 10:00 a.m.

**Tuesday, May 21 – Bestview Trail**  
 Steeles east of Bayview. Go south on Laureleaf Road South. Park in the plaza or on the street and meet at the trailhead south of the plaza at 10:00 a.m.

**Tuesday, June 18 – Downsview Park, Keele and Sheppard.**

Enter on John Drury Road and follow signs to Discovery Centre. Meet 10:00 a.m. Treats will be served.

Contact: Kathy Shorney at [k\\_shorney@yahoo.com](mailto:k_shorney@yahoo.com) or (416) 225-1336.



## Our Fall Schedule - Meet at 10 a.m.

**Tuesday, November 14 (2nd week) – Windfields Park**

Bayview Avenue and York Mills Road. Park near the stands and meet at 10:00 a.m.

**Tuesday, December 19 – York Cemetery**

Enter off Senlac west side of the park. Park near the gate and meet at 10:00 a.m.



# Book Club

by Sylvia Skippen, Convener

## So far this year ...

At our September Book Club meeting, we were pleased to have author Rona Arato attend to discuss *The Last Train* and her new book *Nothing Could Stop Her*.

Then, in October, Nina Pollock facilitated the book *Letters Across the Sea*. She provided probing questions, analysis of the book and the author's background.

## And coming up ...

### **The Way Things Fall** by Liz Torlee

Wednesday, November 29, 2023



*Liz Torlee, the author will be present to discuss the book.* This intriguing book is about fate and invites more questions than answers. *The Way Things Fall* takes place in Egypt, Tuscany, and Canada. The heroine, Rachel, a thriving art critic, attends an exhibition by an up-and-coming artist. She is unsettled by the eerie familiarity of his paintings,

which recall a tragic event from the past and her cowardly decision. As her relationship with the artist develops, she searches for a way to come to terms with this and is drawn back to a man she loved and worked with many years ago in Cairo. This man had warned her that, one day, fate might find a way to punish her. As the story evolves in three different countries over fifteen years, the tension and conflict between Rachel's relationship with two men and two other worlds accelerate. Eventually, she must pay a steep price to fully atone for what she did.

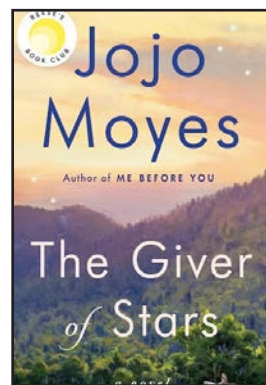
How does STONY Bridges' theme of "belonging" speak to you in these books?

*BELONGING* is evident in the Book Club as members listen respectfully, reconnect with old friends, enjoy food, share personal stories, and make new friends.

In January and February, the group will meet virtually as the winter months can bring unpredictable weather conditions.

### **The Giver of Stars** by Jojo Moyes

Wednesday, January 31, 2024



*Facilitator: Marianne Spilberg* This is a truly breathtaking story of the travelling library established by five extraordinary women through the mountains of Kentucky in Depression-era America. Hoping to escape her stifling life in England, Alice Wright marries handsome American Bennett Van Cleve. However, small-town Kentucky quickly

proves equally oppressive, especially living with her dominating father-in-law. When a call goes out for a team of women to deliver books as part of Eleanor Roosevelt's new travelling library, Alice signs on enthusiastically. Margery is the leader and Alice's greatest ally. She is a self-sufficient and smart-talking woman, who will never ask a man's permission for anything. They will be joined by three other singular women who became known as the Horseback Librarians of Kentucky. What happens to them—and to the men they love—becomes a classic drama of loyalty, justice, humanity, and passion.

Though they face all kinds of dangers, they're committed to their job—bringing books to people who have never had any, and sharing the gift of learning that will change their lives. This is a richly rewarding novel that is at times funny and at other times heart-rendering.

**Edithvale Community Centre - 2:00 - 4:00 p.m.**

*or virtually ...*

### **The Home for Unwanted Girls** by Johanna Goodman

Wednesday, February 28, 2024



*Facilitator: Liliana Cappella* This is the story of a young, unwed mother, Maggie, who is forcibly separated from her daughter, Elodie, at birth and their efforts to find each other. In the 1950s Quebec, the French and English tolerated each other, but these English parents didn't want their daughter to marry a poor French boy, Gabriel, on the

neighbouring farm. Elodie lives in an impoverished orphanage, which is precarious enough, but the story takes a tragic turn. Elodie and thousands of other orphans in Quebec are declared mentally ill due to a new law that provides more funding to psychiatric hospitals than to orphanages. Elodie endures deplorable treatment at the hands of nuns and finally obtains her freedom at seventeen. She is then alone, facing an unfamiliar and unnerving world. Maggie, married to a businessman, is eager to start a family but cannot forget the daughter she was forced to abandon. By a chance reconnection with Gabriel, she realizes she must make a difficult decision about what she wants from life and go in search of her daughter, finally reclaiming the truth that has been denied them both.

### **Wan** by Dawn Promislow

Wednesday, March 24, 2024



*Facilitator: Sharron Holesh* *Wan* is the story of Jacqueline, a privileged artist in 1970s South Africa. After an anti-apartheid activist comes to hide in her garden house, Jacqueline's carefully constructed life begins to unravel. This exquisite debut novel is written in gorgeous and spare prose. It grapples with questions of complicity,

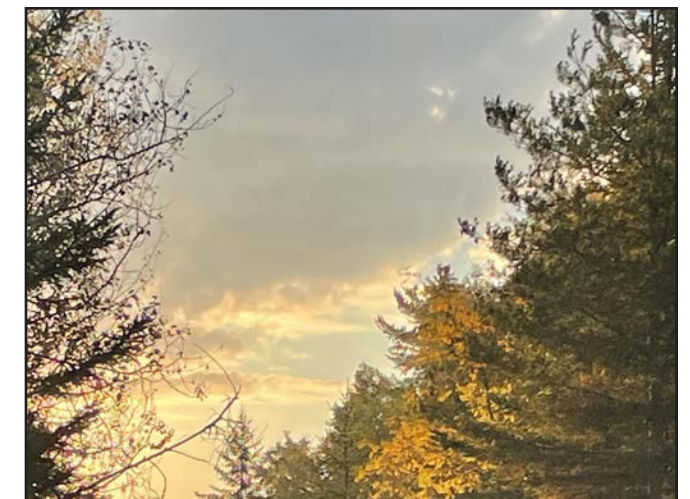
guilt, privilege, and the immeasurable value of art and life.

# In Memoriam

by John Giannone, Convener

With great sadness, we inform you of the passing of the following members of District 23, North York, from June 1, 2023, to September 30, 2023. We extend our heartfelt sympathy to their families and friends.

- |                 |                    |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| Mary Aziz       | Pete Kondoff       |
| Richard Byford  | Stanley Kremer     |
| Robert Campbell | Garnet Lamb        |
| Claire Piche    | Mary Lu Johnston   |
| Joann Gillard   | John McGivney      |
| Brian Hodge     | C. Blanche Mulhall |
| W. Hogg         | Edward Richardson  |
| J. Lockrey      | Beverly Shaw       |
| John Harti      | Stanley Shortt     |
| John Patsalides | Rosaleen Tomblin   |
| Jean King       | Maxine Wasserman   |
| Emilia Kisko    |                    |



The above information was taken from RTOERO's monthly updates from June 1, 2023 to September, 30 2023.





*Over 200 members and guests attended our Welcome to New Members event!*



*We toasted our new members and provided information about RTOERO and District 23, North York.*



*Sara Di Nallo, President, welcomed members and guests.*

# **Champagne Breakfast**

**September 20, 2023**

*The Needlework & Crafts group creates wonderful items that are raffled. \$345.00 was raised at this event and donated to our Community Service Project: 2Choirs! Seniors & Music.*



*Mildred Frank, Social Convener, plans every detail to ensure that the event is enjoyed by all.*



*Plan to attend next year's event and invite a friend who is close to retiring.*

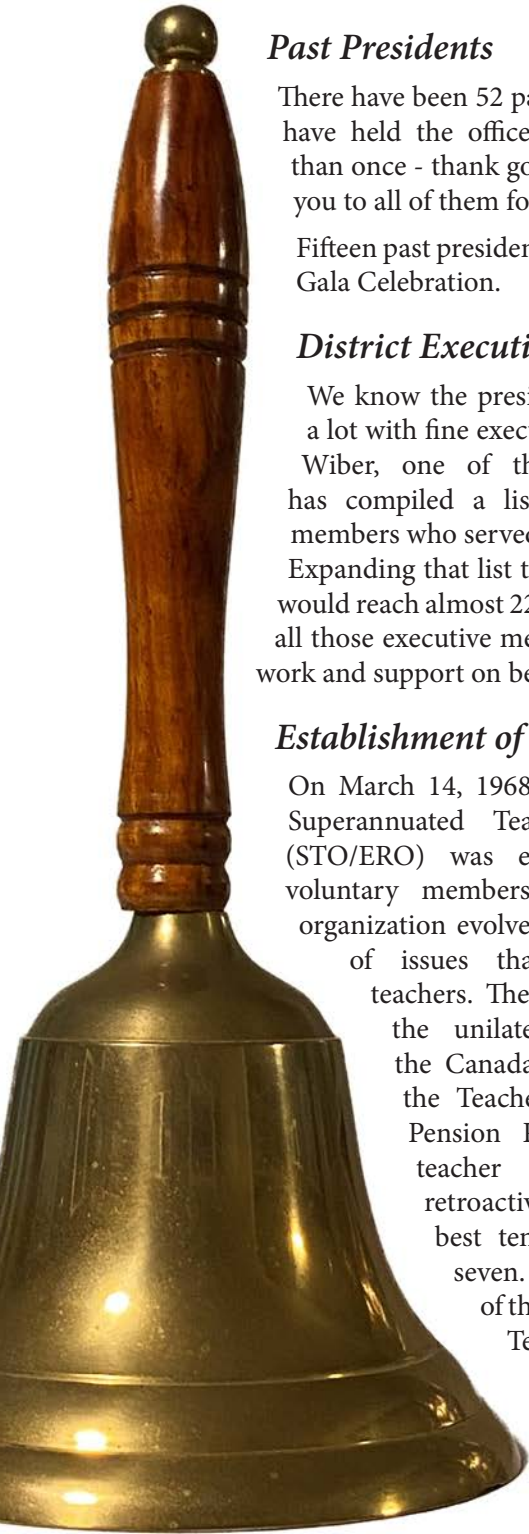
*A spirit of joy and belonging permeated the event!*

*Please come to our Holiday Season Lunch, Thursday, November 30, 2023, at Parkview Manor Convention Centre.*



# 50 Years of Accomplishments

Condensed from George Meek's speech about the history of STO, RTOERO and District 23, North York delivered at the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala Luncheon



## Past Presidents

There have been 52 past presidents. A few have held the office of president more than once - thank goodness. A big thank you to all of them for their leadership.

Fifteen past presidents attended our 50th Gala Celebration.

## District Executive Members

We know the presidents accomplished a lot with fine executive support. Helen Wiber, one of the past presidents, has compiled a list of 156 executive members who served from 1973 to 2006. Expanding that list to today, the number would reach almost 225. We are grateful to all those executive members for their fine work and support on behalf of the district.

## Establishment of STO/ERO

On March 14, 1968, 55 years ago, The Superannuated Teachers of Ontario (STO/ERO) was established, with a voluntary membership of 9176. The organization evolved gradually because of issues that affected retired teachers. These matters included the unilateral integration of the Canada Pension Plan into the Teachers' Superannuation Pension Plan in 1966, low teacher pensions and no retroactivity in changing the best ten years to the best seven. STO/ERO grew out of the work of an Ontario Teachers Federation committee in 1966 that organized superannuated teachers with a Senate.

## Creation of 25 Districts

Senate determined that, beginning in 1973, the organization's ten large areas would be reorganized into 25 districts to provide activities closer to where the members lived. Thus, District 23, North York was created and 36 members were present at its first general meeting on October 4, 1973.

At the time, each district was invited to send a representative to the provincial Senate (later, it became 2 senators). Our first president, Bruce Dawson (1973-1974) and Dr. Charles Phillips, represented us.

Founding members of District 23, North York were: Bruce Dawson, Jean Featherstone, Viva Heaton, Helen Lang, Dick Webster and Dorothy Young. Helen and Dorothy attended our luncheons into the 2000s and some of Dorothy's family attended the 50th Gala.

Thus, District 23, North York was brought into being along with the other three districts in Toronto. The district's annual fee was set at \$1.00 per member. By April 1, 1974, there were 94 paid-up members. The treasury contained \$266.14, which included \$200 that had been received from STO/ERO for district support. Even then, escalation was the major issue.

## Context

Things started to happen during the first five years of STO/ERO (1968-72). The following was achieved under ministers of education Bill Davis and Tom Wells: minimum pensions were raised from \$600 to \$2200; basic health plans were introduced in 1969 through the Superannuation Commission. This was later deemed illegal. Soon after that, Johnson Inc. was appointed by STO/ERO to manage our health plans.

In 1976, escalation - a long-time objective - was introduced to our pension plan. Ken McKee and Jack Foote were very involved in lobbying the government to introduce it. Escalation has gone through a few changes over the years, along with the plan's costs.

## The Brass Bell

At the STO/ERO Senate in May of 1988 (20th

anniversary), John Allen and Jack Foote, past presidents, presented 'The Brass Bell' from North York, District 23 to Senate on behalf of North York district members in recognition of the many and varied achievements. Until recently the inscribed brass bell has been used at senates and forums to announce the beginning of a meeting and the end of recesses. To quote Mel Steele, a former STO President, "District 23, North York is an inspiration to the whole organization."

## RTOERO Name Change

During the Senate in 1989-1990, District 23, North York proposed a name change from Superannuated Teachers of Ontario (STO/ERO) to The Retired Teachers of Ontario (RTOERO). In 1998, the Senate officially implemented this change of name.

By 1990, the district had over 1100 members. The executive had grown from six in 1973 to 22 in 1990 with Don Hazel as president.

## Communications

We have always had a quality newsletter in District 23, North York. It has taken many formats, but the name has remained STONY Bridges. STONY is an acronym for Superannuated Teachers of North York. This newsletter is distributed three times yearly, in both electronic format and hard copy.

We now have an active website where one can source almost anything one needs to know and do, including getting copies of STONY and eNewsletters.

Go to <https://district23@rtoero.ca>



## Community Service Projects

We have been successful in receiving funding from RTOERO for about 23 community-oriented projects over the past years - a total contribution of over \$75,000.00 to our community service projects.

## RTOERO Recognizes Our Leaders

RTOERO Founding Member Award - the following were recognized:

1986: Jack Foote for his work in Goodwill and Life Insurance and for service at the provincial level.

2007: George Meek for his outstanding service at the provincial level, for his work at the Senate as Chair of the Health Services and Insurance Committee, his contributions to the Constitution Committee, and his parliamentary work as a member of the Speaker's team at the Senate.

RTOERO Distinguished Member Award Recipients (for outstanding contributions to District 23, North York):

Mary Ellen Lawless (2017), Mildred Frank (2019), Maureen Capotosto (2021), and George Meek (2023)

## Our Mandate

To maintain connections with our members, RTOERO District 23, North York supports the growth and development of the district and its members, focusing on areas such as recruitment, health service and insurance, support for the RTOERO Foundation, political advocacy, and retirement issues. Everyone involved in education in North York is welcome to join RTOERO District 23, North York.

Our executive plans a wide range of activities to support member interests. Inclusivity is the base from which District 23 develops focus areas. Consideration of the diversity of our members results in robust support for our many activities.

The full text of the speech delivered by George Meek on the 50th Anniversary of District 23, North York is available at <https://tinyurl.com/RTO23-50Years>

With many thanks to Mary Cairo (past District Archivist) for her assistance with research for this presentation.



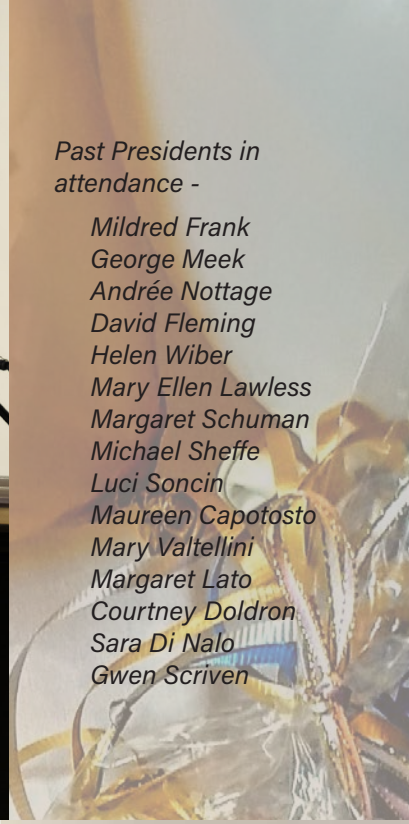


*Good Friends! Good Food! Good Memories!*

*We welcomed 120 guests to celebrate RTOERO District 23, North York's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala Luncheon at Parkview Manor.*

*Music was provided by the David Patt Quartet and there was even dancing before the event concluded.*

*"A huge thank you to the wonderful team that organized the 50th. The decor was spectacular. Everyone had a great time!" - J.F.*



*Past Presidents in attendance -*

- Mildred Frank*
- George Meek*
- Andrée Nottage*
- David Fleming*
- Helen Wiber*
- Mary Ellen Lawless*
- Margaret Schuman*
- Michael Sheffe*
- Luci Soncin*
- Maureen Capotosto*
- Mary Valtellini*
- Margaret Lato*
- Courtney Doldron*
- Sara Di Nalo*
- Gwen Scriven*



# **50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala Luncheon**

## **October 18, 2023**



*Every guest went home with gifts: a bag of Lindt truffles, as well as a pen, an eyeglass cloth and a handy reusable bag bearing the RTOERO District 23, North York logo.*



**Hats Off to 50 Years!**  
*In honour of District 23, North York's 50 years, the Needlework & Craft group created 50 + 50 + 50 hats to be donated to a school to keep the children cozy and warm all winter.*  
*The group also raised \$155.00 for our Community Service Project from the raffle of handmade items.*



**In the Beginning ...**

Murdock McIver, Provincial RTOERO President 1973-1974, District 16, introduced the formation of districts for the Superannuated Teachers of Ontario.

North York, District 23 was officially formed in 1973.

At that time, each district was invited to send a representative to Senate. We were represented by our first president, Bruce Dawson (1973-1974) and Dr. Charles Phillips-Senator.



**2Choirs! Seniors & Music**  
*Yorum Beer of The Choralairs of North York and Jessica Kun of Richmond Hill McConaghy Seniors' Centre Choir - our Community Service Project recipients - were presented with cheques for \$2000 each.*



# Policy for Excursions, Events & Activities

## Waiver, Acknowledgment & Release Form

Participants in RTOERO District 23 activities acknowledge and agree to the terms of this following release form.

All participants in RTOERO District 23 events, cycling, bus trips or excursions acknowledge and agree that RTOERO, including District 23, North York, will not be responsible for any loss, injury or damage of any nature, including death, howsoever arising in connection with such trip/excursion/event. Participants are, therefore, hereby advised to carry their own insurance in connection therewith.

In consideration of the participant's attendance on such trip/excursion or at this event, the participant hereby releases and forever discharges RTOERO, District 23, North York, and their respective directors, officers, members, agents, employees and volunteers (collectively, the "Releasees") from any and all actions, causes of action, claims, and demands (collectively, the "Claims") from any loss, injury or damage of any nature, including death which has arisen or may arise from the participant's attendance on such trip/excursion or at such event, unless such loss, injury or damage has arisen as a result of the sole negligence of one or more of the Releasees.

Any Claims arising out of the participant's attendance on such trip/excursion or at such event will be governed by the laws of the province/territory in Canada in which the participants reside, and the participants consent to the exclusive jurisdiction of the Courts in the appropriate province/territory in Canada in any such action.

## Payment Practices

All trips and events advertised in STONY Bridges and requiring a cheque and registration form have a cut-off date. The date is set to enable us to comply with our commitment to pay for the event. All cheques must be postdated to the cut-off date. Make cheques payable as directed on the event advertisement.

## Registration

When completing your registration forms, follow the guidelines listed below:

- A separate cheque is required for each event/activity.
- Each person's name and phone number must be included on each form for each event/activity.
- When applicable, an RTOERO member may bring ONE guest who pays the advertised cost. If the event is subsidized, additional guests will pay the total fee.
- Unless you are contacted, your registration form and

Photos and videos taken at any RTOERO District 23, North York event may appear in STONY Bridges, on the website, on social media or at later events.

cash cheque (or image) for the activity/event is your confirmation for the activity/event.

## Cheques

Cheques will be deposited into the bank shortly after the cut-off date. Your cashed cheque proves you have a ticket for the trip/event. If your cheque has yet to be cashed more than ten days after the cut-off date, please phone Vernon Paige, Treasurer, at 416-816-2032.

If payment is received before the cut-off date but after the quota for a trip/event has been filled, you will be phoned and asked if you wish to be put on a waiting list. If your ticket request cannot be filled, if you cancel before the cut-off or if payment is received after the cut-off date, your cheque will be shredded; we do not mail cheques back to you.

## Tickets

Tickets, if required, are given out on the day of the performance. If you arrive late, please go to the box office to pick up your tickets(s).

Please note that all our seats are in the theatre's orchestra section. Tickets are assigned in the order in which the requests are received. The earlier you send in your request, the better your seats will be.

If you have any suggestions for performances that you think our members would enjoy, please contact Mary Valtellini at [mary.valtellini@rogers.com](mailto:mary.valtellini@rogers.com). Please be aware that we need about five months lead time to advertise in STONY Bridges and on the website.

## Refund Policy

Once a ticket has been allocated for you, there will be no refund. The onus is on you to find someone to use your ticket, though we will try to help.

Any booking can be cancelled before the cut-off date by emailing Mary Valtellini, at [mary.valtellini@rogers.com](mailto:mary.valtellini@rogers.com) (for trips/theatre), or phoning Mildred Frank, at 416 221-5328 (for social events) or the organizing convener. Your cheque will be shredded if you cancel an event before the cut-off date. We do not mail cheques back to you.

Cancellations after the cut-off date will be accepted only if we can sell your ticket(s) to someone waitlisted.

Ticket holders are welcome to sell, give or transfer their ticket(s) privately.



Used with permission of Mirvish Productions

# Aladdin - The Hit Broadway Musical

Wednesday, March 6, 2024 at 1:30 p.m.

At the Princess of Wales Theatre, 300 King St. W., Toronto

Discover a whole new world at Disney's Aladdin, the hit Broadway musical. From the producer of The Lion King comes the timeless story of Aladdin, a thrilling new production filled with unforgettable beauty, magic, comedy and breathtaking spectacle. It's an extraordinary theatrical event where one lamp and three wishes make the possibilities infinite.

## AUDIENCE ADVISORY

This production contains *strobe lighting, loud noises, flashing lights, haze, fog, and smoke.*  
Running Time: 2 hours 30 minutes (including intermission)

Ticket price: \$93.40

Cut-off date: Feb. 26, 2024

Event details, updates, and fillable event registration forms are available on the website at <https://district23.rtoero.ca/aladdin-the-hit-broadway-musical/>

Aladdin – Wednesday, March 6, 2024 at 1:30 p.m. | Cost: \$93.40

Name:

Email:

Phone:

Guests:

Please make cheque payable to  
RTOERO District 23 and mail form and cheque  
before **February 26, 2024** to Mary Valtellini,  
762 Clarence St.,  
Woodbridge, ON L4L 8V2

# tickets:  @ \$93.40 each | Cheque enclosed

I have read and agree to the Acknowledgement, Waiver & Release Form for RTOERO on page 32.



Name:  Beef  Salmon  Please make cheque payable to RTOERO District 23 and mail form and cheque before November 24 to Mildred Frank, 505 Cummer Avenue, Suite 705, Toronto, ON M2K 2L8

Email:

Phone:

Guests:  Beef  Salmon

(\$22.84 subsidy for each member and one guest by RTOERO District 23)

# tickets:  @ \$45 each |  @ \$67.84 each | Cheque enclosed

I have read and agree to the Acknowledgement, Waiver & Release Form for RTOERO on page 32.

Updates, event details, updates, and fillable event registration forms are available on the website at <https://district23.rtoero.ca/2023-holiday-season-luncheon/>.

## Only a few days remain for you to join us at our Annual Holiday Season Luncheon

This will be a festive occasion to connect with friends and enjoy a pleasant time together.

(Cut-off date: Friday, November 24, 2023)

Parkview Manor Banquet and Conference Centre

55 Barber Greene Road. Free parking.  
(North of Eglinton Avenue, west of Don Mills Road)

Member and one guest \$45.00 (based on subsidy of \$22.84). Additional guests: \$67.84.

### Menu

- Butternut Squash Soup
- Filet Mignon 6 oz. or Grilled Atlantic Salmon served with mashed potatoes and seasonal vegetables
- Rolls & Butter
- Coffee or tea
- Ice-cream Crepes

Dietary requirements: [speakingfrankly@rogers.com](mailto:speakingfrankly@rogers.com)

### Schedule

10:00 a.m. Artisan Craft Sale

11:00 a.m. Cash Bar

12:00 p.m. Lunch

### LEGEND

- Book** Book Club - 2:00 - 4:00 p.m.
- Bridge** Bridge Club - 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.
- EXEC** Executive Meetings - 9:30 - 11:30 a.m.
- Java** Have-a-Java - 9:30 - 11:30 a.m.
- MBW** Milk Bag Weaving - 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.
- N&C** Needlework & Crafts - 9:30 - 11:00 a.m.
- Pole** Nordic Pole Walking - 10:00 - 11:30 a.m.
- Stroll** North York Strollers - 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. +
- Tech** Technology (e-devices) - 10:30 - 11:30 a.m.

- Holiday Luncheon
- Fiddler on the Roof
- Cut off dates
- Aladdin

January						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5 Tech	6
7	8	9 Bridge	10 EXEC	11	12	13
14	15	16 Bridge	17 Java	18 MBW	19 N&C	20 Tech
21	22	23 Bridge	24	25	26	27
28	29	30 Bridge	31 Book			

November						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2 Stroll	3	4
5	6	7 Bridge	8 EXEC	9	10 Tech	11
12	13	14 Pole	15 Java	16 MBW	17 N&C	18
19	20	21 Bridge	22	23	24 Tech	25
26	27	28 Bridge	29 Book	30 Holiday Luncheon		

February						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2 Tech	3
4	5	6 Bridge	7	8	9	10
11	12	13 Bridge	14 EXEC	15 N&C	16 Tech	17
18	19	20 Bridge	21 Java	22 MBW	23	24
25	26 Aladdin	27 Bridge	28 Book	29		

December						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5 Bridge	6 Fiddler on the Roof	7 Stroll	8 Tech	9
10	11	12 Bridge	13 EXEC	14 MBW	15 N&C	16
17	18	19 Pole	20 Java	21	22 Tech	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

March						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1 Tech	2
3	4	5 Bridge	6 Aladdin	7 Stroll	8	9
10	11	12 Bridge	13 EXEC	14	15 Tech	16
17	18	19 Pole	20 Java	21 MBW	22 N&C	23
24	25	26 Bridge	27 Book	28	29	30
31						



# Down Memory Lane

by Elisa Arciero, Archivist



Here are some photo memories from 2008 to 2012.

We hope that you will join us at an activity or event as our golden anniversary year draws to a close!



Stratford - 2009



RTO Golf - 2010



District 23 Spring Luncheon - 2008



Camelot - 2011



District 23 Executive - 2012

## Change of Postal / Email Address or Other Information

Please send changes to: RTOERO, 18 Spadina Road, Suite 300, Toronto, ON, M2R 2S7 or to [membership@rtoero.ca](mailto:membership@rtoero.ca); or call the RTOERO Membership Section at 416-962-9463 or 1-800-361-9888 or fax: 416-962-1061. This will ensure your continued receipt of STONY Bridges, Renaissance, your RTOERO annual diary and other RTOERO mailings.

For questions about distribution of STONY Bridges, contact Gerard MacNeil at: [g.macneil@bell.net](mailto:g.macneil@bell.net) or 416-481-7411. For the most efficient/rapid response, contact Gerard via the email address provided.

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