



**RTO
ERO**

District 23
North York

August 2020, Issue 129

STONY Bridges



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With great sadness, we inform you of the passing of the following members of District 23.

We extend our heartfelt sympathy to their families and friends.

The following information was taken from RTOERO Provincial's monthly updates from January 1, 2020 to May 31, 2020

January: Roy Alderdice, Bruce Archer, Theresa Boland, Donald Brown, Dennis Coles, Roslyn Harris, Kenneth E. Mahy, Jean Monson, Roberta Saunders, Thomas Walters

February: Vivienne Bailey, Maria Filomena de Melo, Susan Eguchi, Josephine Field, Douglas Haddow, Margaret Hunter, Beverley Rosenberg, Oswin Salins, Paul Steele

March: Nelson McKay, Thomas O'Brien

April: Seymour Durbin, Elisabeth Kupelwieser, Maire Lainevoal, Ava Lall, Sandra Levitt, James McGovern, Margaret Nemes, Dayton Ostrosser, Eric Pilkey

May: Lea Corsini, Audrey Crowley, Sheila Ellis, Nancy Knight, Jacqueline Korn, Daniel McKechnie, J. Roger Roussel

IN MEMORIAM

*You, forever a part of my heart,
The best of me: my soul, my being...
Once was love, and forever
Pursued
The passions of yesterday...*

*Forever pursued:
The dreams of enlightenment,
The promises of hope:
Answers forever elusive,
Answers forever ephemeral:
Time passages...*

*The closing of each day:
A time of shadow, a time of longing...
All the promises...
Purpose never to be understood...*

*Yet, you forever
My heart forever stolen away
To live, to endure.*

by Bev Gorbet, May 2020



Greetings to New District 23 Members!

by John Giannone – Convener ~ Membership

The Executive welcomes all new members who have recently joined RTOERO District 23 and invite them to become active participants in all of our activities. As of May 31, 2020 RTOERO District 23 has a total membership of 2815 members. The following information was taken from RTOERO monthly updates from January 1, 2020 to May 31, 2020.

January: David Adshead, Alice Alderdice, Margaret Bernardo, Luba Garcia, Arlene German, Joanne Iantorno, Elizabeth Mahy, Cheryl Spears, Margaret Walters, Anthony Wong

February: Al Baker, Marian Keaney, Mary Kosa, Karen Kovacs, Jose Matias, Herbert Paige, Jeffrey Ramson, Barbara Upton, Linda Ward

March: Helena Ben David, John Gonos, Faye Haddow, Robert Hamlyn, Diana Williams

April: Alisa Joseph, Barry Mager, Christine O'Brien, Doris Pilkey

May: Liliana Cappella, Marisa Cocco, Patricia McKay, Monica Miller, Shilagh Ostrosser Maurizio Rossetto

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Submissions

STONY Bridges RTOERO, North York, District 23 welcomes submissions for STONY Bridges from members. Do you have a story to tell, an experience to share or a poem you have written? Consider submitting your work for publication. Please include name, address, and telephone number (for identification only) and some past and present biographical information (for publication if space permits). Articles should be from 400 to 1200 words (one half to one page) in length. Photos are also welcome (minimum 300 dpi in jpg or RAW format). Please send photos as attachments and do not reduce the size. We reserve the right to edit, condense, crop, or reject letters, photos, or other submissions.

Send submissions to: Maureen Capotosto at mpcapotosto@sympatico.ca. STONY Bridges is published for its members in March, August, and November by the Retired Teachers of Ontario District 23, North York.

The due date for material for the next issue is September 15, 2020



Until Our Journey Continues...

by Sara Di Nallo – Past President

As we move forward into sunny days of Summer, I hope everyone is doing well and getting through the Covid-19 pandemic as best as possible and in good health. We have not had too much activity in District 23 this spring but hope that things will resume once we can restart activities for our District. The executive and some of our activity convenors have continued to have meetings to stay on track so once we are able to meet again, we will be able to resume activities as quickly as possible.

We have received nominations for positions on the Executive and we have nominees for every position on the committee. Once we can have our Annual General Meeting, we will be able to proceed and elect some new members in Executive positions for 2020-2021.

During this unusual and stressful time, I hope everyone stays safe and healthy. As things slowly reopen and life goes back to normal, I hope that everyone stays in good health until we return to activities that we enjoy. Have a wonderful summer and enjoy the good weather as much as one can.



Changes in Our Lives

by Gwen Scriven ~ 1st Vice President

Sitting here looking out at the lake in early June, I am reflecting on the many changes that have taken place in our lives during the last three months. In early March my husband and I were enjoying a winter get away in Bonaire. Then came COVID-19, voluntary isolation and social distancing.

vital to keeping our members engaged. As Vice President and Treasurer, I have worked with the rest of the Executive to continue service to our members in as many ways as possible. A group of us reached out by telephone to all our members over 80. These conversations showed just how resilient and strong our members are!

This new normal has forced us to be creative in how we spend our time and stay connected. Zoom, Skype, Facetime, phone, text and email are all staples of everyday life to stay connected with family and friends. A good friend inspired me to begin knitting again after many years. Our garden is much larger this year and everyday involves at least one nice long walk. I hope that you have also found fulfillment in activities that you had no time for earlier and are creatively staying in touch with loved ones.

My term on the Central PAC has ended, but advocating with governments and appropriate organizations continues. Letters have been sent to relevant levels of government expressing concerns about additional prescription dispensing fees, LTC facilities and refunds for cancelled travel. RTOERO continues to work with other organizations whose concerns are the same as ours. Funds have been donated to COVID-19 Research through the Toronto General and Western Hospital Foundation as well as the North York Food Bank to provide support in difficult times.

Meanwhile...keep strong, keep safe and take care of each other!

District 23 has adapted in many ways to the COVID reality. Zoom meetings and activities have been

FALL EVENT CALENDAR 2020

ZM—Zoom Session		
August	7 E-Devices Group (ZM)	
	21 E-Devices Group (ZM)	
	27 Needlework & Crafts (ZM)	
September	4 E-Devices Group (ZM)	
	9 Executive Meeting (ZM)	
	16 Have-a-Java (ZM)	
	17 Needlework & Crafts (ZM)	
	18 E-Devices Group (ZM)	
	24 Champagne Breakfast (ZM)	
October	30 Book Club ((ZM)	
	2 E-Devices Group (ZM)	
	14 Executive Meeting (ZM)	
	16 E-Devices Group (ZM)	
	21 Have-a-Java (ZM)	
	22 Needlework & Crafts (ZM)	
	28 Book Club (ZM)	
	30 E-Devices Group (ZM)	
	November	11 Executive Meeting (ZM)
		13 E-Devices Group (ZM)
18 Have-a-Java (ZM)		
19 Needlework & Crafts (ZM)		
25 AGM & Holiday Season Luncheon		
December	25 Book Club (ZM)	
	27 E-Devices Group (ZM)	
	9 Executive Meeting (ZM)	
	11 E-Devices Group (ZM)	
	16 Have-a-Java (ZM)	



"It's no use going back to yesterday, ..."

by Maureen Caporosto – President

| "It's no use going back to yesterday, because I was a different person then." Alice in Wonderland |

I feel like Alice in Wonderland with my world turned upside down and full of unexpected challenges. There is the loss of being with our loved ones and friends, but the joy of finding new ways to connect.

Have you [zoomed](#) yet? Learned to use [WhatsApp](#)?

People are using technology to talk with friends and participate in meetings, fitness classes and physiotherapy sessions. Doctors call you at home – no waiting around! There are also downsides for grandparents who have yet to meet their grandchild or, the many who were not able to be with a loved one who was dying – incredibly tough all around.

We have drawn on skills from the past such as learning how to bake again, make bread or sew to make masks and gowns for healthcare workers. We have revived old interests and pursued new ones through the wonders of YouTube, on-line books and other resources such as webinars. With all of this going on, the executive of RTOERO District 23, North York is looking for ways to continue to reach out to our members. I commend all of them for their creativity and willingness to try new approaches.

Gwen Bumbury, our Goodwill Convener describes how her team is reaching out to those over 80 years old. Vernon Paige has increased the frequency of the meetings of the Mobile Devices group. Margaret Schuman and Joan Bourne have moved into zoom meetings for the Needlework & Crafts group. They know that some members really need the connection. Elizabeth Clarke hosted a Have-A-Java meeting where we shared a coffee and conversation with others. These are all new efforts on our part, but we see this as the best way to reach out and provide our members with opportunities to pursue interests and friendships.

Mildred Frank is planning a virtual Champagne breakfast to welcome new members in September. We are exploring how we might hold our Annual General Meeting and celebrate the Holiday Season later in the fall. We are grateful that RTOERO has provided us with access to a Zoom account that is safe and secure. If you haven't yet mastered getting onto a zoom call, then make that a challenge for this summer. Ask a friend to help or find a video online that demonstrates how to do it.

Since we have not had an AGM, the executive remains in the same positions until we can hold an election. Irene Kitchell

has resigned after many years running the Book Club. Irene started this group and has faithfully organized with the members some interesting reading and guest author visits. We are very grateful for her contribution to our District. We welcome Sylvia Skippen who has already hosted one Zoom call for members and worked with them to produce some great reading selections for 2020/2021. Lorraine Hennessey resigned as Treasurer and Gwen Scriven has been acting Treasurer. We appreciate the time and effort Lorraine put into this role. Thank you to Gwen for keeping us in shape until a new treasurer is elected.

Please be sure to sign up for our email news from Karen Quinn. This is going to be a key link for us to you as we plan our fall events. Check out how to sign up or update your email in Karen's Communications article. Our website which is up to date with information is also a good place to visit. Mervyn Mascarenhas, our Webmaster is attuned to the world around us and keeps us informed on Twitter as well. You can also follow us on Facebook for current news. Where we can we have provided dates, but some things cannot be planned very far ahead.

I am encouraging our executive to look to new ways we can serve and be engaged with our members. Around the world changes are taking place in long standing beliefs and attitudes. We want to work with our membership to meet your needs. Our organization is taking a much stronger role in advocating for seniors in relation to long term care. They have been reaching out to establish our voice with elected officials both provincially and federally through the Vibrant Voices work. With the Black Lives Matter protests and the targeting of antiracism in our institutions and culture, we may need to take on new approaches and activities. Recently in the Mobile Devices group there was a discussion of what steps we could take as a District and as RTOERO members. If you have ideas or input, we would like to hear from you.

At our June meeting the executive passed motions to donate funds to the North York Harvest Foodbank. We accepted a challenge from District 24 Scarborough & East York to donate a \$1 for every district member to Covid-19 research. We also made sure our annual donations were sent off to support the student nutrition programs.

Please continue to be safe and well. Life is different and there are still more challenges for us to overcome.



Remember the Bids That Were Not Made

by Alan Ward – Convener ~ Bridge

When our group last met on Tuesday, March 10th, we could not imagine that we would not be seeing each other again for many months, perhaps for the remainder of 2020. Nor did we realize that so many of the activities that bring us so much pleasure would be so abruptly curtailed. For the benefit of new members who are retiring and joining RTOERO, we are including information about Bridge and other RTOERO activities in the hopes that we shall be able to resume them at some unspecified time in the future.

The Bridge Club meets at Willowdale United Church on Kenneth Avenue, just north of Church St (south of Finch, 2 blocks east of Yonge) on Tuesday afternoons. New members are welcome: please try to arrive by 12:45 p.m. Basic instruction can be provided on request. For further information contact Alan Ward at 905-889-3687 or by email at alanward@interlog.com. We are a social group of about 40 RTOERO members and friends of whom 24 - 28 meet on any given Tuesday for cards, coffee and cookies. Serious duplicate players will generally look elsewhere for their bridge “fix” but we offer friendly company in pleasant surroundings with the opportunity for newbies to get into the game. It is not necessary to come with a partner, nor to commit to appearing every week. RTOERO members may bring a friend who is not an RTOERO member; all attendees contribute \$3 per afternoon to defray the costs of leasing the space. The group thanks those members who come early to set up the room and assist in the kitchen before and after the meeting as well as all whose generosity and skills as bakers have enhanced our enjoyment of the afternoon.

Upcoming Schedule (when restrictions are lifted by the province)

September 8th - December 15th except for September 29th (Room unavailable, Church Spaghetti Dinner)

Apologies to those members who bid and made slams or distinguished themselves as Table Champs in the period between January and early March: the records of their achievements are locked up in the church basement and will remain so until we once more have access to the facilities.

Passing the Time

Since I have found myself spending too much time in front of a computer screen since March, I have not as yet opted to play Bridge online. Summer is in any case a time for sitting on the deck and watching the grass grow. It is also a good time for reading and perhaps falling asleep over a book. Recently I have been enjoying the perusal of David Bird’s “**Another 52 Great Bridge Tips**”, 160 pages of condensed Bridge wisdom from one of the world’s most experienced players, published by Batsford in 2006. Rather like an Agatha Christie book of short stories, it is fun to dip into. Chapter headings include “Remember the bids that were not made”, “Do not double without a surprise for declarer”, “hold on to the ace of trumps”, “Endplay the defender who becomes trump-heavy”.

Doubling is a two-edged sword and can often come back to bite the doubler. In the following deal, South opened 1S, West doubled, North responded 4S, East passed and South bid 6S. What would you do as West with this hand?

3 (S), AQJ6 (H), QT62 (D), AKQ5 (C)

West elected to double and was disappointed but not utterly surprised when South ruffed the opening lead of the club ace. Surely there would be two heart tricks down the road. Alas not. South’s hand was AQT952 (S), K9 (H) and AKJ85 (D). North’s hand was KJ764 (S), T54 (H), 3 (D) J982 (C). South was able to ruff out two diamonds and discard two of North’s three hearts on the fourth and fifth diamonds.

South’s bidding suggested a strong unbalanced hand while North’s preemptive jump to game promised 5 spades and about 6 HCP. Clearly that left nothing for East. South’s decision to bid 6S without checking for aces implied at least one void. West had no surprise for declarer, who could effectively read his hand. Doubling a slam is rarely profitable against good opponents and may sometimes allow declarer to locate a missing honour or shift into a no-trump contract from an unmakeable suit contract. Doubler beware! Oddly enough, EW would have scored better had East daringly taken out the double by bidding 7C.

How Do We Contact Individual Executive Members?

Due to privacy concerns, we have stripped most contact information from STONY and the website. Use the website [Contact Us](#) form to reach members of the Executive.



A Whole New Twist on the Concept of a Portable BBQ

by Eileen Kearns – Convener ~ Cycling

Picture is from the **Orillia Streets Alive Art Initiative Project**. As you can see it gives a whole new meaning to the summer BBQ and cycling ☺

Given we do not know when cycling will start up for the 2020 season, it seemed like a fun idea to show this bit of bike art. Hopefully, we will get in some summer rides.

The rides will not start while we still experience a large number of new virus cases in Toronto. Another requirement that needs to be met is for both washrooms and refreshment places to be open and available to us. The washrooms will need to meet the new protocol of both infection control and social distancing. To this end, I remain in contact with the parks department and a few of the places where in the past we have stopped for a refreshment break during the half way point of our rides. I will keep the cyclists apprised via email on the progress in this area.

Meanwhile I know that many of you have written me and said that you are venturing out on neighborhood rides. This is a wonderful way to keep the bike moving and yes most importantly YOU!

With so many of us either cycling solo during this time or perhaps distance cycling with one other person, I wanted to bring to your attention that if you have a CAA membership and you encounter problems with your bike, they cover 2 wheels in addition to their 4 wheel assistance coverage. Their program is called CAA BIKE ASSIST. This program may exist with other car roadside assist coverage programs that come with new cars. I suggest you check your car assistance membership so you are prepared. Most importantly have your card membership number with you or in your phone should you require it and remember to tell the dispatcher that you are seeking assistance for 2 wheels not 4 so they come with the correct equipment to assist you.

After this most difficult and unprecedented time it will be delightful to bring the RTOERO District 23 Learning Spokes together and ride again☺

Who? For those who have a comfortable and confident skill level with cycling. We are however a social cycling group and not a group seeking to set a goal to accumulate kms cycled

per season.

Where? Routes: The start up locations may vary per ride. Most often we will start at the Betty Sutherland Trail, Leaside Spur Trail, Wilket Creek Park just south of Edward's Gardens, the Don Trail and Lower Don Trail to Martin Goodman Trail, Distillery, Brickworks etc.



Eileen Kearns

Our cycling will be a combination of off road on the trails and some on road cycling to connect to the next trail.

Parking and Meeting Site:-The parking lot in the North West corner of Sheppard and Leslie.

We may also park on occasion later in the season at Sunnybrook near the Sunnybrook/Edwards Garden washrooms.

When: Thursday mornings at 10:00 am.

Dates: You will be notified when it is safe to resume cycling.

Requirements:

Participating cyclist must have:

- bike with bell
- air in tires
- bicycle helmet certified "approved" by CSA, Snell, ASTM, CPSC, or ANSI - to be worn at all times
- running shoes
- water bottle
- emergency information
- a small snack is a good idea

Please have your most important emergency information in addition to your **OHIP #** with you.

Please note: A waiver form will be provided that each cyclist is required to sign before each cycling trip.

To register email: Eileen_Kearns@edu.yorku.ca. Please note there is an underscore between the first and last name in the email address.

Registering for this event is most important as cycling is weather dependent and the trip could be cancelled. Also, we vary the location where we start as the season gets underway.



Gardening in the Time of COVID

by Carmel Preyra – Guest Contributor

It's a particularly glorious day of self-isolating in my garden. I've perched myself on a comfy couch in the backyard from where I can see the water garden and dozens of goldfinches darting back and forth between my brilliant yellow water irises and the bird feeder. A rag tag assortment of chipmunks, mourning doves, blue jays and an indigo bunting scatter around looking for a treat. A ruby throated hummingbird makes its way from one flower to another. Last January, I was leafing through seed catalogues, planning my garden, musing to myself that I would make this first year of the new decade memorable. Gardening and everything about it are such a frolic, a flight of fantasy, an indulgence.



Bronze Bearded Iris - Carm Preyra

I was thoroughly shaken by the unexpected and unprecedented magnitude of the events that were to unfold. I ushered in the decade, with the global community under assault by COVID; an invisible and virulent enemy that cut across social, political, and geographic divides. In an era of abject loneliness, our addictive dependency on digital devices, news of wildfires and floods, destruction of habitat and extermination of wildlife, I entered a decade that was a frightening time of uncertainty, fear, helplessness, and stress. I learned a whole new vocabulary of being. Words like worldwide pandemic, sheltering in place and social distancing quickly entered our lexicon.

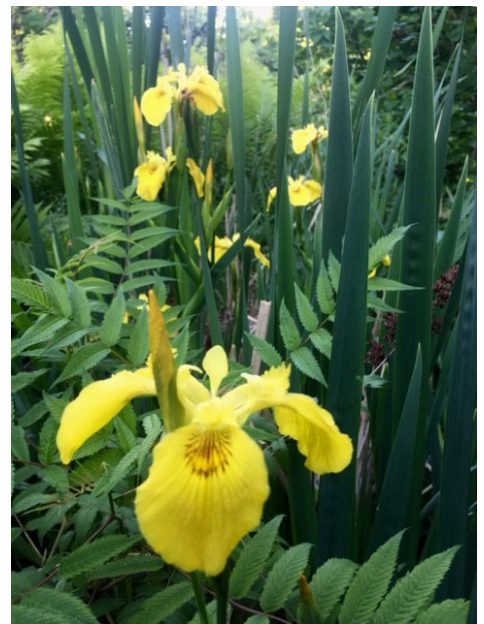


My new Garden Scooter - Carm Preyra

As the news of the COVID pandemic

filtered down into our collective consciousness I did the only thing that I knew would protect us: We cocooned and made plans to lock ourselves in and isolate from the rest of society. There were long lineups at grocery stores; hoarding made the newspaper headlines, as we honoured and thanked those designated to be essential workers. By the end of March, most of us non-essential workers had accepted seeing loved ones through the filter of social media. We embraced homeschooling, cooking, baking, crafting, and yes gardening in a big way. Virtual meetings and time online were leaving people in an existential void but gardening was something that engaged the entire self. It not only gave way to artistic expression but heightened one's senses to a world of fragrance and bird songs, warm sun, and a glorious physical exhaustion.

By April, our surreal world was beginning to change. The warmer weather and nature itself had ignited in riotous abandon awakening something deep inside us. Outside our windows the sun coaxed the trees to bud; on the ground tulips, daffodils and tiny snow drops were peeking through the warming earth and people, both young and old, stripped of their busy existence, had time to listen and feel the primordial call of nature. It was becoming impossible to stay inside; the things that have engaged our quarantine were no longer satisfying; slowly, cautiously and well masked, people ventured out



Yellow Water Irises - Carm Preyra

and breathed the Spring air fragrant with the perfume of all things new and renewed.

The impulse to garden in difficult times is deep rooted. Spring brought with it a catharsis. Without knowing why, people everywhere, were irrationally drawn to gardening; There was a surge, a flurry of first-time gardeners. The urge to design, dig and plant played out in every community.

It wasn't just that people had time on their hands, or the monotony of self-isolation but rather a subliminal call to reboot, reset and check our hardwiring. Standing on the ground is a deliberate and positive connection to the earth. We plant and grow flowers or food with an abundance of anticipation and hopefulness. Fueled by the sounds of birds, the whistle of the wind in the trees and rain showers, we imagine the things we plant, growing to fruition.

I am not at all surprised that during this time the sale of gardening books and DIY videos have skyrocketed. Seed companies were quickly running out of seeds and there was a noticeable scarcity of flowering annuals. Most surprising of all was that there were absolutely no vegetable seedlings to be found anywhere in the GTA. People were hunkering down, back yarding, taken to growing food in large numbers.

“The glory of gardening: hands in the dirt, head in the sun, heart with nature. To nurture a garden is to feed not just



Purple Aquilegia - Carm Preyra



Allium Gigantium - Carm Preyra

Gardening teaches lessons for life.

Last January I thought gardening was an amusing and selfish frolic. Now I know how absolutely essential and life affirming gardening has been for myself and others. I have a better and deeper understanding of my need to connect to the earth, to dig in the ground, walk in the woods and meander along the riverbeds. Nature is healing; growing food or flowers is a sacred bond between the earth and its people. During this pandemic, I default to my friend Laura, a master gardener; she has one piece of advice **“Go play in the dirt, it's good for what ails you”**. Khalil Gibran put it more beautifully, **“And forget not that the earth delights to feel your bare feet and the winds long to play with your hair.”** While we are all partially distanced from each other, gather up some tools, a fist full of seeds and any old pot or plot of land and go grow yourself some juicy tomatoes or some resplendent roses. You'll feel much better in the morning.

Be safe and stay healthy.



Yellow Day Lilies - Carm Preyra

process and reap according to the labour we invest.

Gardens give us a vision of an ideal world. When we suffer because of plagues, climate breakdown or inequality we yearn for hope. New life emerging from the earth is a symbol of our resilience and insatiable belief in renewal; We will rise out of our difficulties and this too shall pass.

Research bears out a few indisputable truths. Gardening can reduce anxiety, Gardens can increase your energy level, cognitive functions and stimulate dopamine that leads to feeling happy. Gardening is good for your lungs, heart and for your bones. Gardens give us an opportunity to be altruistic and share our abundant harvest with others



“The More That You Read, ...”

by Sylvia Skippen - Convener ~ Book Club

“The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you’ll go.”

—Dr. Seuss

Our District 23 Book Club continues to be a popular and successful initiative. Even during the pandemic when we needed to isolate ourselves, we were able to decide what books we plan to read as a group. We are still committed to meeting together but using new guidelines. In the past, our meetings were held on the last Wednesday of September, October, November, January, February, March, April and May. The meetings began at 2:00 p.m. at the Edithvale Community Centre. We hope to eventually return to our meeting place but at this time, we suspect for the next three meetings, we will be meeting virtually. We already had one meeting using Zoom and found it interesting and worthwhile. We will be sending out information regarding the Zoom meeting nearer to the time that we will meet. Information will be published in the monthly E-Newsletters sent at the beginning of most months to let you know who you will need to register for the activity.

Everyone is welcome to attend, and we are always looking for new members to join us. It always is a lively discussion and many of us have made new friends attending this group. We have been successful in our members volunteering to lead and facilitate the discussion which is always helpful and productive. Irene Kitchell was the convener for several years and we all appreciated her commitment and direction. At this time, Sylvia Skippen is taking over and we are all looking



forward to another valuable year of reading.

Wednesday, September 30, 2020

Becoming

by Michelle Obama



Michelle Obama invites readers into her world, chronicling the experiences that have shaped her—from her childhood on the South Side of Chicago to her years as an executive balancing the demands of motherhood and work, to her time spent at the world’s most famous address. She describes her triumphs and her disappointments in her own words and on her own terms. *Becoming* is the written memoir of the life and

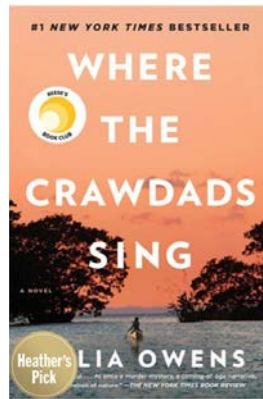


experiences that determined the remarkable Michelle LaVaughn Robinson Obama.

Wednesday, October 28, 2020

Where the Crawdads Sing

by Delia Owens



The #1 New York Times best seller - tells the story of Catherine Danielle Clark, known as “Kya” or the “Marsh Girl”. Living in poverty with her family in the marshes of rural North Carolina, she is eventually abandoned and left to fend for herself. With no formal education, Kya scrounges to support herself, isolated from others and with few personal relationships. For years rumours of the “Marsh Girl” have haunted Barkley Cove, a quiet town on the North Carolina coast. But Kya, the so - called “Marsh Girl” is not what they say. She eventually develops friendships with two local boys, Tate (who taught her to read) and Chase. In 1969, when Kya is 23 years old, Chase is found dead, and Kya is accused of killing him. “Where the Crawdads Sing” is a story rooted in the lessons of the natural world and addresses loneliness, strength, and endurance

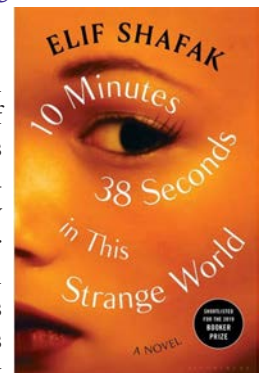


Wednesday, November 25, 2020

10 Minutes 35 Seconds in This Strange World

by Elif Shafak

Short listed for the Booker Prize in 2019, this novel depicts a story of Leila. Known as Tequila Leila, she is a prostitute in Istanbul who is killed at the start of the book and her body ends up in a rubbish dump. After being physically dead, Leila’s brain remains active for another 10 minutes and 38 seconds, during which Leila’s memories surge forth bringing back significant moments of her life and more importantly, stories of 5 close friends she met at key stages in her life.



We gratefully acknowledge Indigo for the use of its bookcovers and book synopses in STONY.



Website in Transition

by Merv Mascarenhas - Webmaster

RTOERO is reinventing itself, first with new vibrant branding and now by transitioning from its staid [Drupal 7](#) web platform to a new dynamic universe of websites powered by [WordPress](#). The [central website](#) went live on June 6, 2020 along with district websites for the three new districts which were starting from scratch – [49: The Prairies](#), [50: Atlantic](#), [51: Echo](#).

The WordPress websites will have a new domain name [rtoero.ca](#) as compared to the current one of [rto-ero.org](#). Part of the change is slashing the slash in our acronym – out with RTO/ERO and in with RTOERO.

Central office staff will be converting each district website over to the new platform and launching it by the end of Summer. Existing URLs to homepages will be redirected to the new websites, allowing you time to change bookmarked links.

If you have pet peeves with our existing website (<https://district23.rto-ero.org/>) or a wish list for it, we want to hear from you – please send your comments to me via the Contact Us webpage - <https://district23.rto-ero.org/district-contact-us>.

Through our Twitter account [@RTO23 North York](#) we attempt to keep you informed on RTO-ERO District 23 matters, and a variety of topics of interest to our members – education, seniors’, and relevant social, health and political issues.

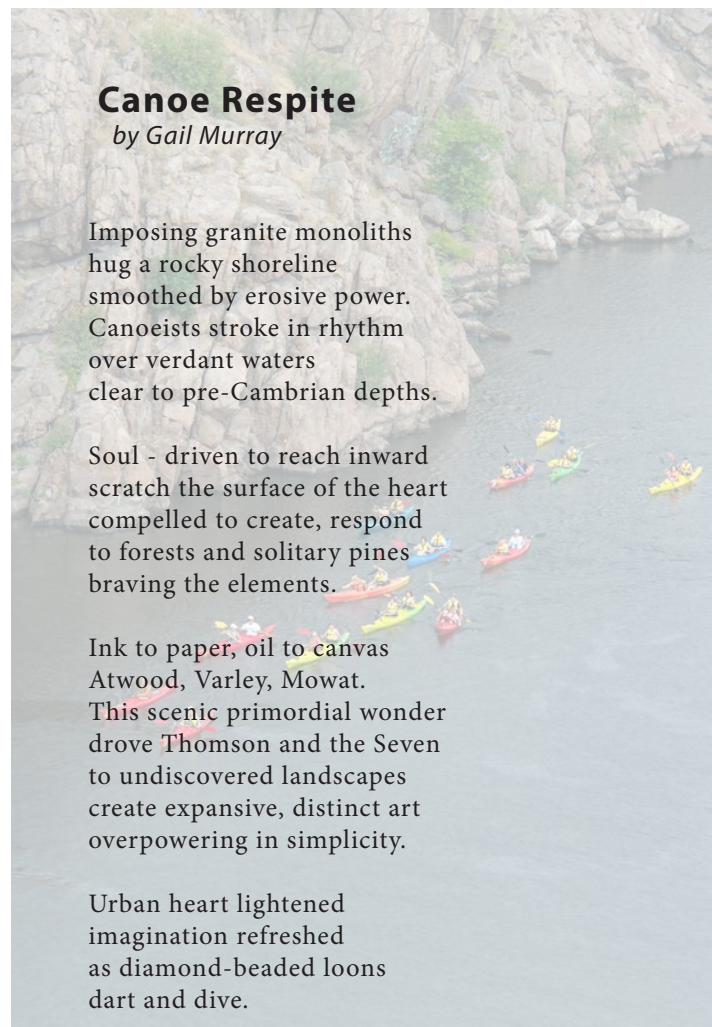
We encourage all members to follow it, like its tweets and retweet them. If you are not on Twitter, do signup by going to www.twitter.com. Our Twitter account will keep you informed by:

- Tweeting Breaking News and new content on our website
- Retweeting curated content related to seniors’ matters, education and health issues
- Providing notifications about Events, News, Articles, STONY Bridges, E-Newsletter, etc.
- Attracting, informing and engaging members.

You do not need a smartphone to use Twitter. You can access it on a Windows PC, Mac or iPad/tablet. And you do not need to post anything – you can just be a passive consumer of RTOERO District 23 tweets. Whenever you choose to, you can like, retweet and follow Twitter users whose tweets are of interest to you.

SHUT UP AND TWEET author Phil Pallen is featured in Twitter for Dummies on YouTube <https://youtu.be/dBVLftVaOw> - view it for insights and comic relief. Twitter Tutorial For Beginners is also a great YouTube resource for new Twitter users - <https://youtu.be/SBDYYGER5iM>.

Be Safe and Have a Great Summer and Fall!



Canoe Respite

by Gail Murray

Imposing granite monoliths
hug a rocky shoreline
smoothed by erosive power.
Canoeists stroke in rhythm
over verdant waters
clear to pre-Cambrian depths.

Soul - driven to reach inward
scratch the surface of the heart
compelled to create, respond
to forests and solitary pines
braving the elements.

Ink to paper, oil to canvas
Atwood, Varley, Mowat.
This scenic primordial wonder
drove Thomson and the Seven
to undiscovered landscapes
create expansive, distinct art
overpowering in simplicity.

Urban heart lightened
imagination refreshed
as diamond-beaded loons
dart and dive.



Navigating STONY Waters

by Merv Mascarenhas – Newsletter Editor

We have been wading in extremely stony waters since the spring edition of STONY Bridges came out hot off the press in early March. Not in our wildest dreams did we anticipate a tiny invisible creature placing the entire world under house arrest and leaving our economy in tatters, tens of thousands dead, with students losing out half a year of studies, graduations cancelled, and the next school year far from discernible. This pandemic was exacerbated by the murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020. The ensuing protests, riots and looting wreaked havoc on many cities in the U.S.A. and Canada, with peaceful protests in cities across the globe. Colin Kaepernick's peaceful protest four years ago gained traction with the NFL finally supporting him. **White Privilege** is finally being understood, and **Black Lives Matter** has gained credibility. There is hope that systemic racism will be addressed, and that Police forces across North America will be refocused, with bad apples removed.

The best-laid plans of mice and (wo) men at District 23 did go awry. On March 14, just as the ink was drying on Spring STONY, the boom came down and we had to cancel all sponsored activities until further notice.

Not all is gloom and doom. The e-Devices group led by Vern Paige celebrated May Day by resuming meetings, albeit virtually using ZOOM. They have been so successful that Vern has increased their frequency to biweekly meetings. The medium changes the dynamics from Sage Vern on the Stage, to Guide on the Side, with all participants engaged in first-hand learning - everyone chipping in and sharing their experiences. A few other groups have had at least one Zoom Meeting - Have-A-Java, Needlework. Our Goodwill team has been calling up our more senior members the old-fashioned way to reassure them that they are not alone.

We are unsure when we will be able to return to the old normal, if ever again. We will resume activities as and when the Medical Officers of Health allow them, always with an abundance of caution because our membership is the most vulnerable to COVID-19.

Karen Quinn's monthly E-newsletter will inform you of new events as they occur. If you have not subscribed to them, please do so by clicking on <https://bit.ly/RTOe-Newsletter>. This is our primary means of communication to you in the Time of COVID. The link is also on the homepage of our website - <https://district23.rto-ero.org/>. Remember that District 23

event registration forms are published on our website at <https://district23.rto-ero.org/activity-registration-forms>.

This webpage has fillable pdf forms that you can complete online, print and mail off to the convener with your cheque while keeping your copy of STONY or e-Newsletter intact. Later this year, we shall provide you online registration and payment - no more scurrying around looking for an envelope and postage stamp.

The dearth of activities and events in this version of STONY has freed up space for poems, stories, travelogues and tips from our members. I hope you enjoy them as much as I did reading them. The June 2020 RTOERO publication of LIAISON contains many helpful pointers on simple stretches for a healthy lifestyle, 5 apps to help keep you socially connected (including my favourite: Twitter), protective sunglasses, healthy snacking, green thumbs, and protecting your identity. Did I tell you that we seniors are the most targeted group because we tend to be so trusting?



An increasing number of members are choosing to switch to our interactive PDF version of STONY, which permits

readers to click on links to navigate about or jump directly to webpages that provide greater insight into topics introduced in articles. George Meek uses this feature extensively in his Health Services & Insurance report.

When the interactive PDF version is downloaded onto a smartphone, readers can also initiate phone calls to numbers appearing onscreen. Members can opt to receive the interactive version in their email or from our District 23 website. If you would like to help save a few trees, you are encouraged to sign up for the electronic version by completing an online form (<https://district23.rto-ero.org/opt-in-for-online-newsletters>) on our website - you can choose between single or double-page spreads. You can elect to do the same with Renaissance. By doing so, an added benefit is that you receive your copy of STONY Bridges or Renaissance in your mailbox a couple of weeks before Canada Post delivers the print version, and wherever you may be - even a cottage in the Muskokas!

This is your magazine - we seek submissions from you, the members of RTOERO District 23, North York, in the form of articles, poems, stories, travelogues and photographs. This is a great way to reach out to shut-ins!

Stay Well!



The Different Way We Perceive the World

by Karen Quinn – Communications Convener

“To effectively communicate, we must realize that we are all different in the way we perceive the world and use this understanding as a guide to our communication with others.” Tony Robbins

As we have mentioned in previous issues, one of our primary jobs in District 23 is the need to keep our members informed throughout the year. This year has demonstrated just how important communicating the latest data has been in our day to day lives. On March 13, the decision was made by Prime Minister Trudeau to literally bring Canada to a halt to stop the spread of the Coronavirus pandemic. Many of us took to our homes and stocked up on necessary provisions; some headed home immediately from travel spots and cruises with assistance from RTOERO Travel Insurance, while others headed home from southern vacation locations. The battle began to “flatten the curve” as the virus spread its way around our city, our province, our country and the world. The hashtag #We Are All in This Together”, was a familiar trending tag across the county. We watched our government and public health officials daily between 11:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. gauging our progress in fighting the virus and moving from isolation toward our stages of reopening!

While STONY Bridges is our primary publication that goes out to ALL members three times yearly, we use our monthly E-Newsletters to keep you informed during the interim times. This is how we were able to keep you, our members, aware of the cancellation of all regular activities following March 13, the creation of additional mobile devices classes to increase awareness of Zoom sessions and the use of communication via WhatsApp? As members became more knowledgeable about the Zoom program, we were able to offer it to our Executive group to hold their monthly sessions and eventually extend the opportunity to the Needlework and Craft group, the Book Club and Have-a-Java to allow people to gather virtually. The future of our regular gatherings for the North York Strollers, Pole Walking, Bridge, Cycling may also take a new direction as the world as we knew it begins to further evolve.

This year our distribution list for the RTOERO District 23 North York E-Newsletter has increased to just over 1775 members receiving updates, monthly reminders, “last chance event” offers and important information notices.

Since the beginning of 2020, our monthly E-Newsletter has changed its design as RTOERO launched a new branding to highlight the organization that is now nationwide. Our website, Facebook and Twitter pages reflect the new colours and graphics as does our STONY Bridges magazine. Our E-Newsletters are available on all these media sites.

The RTOERO monthly change lists continue to update our database, providing us with the contact information for each of our new members, as well as providing key changes to email addresses. Members must notify the Provincial RTOERO Office of all changes to their personal contact information. – we cannot make these updates at our local level. The Central Office created three new regions in the Prairies, Quebec and the Atlantic. The realignment by RTOERO saw some movement of our membership to other districts. Any other adjustments must be made by you should your address, phone number or email information change.

All of our members’ email addresses are kept private. When emails are sent out to the District 23 North York members, they only see their own email address. Only the convener has access to the complete list. Email addresses will not be shared with other members without your permission. Our domain provider is from the RTOERO: rto-ero.org and our distribution list and E-Newsletter template is provided through Mail Chimp services. As we have almost 1775+ members in our database, there is no service fee to District 23.

Distribution: On average, members receive one to three emails monthly from District 23, via this service. Some people have asked questions regarding RTOERO activities that I try to resolve or re-direct members to the appropriate Executive convener. I look forward to continuing to improve our services over the coming year.

Facebook: District 23 created a FACEBOOK page for our members that has been running for about two years now. This is designed to be an interactive site to encourage communication with our members. It continues to be a work in progress as we learn how to best utilize the technology. We provide updates from the RTOERO Office and promote local events and activities. Our monthly E-Newsletters are also posted on the site. Please check us out at: <https://www.facebook.com/rtoerodistrict23/>

We hope members choose to FOLLOW us, LIKE us and engage in dialogue with us.

We look forward to continue on this new journey with you. Let us know how best we can serve you with suggestions sent to us through our website where you can contact Executive members. We learned so much about ourselves, our organization and the world around us...let us continue to be one of your guides.



Recruitment and You

by Mary Ellen Lawless – Convener ~ Recruitment

“The expert in anything was once a beginner.”
Helen Hayes

Recruitment... what recruitment you might ask? My answer is the direct contacts each of us are making with friends and colleagues by telephone, e-mail or Zoom. For many, conversations will be around how people are managing with the home-schooling, contacting and trying to manage virtual teaching, and surprisingly, who has decided to retire.

And, when you hear of anyone taking this option for June, do talk up joining RTOERO as part of the retirement process. Never before has the one-to-one contact via technology been more important than during this current unprecedented time of social upheaval and restricted contacts with friends and even family.

Our March 2020 edition of Stony included a detailed outline of the many ways RTOERO is evolving, including its branding. Since then the Covid-19 virus has added a whole new level of requirements on all of us, including how the Retirement Planning Workshops would continue to be offered.

Accordingly, RTOERO will continue to offer two retirement planning webinars every week through until the end of August with sessions available in French and English. These webinars have been well received with over 80% rating it as “excellent” and close to 80% indicating they would be recommending membership in RTOERO to a friend/colleague. Always remember that RTOERO is the largest national provider of non-profit group health benefits. Our

organization owns the plan, sets the premiums, and makes adjustments to coverage as needs and times change!

To provide a friend or colleague with the contact information for the retirement planning webinars go to <https://rtoero.ca/events/>. And keep recruiting. We depend on you to spread the good news. Ours is a great organization, the envy of many, so let’s promote it every chance we get.

KEEP RECRUITING everyone!

Top reasons to join RTOERO

RTOERO welcomes members from the broader education community - including early years professionals, teachers and those working in schools, school boards and post-secondary.



Whether you are retiring this year or within the next 5-15 years, join RTOERO to cruise through retirement worry-free! From insurance plans to discounts, we’ve got everything you need to retire happy and make your awesome years healthy and fun.

Free

1. Free membership until you retire
2. Free retirement planning workshops

Insurance

3. Available to any member 50+
4. Largest non-profit health insurance in Canada for education retirees
5. Insurance plan is owned, designed and managed by members for members
6. Guaranteed acceptance within 60 days
7. Group plan = security for all members
8. No cost difference based on age
9. Comprehensive affordable coverage
10. Great coverage available across Canada
11. 93-day travel coverage included at no extra cost
12. In-depth, user-friendly insurance guide

Discounts and perks

13. 3,000+ MemberPerks® discounts
14. Preferred partner discounts on products for hearing and vision care
15. Exclusive travel discounts
16. Save up to 40% on home/car insurance

Member programs and services

17. Bilingual service and francophone districts
18. Events, clubs and activities in your community hosted by your peers
19. Exclusive group and solo travel, tours and discounts
20. Friendly walk-in service at RTOERO office
21. Fast response time
22. Retirement planning resources
23. Goodwill program
24. Support for healthy, active living

Political advocacy

25. Pension support and advocacy
26. Government advocacy on key seniors’ issues
27. Vibrant Voices advocacy campaign

Community service/giving back

28. Volunteer and leadership opportunities
29. \$100,000 annual community grant program
30. Scholarships for family members

Research

31. RTOERO Foundation funds research on healthy aging
32. Awareness campaign - social isolation

Publications

33. Renaissance - award-winning quarterly magazine
34. Monthly e-newsletters
35. Tax Tips - help for members during tax season
36. Pocket Planner calendar

Online community

37. Connect and engage with RTOERO and other members via Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn
38. Blogs and vlogs
39. Comprehensive resources at rtoero.ca





Connecting with Older Members

by Gwen Bumbury – Convener ~ Goodwill

“As you grow older, you will discover that you have two hands, one for helping yourself, the other for helping others.” Audrey Hepburn

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted our lives in many ways. We have all been trying to adjust and live through these unprecedented times in the best way we can. RTOERO District 23 took the initiative to contact our older members who live in Retirement Homes as well as those living with family members.

It was with great success that a group of nine District 23 dedicated volunteers – Goodwill Committee and members of the Executive made phone calls to over 200 older members. Most of the members contacted seemed resilient, calm, cheerful and accepting of their situations. Others expressed that the constant support from family members provided the needed help. The members that were contacted expressed much thanks and appreciation.



We asked our older members how they are coping day to day during these challenging times.

Here is what some had to share.

- learning new technology
- are encouraged to use technology to connect with family
- using the cell phone is the way to stay in touch with friends and family
- realizing the shutdowns are necessary
- engaging in doing jigsaw puzzles;
- writing books and articles
- reading and watching more TV
- caring for pets; baking cookies; knitting; painting
- looking forward to gardening
- getting meals delivered to their doors
- postponing a move to a Retirement Home has caused some anxiety
- sleeping more; needing to be outdoors

Birthday Recognition

RTOERO District 23 continues to send out birthday cards to our members 80, 85, 90, 95 and above

Every year at our Spring Luncheon we celebrate the birthdays of members reaching 70 and 90 years. They are invited to be our guests at the luncheon. This year that celebration did not happen. As a result of COVID-19 all events and activities including the Spring Luncheon had to be cancelled. On behalf of District 23, we would like to express warmest wishes to those members who did not have the opportunity to celebrate a significant milestone with colleagues and friends.

Donations

In honour of our members who reach significant birthdays namely: 80, 85, 90, and 95, District 23 makes an annual financial donation of \$300.00 to each of the following: Toronto Foundation for Student Success and the Angel Foundation for Learning. These two registered charitable organizations provide support to the nutrition program in both the Toronto District School Board and the Toronto Catholic District Board.

In Memoriam Policy, a donation of \$600.00 is made to the RTOERO Foundation in honour of District 23 members who have died during the current year.

Reminder

If you know of anyone who is sick or shut-in and should receive a Get Well or Thinking of You card, please contact one of the Goodwill members or District 23 Executive.

Goodwill Committee

Gwen Bumbury	416 491 1213
Xenia Cooper	905 881 5481
Maria Fernandes	416 493 7616
Kathy Shorney	416 225 1336



Walk with Nature

by Kathy Shorney – Convener ~ Nordic Poling

As the Fall approaches, we will be guided by the Provincial and RTOERO guidelines for a group activity. The Nordic Pole Walking encourages our members to participate in a fun fitness activity and to explore our local parks and trails. Pole walking is an excellent activity to build strength and to gain total body fitness. We are trying to break the stereotype around who uses this fitness equipment. As I observed walkers getting exercise during recent events, I have noticed an increased use of Nordic Poles

with all age groups. Our group is geared to all levels of fitness and sometimes members just like to come for a walk with friends. We usually walk for about an hour each at their own pace and fitness level.

*"In every walk with nature
one receives far more than he
seeks."
John Muir*

We would like to have monthly walks in local parks on the paved trails. We usually avoid the extreme weather of January and February. Washrooms are not always available. Watch for locations in STONY Bridges and in our monthly E-newsletter. When our group gatherings restart, a poster board with pictures and locations will be displayed at District 23 events. If we are able to carry on we will meet at 10:00 on the third Tuesday of each month in the parking lot adjacent to the paths in central North York. It is a fun group, who likes to share lively conversation while enjoying the outdoors. It would be easy to practice the safe distancing protocols. I attend rain or shine.



Earl Bales Park - Merv Mascarenhas

How Do We Contact YOU in the Time of COVID?

During this time, we encourage members not already receiving our monthly E-Newsletters, to register for our online communications to keep as up-to-date as possible. You find the information through our District 23 website: <https://district23.rto-ero.org> Look for the banner: "Register for our E-News from the Button", for new members not currently receiving the monthly E-Newsletter.

Potential new readers can also contact Karen Quinn at: kquinn56@gmail.com



Engage: End Isolation

by Mary Valtellini - District Foundation Representative

Many of our members supported last year's campaign "Engage: End Isolation". Our members are passionate and generous because when they donate to the Foundation, they are helping to foster respect, self-determination, better healthcare and social connections for older adults.

In the fall of 2020, the Foundation will once again award four \$25,000 grants to support projects that are advancing knowledge about the effects of social isolation and loneliness on friend and family caregivers. Many caregivers are seniors and this group is often forgotten!

The Foundation says goodbye to Jo-Anne Sobie, Executive Director since 2016. We will miss her advocacy! We welcome

and look forward to working with Mike Prentice, the new Executive Director of the Foundation.

We each have a role to play in helping to keep older adults socially engaged.



We obviously require government involvement (e.g. effective transportation systems), but there are steps we can each take to improve the quality of life for ourselves, neighbours, friends and family members—simply staying connected with others is an excellent place to start.

Please consider making a gift to the RTOERO Foundation today!



Advocating for Your Security

by Kathy Shorney – Convener ~ PAC

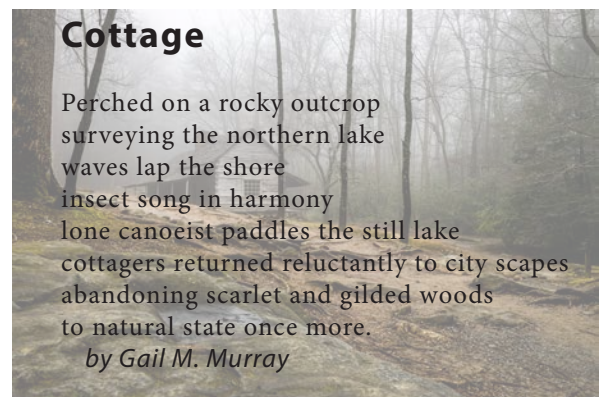
"It's our right, and our responsibility to advocate for and support positive and lasting change." Jim Grieve

During these rapidly changing and unusual times for all our members we want to share with you some of the actions that RTOERO is proceeding with, on your behalf related to the vitally important issues of Seniors' care and rights. These actions include concerns in regard to Geriatric Health Care (including Long Term Care), National Seniors' Strategy and environmental stewardship. We have also continued to provide education and advocacy related to elder abuse. The RTOERO Board of Directors has continued to meet with and create partnerships with like-minded organizations to create positive change. Because we have more than 81,000 members, we have a strong voice and believe in taking a positive proactive approach to the issues. Members have been pleased that RTOERO has taken a more vocal and forceful direction in the political arena.

In April, we wrote to all federal, provincial and territorial ministers of health, premiers and elected representatives at all three levels of government including the Prime Minister, to urge immediate and ongoing action to improve long-term residential care. We offered to assist in developing strategies to improve the situations of funding, staffing, facilities' care protocols, working conditions for all staff and inspections,

hoping to effect long-term changes not just during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The four Toronto District Presidents also wrote to our Toronto MPPs and Councilors regarding the need to address issues related to long term care. The other actions we have taken are letters to the Provincial government in regard to the availability of medications and costs. At the time of this writing we are now able to get a 3 month supply with one dispensing fee. As your convener I will continue to monitor the communications received from the central committees and relay any information to you through our various communication networks.



Cottage

Perched on a rocky outcrop
surveying the northern lake
waves lap the shore
insect song in harmony
lone canoeist paddles the still lake
cottagers returned reluctantly to city scapes
abandoning scarlet and gilded woods
to natural state once more.

by Gail M. Murray



TORONTO 4 DISTRICTS

Etobicoke/York – District 22

North York – District 23

Scarborough/East York -District 24

Toronto – District 16

**To: City of Toronto Mayor
City of Toronto Councillors
Premier of Ontario
City of Toronto Members of the Provincial Parliament**

RTOERO is a bilingual, trusted voice for healthy, active living in retirement. With over 81,000 members in Districts across Canada, we are the largest national provider of non-profit group health benefits for education community retirees. Members are those who are retired, or are approaching retirement, from the Early Years, Schools and School Boards, Post-Secondary Institutions and the broader education community.

The RTOERO Four Toronto Districts represent over 14,000 of these members and many of our members are residents of Ontario's long-term care homes.

For decades, across Canada, these long-term residential care facilities have languished despite the calls for reform. The sector has been characterized by underfunding and shortage of appropriately skilled and compensated staff. With around 50% of the deaths in Canada due to Covid-19 having occurred in long-term residential care facilities, we are sure that it is not lost on you that long-term residential care across Canada and in Toronto requires immediate and ongoing action. We are pleased with the immediate steps that are taking place to alleviate the current situation.

Once this pandemic is under better control, we expect all levels of government to work together on comprehensive, research-based policy, legislative and regulatory changes to provide quality, publicly resourced long-term residential care for the treasured elder members of Canadian society.

Using the model of the Canada Health Act, governments must work together to develop a universal public long-term residential care plan that is adequately accessible and funded. This funding will require the transfer of funds from Ottawa to the provinces and from the provinces to municipalities. Federal funding ought to be based on a cross-Canada standard. Such funds, when received by the provinces and distributed to municipalities, will need to be augmented with additional provincial and municipal standards and funding. Cross-Canada standards (working conditions, wages, standards of care, inspections) and funding (to be spent for the purpose received) will need to be augmented with Ontario and Toronto payments.

There are decades of provincial, national and international research into promising practices including the groundbreaking research Re-Imagining Long-Term Residential Care: An International Study in Promising Practices and findings of the 2002 Royal Commission on the Future of Health Care in Canada related to long-term residential care. We expect our governments to work together to transform nursing homes and long-term care facilities.

Our members have expressed their concerns about care for seniors. We also connect with other seniors' organizations eager to support this vital work. The non-profit sector can help support the policy and legislative work of government to improve long-term residential care.

We urge our Toronto representatives to support their Provincial and Federal counterparts to collaborate on identifying and implementing new strategies for long-term residential care throughout Canada.

Sincerely,

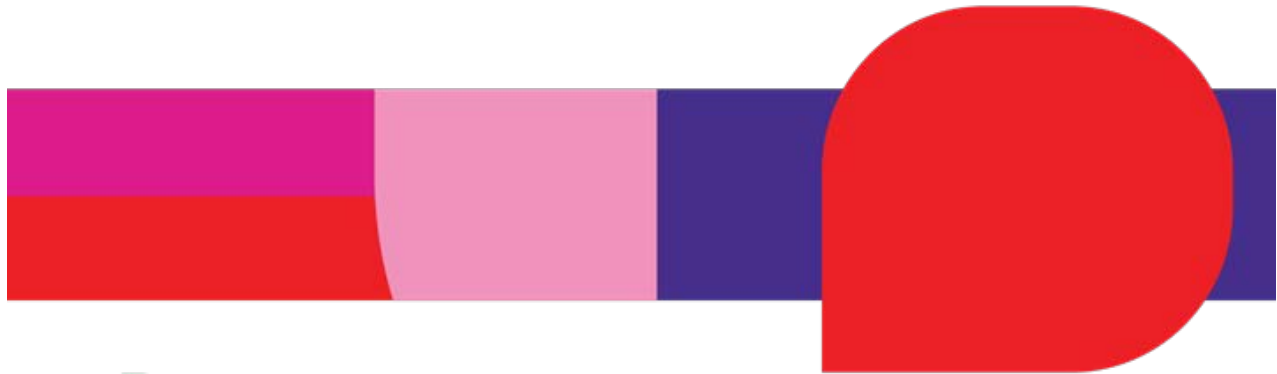
Paula Chambers, Chair of RTOERO Four Districts and President, District 24 Scarborough and East York
paula.chambers@rogers.com
<https://district24.rto-ero.org>

Betty Lou Reynolds, President District 16 City of Toronto
bettyloureynolds@hotmail.ca
<https://district16.rto-ero.org>

Karl Sprogis, President District 22 Etobicoke and York
sprogis@rogers.com
<https://district22.rto-ero.org>

Maureen Capotosto, President District 23 North York
mpcapotosto@sympatico.ca
<https://district23.rto-ero.org>

June 3, 2020



Hello RTOERO Members!

As we enter into the summer season, we also mark our fourth month of physical distancing and working remotely. We've all been striving to stay connected, engaged and informed. It's important that we take care of ourselves and those around us, especially in these times.

Many of us have been saddened and frustrated by the unfortunate news of tragedy, senseless abuse of power, violence and injustice toward black and indigenous individuals. However, we are also inspired by the collective displays of support, peace, and action taking place in communities worldwide. RTOERO members are characterized by their supportive voice. We are leaders in urging action, and in these times, we can use our community to make a positive impact. Things haven't been "normal" for some time, and that's just fine with us. We do not want to return to normal; together, we are committed to pursuing better. It's our right,

and our responsibility to advocate for and support positive and lasting change.

We have the privilege to use our voices in advocacy for equal and equitable access to education, fair policing, and the fair treatment of all Canadians. This is the focus of my video message this month, you can watch the video here: [Standing together](#)

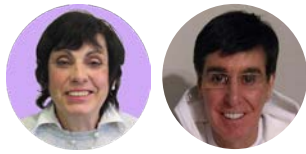
RTOERO is committed to allyship, speaking up for, and pursuing equality. We are all continuously learning. As we take care of our families and loved ones, let's remember to join together to listen and learn from each other.

Stay safe, healthy and connected.

Jim Grieve
Executive Director, RTOERO
June 10, 2020



This video can be watched on YouTube at:
<https://youtu.be/IK2PvcFBfcs>



Just before the Lockdown – Back in Time to the Don Jail

by Joanne Famiglietti – Convener & Len Nicholson – Guest

On March 5, 2020, the North York Strollers visited the Don Jail located at Broadview Avenue and Gerard St. E. In 1860 this site, then outside the city limits, was considered ideal according to the prison reform thinking of the day. These reforms included a balance of solitary time, work, exercise, fresh air and natural light. The architecture of the jail, designed by William Thomas, is in the Renaissance Revival Style. The Strollers were able to appreciate the finely crafted exterior consisting of a richly ornamental central pavilion “heavily rusticated of rough-hewn stone.” The builders also used a textured style called “vermiculation”, which were indentations on the central portico’s arched entrance. We also noted the sculpted keystone which is thought to appropriately represent Father Time!

The interior of the jail was designed to contribute to the physical and moral health of the prisoners. It features a grand four-story rotunda that reaches up to a large skylight. We also had an opportunity to visit the cells which measured 1 meter wide, 2 1/2 meters deep and 3 meters high. Originally designed for 276 prisoners, the rated capacity at the end of its service was 550 with an average prisoner load of 620! These conditions of

overcrowding gave the jail a bad reputation which led to its closure in 1977.

Today the jail forms a part of the Bridgepoint Hospital Administration Building. It is also where the Strollers enjoyed a delightful lunch together in the cafeteria. I am sure that as we remember that day, we realize how much our lives have changed and am sure we are all looking forward to the time when we can once again continue our strolls together.



As per RTOERO guidelines, we suspended all activities until our levels of government and Public Health determine it is safe to proceed in group activities. We are not announcing any future walks in our amazing city. Perhaps we will develop a new format for our group. Please check out our monthly E-newsletters where we will update our future strolls or a new type of adventure for your perusal. Check out our Communication and Website articles in this issue of STONY, and find out how you can enrol if you are not currently on our monthly E-newsletter distribution list.

Continue to explore, be safe and be well!

Dorset Haiku

The leaves are blowing
The summer sun shines brightly
And I stand watching

The loons sing mournful
Winds send the lake water rippling
And I sit listening

The fire light crackles
People’s voices rise in song
And I am remembering

by Gail M. Murray c1978



The Last Hoffman by Gwen Tuinman

review by Gail M. Murray ~ Member

Set in Narrows Falls, a fictional pulp and paper mill town near North Bay Ontario, Gwen's debut novel encompasses environmental stewardship much like Erin Brockovich. The main character Floyd Hoffman is the whistle blower who exposes the carcinogenic toxins the townspeople live and die with.

This touching story is about struggle: Floyd's inner struggles to protect his deceased wife's secret and connect with his teenage son Dean, parallel the external struggle to stop the mill owners of McClelland Pulp and Paper from poisoning the town. His crusade is as much about winning self-respect and justice as protecting others from the suffering his wife and son have endured.

Floyd Hoffman, an introverted man with a quiet nature who loves politics, history, reading and Walt Whitman, stands out in a blue-collar environment. He is humiliated at school by boys who bully him and later as men harass and hate him, fearing his efforts will shut down their only livelihood.

There is a dual timeline alternating between the 1980's as Floyd deals with Dean's illness and the 1960's reconciling with his past. Floyd's story opens in a 1953 flashback as his strict German father announces they are moving away to care for his ailing grandfather, abandoning him at 17. All he feels is shame.

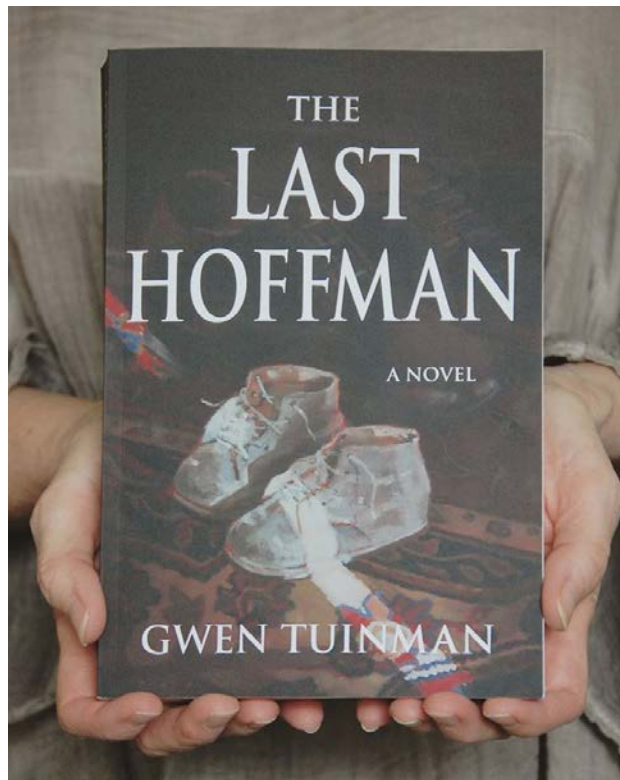
Tuinman captures the tone of small town life both with friendly folk such as Mr. Patterson, local pharmacist and father figure, and vicious neighborhood gossip Arlene at Arlene's Beauty Salon.

Mistrusting, wary and forced to grow up fast, Floyd becomes reclusive. When he meets stunning, high spirited Bonnie Brookman; his life changes.

Floyd looked into Bonnie's eyes, and his insides melted like butter. In that moment, he was completely lost in the beauty

of being seen by someone else. She looked past his dreary exterior, through his layers of shy awkwardness, and straight into his very heart (p73).

Their library dates progress to adventures at Brewster's Gorge where we first glimpse Bonnie's reckless behavior leaping from the gorge into the river below. She brings out his passion and protectiveness. Later in the marriage her moods shift between despondency and euphoria. He shows strength of character in the way he cares for their young son. Could Bonnie's manic depression have been influenced by her mother Rose Brookman's steely dominance?



For all, the novel features characters that are alone; it is a story driven by human connections and support from unlikely places like Dean's friend Allan, and Marian, the Brookman's housekeeper.

This reader became invested given the backstory of how Floyd handled Bonnie's mental illness. He gave of himself to keep her secret from the town and from Dean, "in a lucid moment before her death, Bonnie had begged, 'Let me be his angel. Please Floyd. Don't tell him I'm broken.'" (p130)

This novel is about second chances. Tuinman is fascinated by the landscape of human tenacity and believes we all can unearth hidden resilience. For Tammy King, Dean's girlfriend, a teen pregnancy becomes the stimulus to escape her critical mother and reach deep within to raise her child. This child Jody is the last Hoffman and Floyd's redemption.

With her vivid descriptions, natural dialogue and in-depth characterizations, Tuinman has fashioned a story that compels the reader to look beyond the surface in people. The ending is both heart-warming and triumphant.



Florence – Art is in the Air

by Gail M. Murray ~ Member

Florence is an intense and vibrant city, with tourists en route to galleries and locals on their way to work. Church bells chime amid staccato bursts from ever present vespas. With many narrow, medieval cobblestone streets, the motorcycle has taken over! Tourists beware. They dart about like wasps, so don't be bitten.

That said, Florence is an easy city to navigate on foot. Major historical sights branch out from the Duomo, the Gothic Santa Maria del Fiore cathedral, with its resplendent red brick dome. You won't get lost if you keep this landmark in sight. Cathedrals and galleries are located on the right bank of the Arno River, reminiscent of Paris.

High fashion leather boutiques and gelateria (Italian ice cream shops) displaying a rainbow of flavors are interspersed with museums, cafés and statue-studded piazzas. Ancient and modern co-exist in natural dichotomy. Impeccably displayed wares in shop windows are works of art. I needed a week just to shop in this incredible city but that is another trip. My focus was to drink in Renaissance art and Florentine culture and that is more than possible in a week. I also 'drank' gallons of cappuccino, thick creamy layers of steamed milk floating above strong coffee. Their cups are smaller than North America so I was drinking doubles.

Rick Steves, an expert on European travel, wisely advises to phone ahead and pre-book the main attractions thus avoiding both line ups and disappointment. The Uffizi Gallery which houses the greatest collection of Italian painting limits visitors to 780.

The line ups can take two hours. I met people who hadn't got in. I was not about to miss the Botticelli's! Thank goodness I had made the inexpensive long distance call and happily paid the three euro reservation fee to walk in at my appointed time. (From Canada or the U.S.A. call [011 39 055 294 883](tel:01139055294883)). The receptionist may answer in

Italian so after you say a polite '*Buon Giorno*' just add '*per favore inglese*' then reserve your date and time. Everywhere in Italy I found the Italians warm, helpful and friendly.

The Uffizi Gallery, made possible by the celebrated Medici's, is stunning in layout and design. It is relatively quiet and uncrowded. The great artists are represented – Giotto, Raphael, Michelangelo and Botticelli. The large-eyed Botticelli beauties are full of wonder like man before ejection from the Garden of Eden.

Man in an idealized state. How representative of the Humanist Movement begun in the Renaissance. How mesmerizing to behold '*Madonna of the Magnificat*', *Prima Vera*, and '*The Birth of Venus*'. Paintings date from the 13th to 18th century so many pre-Renaissance paintings have a dominant religious theme, in particular the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary. With Renaissance, art Greek and Roman influence is notable. The Uffizi's excellent gift shop carries definitive books on the collection.

Florence has so many masterpieces – the bronze doors of the Baptistry, the white room of the opulent Pitti Palace, the spectacular sculpture '*David*' at the *Accademia* whose eyes seem to look into your soul. Art permeates the city, inside and out. Sculptures adorn piazzas, ancient stone palazzo and marble bedecked cathedrals form a natural part of the architecture.

I wanted to experience the artistic beauty surrounding me without succumbing to '*Stendhal's syndrome*' so I tried to pace and prioritize to avoid saturation. Florence is an ideal base for side trips so I alternated between city and countryside. My thirst for art continued to be filled in the country too, in a different way. I strongly identify with Maureen Ashley's insight, "*those who experience sensory overload from the surfeit of artistic wonders in Florence are said to be suffering from Stendhal's syndrome.*"



Ponte Vecchio - Gail M. Murray



Duomo in Florence - Gail M. Murray

*There is no recognized equivalent for those overwhelmed by Tuscany's natural beauties.....it is impossible to travel through the region and be unmoved by its grace, wildness, its shapes, colors, and panoramas."*¹ Now I was a character driving through a painting. Undulating green hills, olive groves, vineyards, the soft golden glow of hillside villas, and the dark green cypress sentinels guarding the agricultural bounty. This is the Chianti Region of Italy. The most spectacular scenery stretches between Florence and Siena

Through the hotel concierge, I had signed up for a full day tour organized by Centra SITA Viaggi. I have high praise for SITA, its buses for package tours, city to city, and local transport. They provide comfort, knowledge and value in one company. Although it was May, high season in Tuscany, our bus was downsized to a van, making sightseeing even more personal. The seven of us accompanied by our doe-eyed, raven haired guide Chiara, took in the Tuscan countryside. We toured the picturesque village of Greve and the fifteenth century hillside estate, Castello d'Albola, in Radda. Its wine cellars emitted an intoxicating fragrance that I recognized from my excursion to Bordeaux. The aroma is called "*the angels' share*" and is strongest with red wines. The tour culminated with a generous tasting of seven different wines made on the estate. The dry, ruby red Chianti Classico won hands down and I usually drink French whites! This mix of Tuscan sun, Sangiovese and Canaiolo grapes produces this exquisite velvet liquid. Our tour ended with dinner in a local trattoria and a glorious pink sunset home.

If you are limited to only a few days and cannot get out to the country, visit the *Boboli Gardens*, Florence's only green space. The gardens are part of the *Pitti Palace*. This park-like setting has pathways that lead to hidden grottoes and artistically placed classical sculpture. The main stairway leads up to the *Giardino del Cavaliere* (Knight's Garden) with its cascading roses and peonies and a view of golden villas and deep green cypress in the distant hills.

A few days later, I boarded a local SITA bus for medieval Siena to explore this city's top two attractions – the Duomo and Il Campo. Siena's Duomo or main cathedral is a veritable

¹ Ashley, Maureen. *Tuscany*. London: Mitchell Beazley. C1996

art gallery. Its 13th century façade peppered with sculptures and frescoes is simple compared with this cathedral's interior which is decorated from top to bottom.

A compilation of black and white marble columns, marble floor mosaics, statues by Michelangelo and Bernini and the carved heads of one hundred and seventy-two popes gracing the ceiling is just the beginning. The piece that captured my interest was the Gothic pulpit by Nicola Pisani. Four marble lions the size of large dogs held up the ornate pillars which supported the main structure. Two were capturing prey and two were nursing their young – to me a connection of life amid death. In the library, the frescoes and hand written manuscripts illuminated in gold, gave a glimpse to the traveler of the inner sanctum once known only to the clergy. There was a constant muffled din inside the immense cathedral given the high ceilings and hordes of tourists. It was a respite to discover the small, perfect side chapel to the Virgin Mary. My focus was drawn to the serene blue and gold Madonna and child, and as I stepped inside the tiny chapel I experienced a moment of peace – a spiritual moment.

The *Duomo* is magnificent and a must see on any sojourn to Siena as is the celebrated *Il Campo* or central piazza surrounded by rose colored city hall with its striking medieval tower. As I sipped my cappuccino, I tried to imagine the fury of the Palio, Siena's explosive horse race of competing '*contrades*' or neighbourhoods - ten bareback riders galloping around the perimeter at breakneck speed amid throngs of onlookers.

Back in Florence, which was becoming '*home*', I continued to immerse myself in her art treasures. After a day of exploring the elaborate *Medici Chapel* and the opulent *Pitti Palace*, I climbed to *Piazzale Michelangelo*, a hilltop square in south Florence. Here I sat in comfort, the panorama of this magnificent city below. It was the best gelato I had tasted. Both gelato and cappuccino had become daily rituals. As the blood orange sun set over the peaceful Arno, the bride and groom posed for wedding photos and children chased pigeons around the bronze copy of David. One of those perfect moments you dream about.



Duomo in Florence - Gail M. Murray



Duomo in Florence - Gail M. Murray



Health Benefits: More Than a Report!

by George Meek – Convener & District Health Rep (DHR)

Health Matters is produced 4 times per year by the Health Services Insurance Committee (HSIC) and is included as part of 'Renaissance.' They are found on pages 14 to 18 of the Spring 2020, edition and on pages 14 to 18 of the Summer edition. It is my intention to highlight some of the important matters found therein along with other current important information. What follows is a possible roadmap to reviewing the many health plan and related articles that are found in these editions of Renaissance. Now you can organize your reading of the articles that interest you and then check them off.

Reminder: If you read STONY 'online' and if you find a previous article in Health Matters noted here that you wish to review (again), just click on the title and it will appear. Try it!

On another important matter, if you require more information in advance of, or after contacting Johnson Inc. or Global Excel (new) about a claim or any other Health Plans related matter, please do not hesitate to contact me at 416 226 3568 or at george.meek@sympatico.ca. Please 'look after your health and your finances'.



Important Health Plan Matters

1. Important Message from Martha Foster, Chair, RTOERO Board of Directors:

It's now been three months since the Canadian government issued a global travel advisory and the country went into lockdown to slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

The safety and wellbeing of our members is our only focus. We have kept in close communication with you on a variety of topics. Though our office is closed during the pandemic, our staff are working remotely, and we continue to offer the full range of member services.

At the beginning of the pandemic, we experienced an extraordinary level of use of our health plan services as we helped thousands of members to quickly and safely return to Canada. Some members experienced very complex situations, and we worked with them – through our travel insurance

partner Global Excel Management. I'm pleased to tell you that all impacted members are now safely back in Canada.

We have advocated on behalf of our members and other Canadians in urging government action on long-term care, travel refunds and prescription refill limits and dispensing fees. We are continuing to use the strength of our voice to raise issues important to our members with governments across Canada. Here are answers to some of the questions we have been receiving recently from our health plan members.

Q. During the pandemic, I'm not able to travel, access paramedical services or visit the dentist. Will there be a rebate or discount on health plan premiums?

A. While some services have been temporarily curtailed due to pandemic, others – like prescription drugs – continue to be used as usual. Many practitioners and services are starting to reopen across Canada. As that happens, we may well see a spike in usage. So, it's really too early to know whether claims to our plans are lower in 2020. Remember,

RTOERO owns and manages our non-profit health plans. The Benefits Committee and board of directors set the premium rates to cover the cost of claims. At the end of the year, if there is any surplus, it will be invested directly into the plan for the benefit of all plan participants. We will certainly keep communicating with you in the months ahead about the status of our plans.

Q. When can I start to travel again?

A. During the government travel advisory, clearly it's not yet safe to travel internationally. Once the advisory is lifted, travel coverage goes back into effect.

Q. Is travel within Canada covered?

A. Yes.

Q. I had to cancel my planned trip due to the pandemic. Instead of a refund, I received a voucher. What happens if the voucher expires?

A. If you are a member of the Extended Health Care Plan, you can submit a claim for any unused portion if it expires.

Q. Once the travel advisory is lifted, am I covered if I become ill with COVID-19 while travelling?

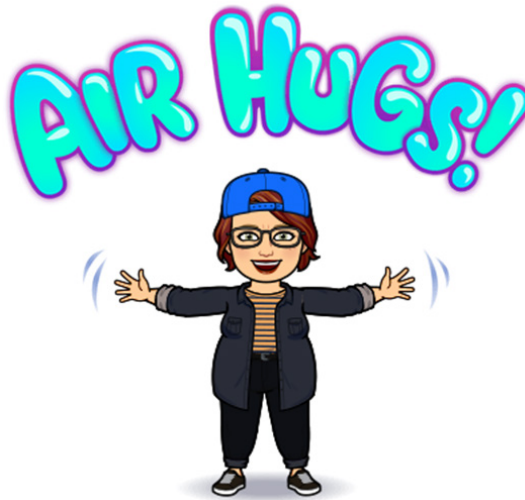
A. Yes.

If you have other questions, please contact us.

- Claims or service: [1-877-406-9007](tel:1-877-406-9007) or healthbenefits@johnson.ca
- RTOERO Benefits team: healthbenefits@rtoero.ca or [1-800-361-9888](tel:1-800-361-9888)

2. Further Important Information:

- Due to the spread of the COVID-19 virus, Global Excel Management and Johnson Inc. are currently experiencing exceptionally high call volumes. The Canadian government has issued an advisory to avoid all non-essential international travel.
- If you currently have a trip planned outside of Canada and are currently traveling and are calling to open a trip cancelation, interruption or baggage claim, we invite you to contact your travel supplier to cancel your arrangements and obtain all applicable refunds and credits, and then submit your claim online at <https://claimportal.globalexcel.com/Claimant/OpenClaim.aspx?language=en>. Please note, you have the option to submit your claim at a later date and Global Excel will review your insurance claim as soon as they are able to do so. For your coverage and benefit inquiries please send your questions to question@globalexcel.com.
- Please ensure to include your contact information along with your claim or policy number and they will get back to you as soon as possible.



3. See Spring 2020 Renaissance: Updates to Health Benefits

- New ways we are taking care of your health in our health plans: ([Spring- pages 14 & 15](#))

4. Highlights of Benefits Committee Meeting February 25 and 26, 2020:

- **Global Excel Management Travel Provider Update:** A presentation by Global Excel Management (GEM) gave the committee data on RTOERO Updates to Health Benefits - New ways we are taking care of your health in our health plans: (Spring- pages 12 & 13), all volumes,

claims opened and claims paid up to February 15, 2020. The committee was pleased with the numbers indicated as well as positive feedback received from members

- **Review of Plan Performance for 2019:** In looking at the performance of the plans for 2019, both the Dental and Semi-Private Hospital and Convalescent Care plans ended 2019 in a surplus position while the Extended Health Care Plan (EHC) had a deficit. The cause of the deficit was an increase in utilization, volatile travel claims and currency issues. Paid claims for EHC have risen by 8.6% over 2018. The deficit was paid from the Health Plan Stabilization Fund (our reserves) to the insurer, Sun Life.
- The top 5 drugs (by amount paid) were Shingrix, Nexium, Cialis, Libre and Crestor. The committee looked at the continued impact that Shingrix had on the plan. In January 2018 Shingrix received its DIN and the total paid out in our plan by the end of 2018 was \$1,855,427. In 2019 the amount paid out for Shingrix was \$2,672,478.
- In 2019 there were 47 claims for Out-of-Province/ Canada Travel exceeding \$100,000 with all claims occurring in the United States with \$10.4 million paid out. It is interesting to note the impact that exchange rate has on our plans. For example, in 2019 paid claims in US dollars amounted to \$17,472,173 which translates to \$23,226,852 in Canadian dollars, adding an additional amount of \$688,000 to the paid claims total.
- **Important:** On January 1, 2020 coverage for Out-of-Province/Canada moved to Royal and Sun Alliance Insurance (RSA) on a fully insured basis. This means that RTOERO will not responsible for deficits nor recoup any surpluses generated by this coverage; travel assistance and claims payment will be performed by Global Excel Management (GEM).
- **Switching from RTIP to RTOERO Group Insurance:** After careful consideration, the Benefits Committee recommended and the Board of Directors supported that any RTIP member wishing to switch from any of the 3 RTIP plans to the RTOERO group insurance program be guaranteed acceptance, without medical documentation.

5. Highlights of Benefits Committee Meeting May 20, 2020 From: Gayle Manley, Chair, RTOERO Benefits Committee:

Life continues to be interesting and challenging at the same time as we move through this COVID-19 crisis. RTOERO

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staff is all working well from home. The RTOERO Board of Directors is now meeting weekly to be updated about events and Committees and Presidents are meeting via Zoom conferencing. Retirement Planning Workshops are now being held on-line with great attendance. The Benefits Committee met for 3 hours with video conferencing - a unique experience for our committee but we were able to keep current with the financial results of our plans and ongoing issues related to the work of the committee. The highlights of our meeting include the following:

- The District Health Representative (DHR/UHR) Annual Workshop is now postponed indefinitely until further notice.
- Travel Update and Communications: In order to better inform our members a COVID19 landing page on the RTOERO website was created to publish key content to our membership; it is updated frequently with responses to frequently asked questions about travel and RTOERO issues.
- First Quarter Financials: The committee looked at claims for all plans in the first 3 months of 2020. As expected, claims for paramedical practitioners were down; however, claims for the three mental health practitioners have increased 25% compared to the first 3 months of 2019. The committee will continue to monitor the effects of COVID-19 on our plans over the coming months. As a not-for-profit plan, members can rest assured that any surplus in premium experienced in 2020 will be reinvested in the plan.
- Plan Change Suggestions: As per our annual renewal cycle, the committee looked at the cost impact for a number of plan change suggestions submitted by members.

6. Changes to the Travel Plan Effective January 1, 2020:

The RTOERO Benefits Committee through the Board of Directors announced changes to your travel insurance effective January 1, 2020. Royal and Sun Alliance Insurance Company of Canada (RSA) replaced Sun Life as the underwriter of the travel insurance. As well, Global Excel is the new travel assistance provider (replacing Allianz Global Assistance). Your Extended Health Care, Dental and Semi-private Hospital plans continue to be underwritten by Sun Life and administered by Johnson Inc.

For further information on these changes, I refer you to my article in the March 2020 (last) edition of Stony Bridges on [pages 18 to 20](#) (available on our website <https://district23.rto-ero.org/>).

7. Stability Clause for Travel (Important If You Travel)

You can find it on pages 59 to 61 entitled [Section 8- WHAT ARE YOU NOT COVERED FOR?](#) We understand it is pretty much the same but may be more restrictive in regard to any change in medication (check with Global Excel if you have a question). Reference is made to the 'Medical Referral Benefit' in the 1st paragraph (please see page 57). You should also review [Section 7- CONDITIONS THAT MAY LIMIT YOUR COVERAGE](#) on page 58. The following may be easier reading: in [Communique \(which accompanied the Insurance Plans Booklet\) on page 5](#) you will find an easier to read interpretation of all of this entitled [Understand the Stability Requirement for Travel Insurance](#) and on page 6 of Communique also read [When Travelling, you MUST Call Before Seeking Treatment](#). We hope all of this assists you.

Articles in 2020 Spring and Summer Health Matters That May Be in the Interests of Your Health:

- Updates to Health Benefits- New ways we are taking care of your health in our health plans: ([Spring- pages 14 & 15](#))
- Living Well- Health news, you can use: ([Spring- pages 16 and 17](#))
- Eat Well, Live Well- Food labels help you make your best choices: ([Spring: pages 18 and 19](#))
- Smart Medicine- Is the human touch of a doctor really needed: ([Summer: pages 14 & 15](#))
- Preserving Summer's Bounty- Freeze summer ripe fruits and vegetables to enjoy all winter: ([Summer: pages 16 and 17](#))
- Tick Prevention - Offence is your best defence in regard to Lyme Disease: ([Summer: pages 18 and 19](#))

Article Number 1: Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Frequently Asked Questions

What is coronavirus?

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness caused by a coronavirus that was first identified in China. What are the symptoms? The most common symptoms are fever, cough, and shortness of breath, but occasionally symptoms are more severe. Symptoms typically appear within two to 14 days after exposure.

How is COVID-19 spread?

The virus is airborne and spreads from person to person through coughing and sneezing. You may be at greater risk if you have recently lived in or travelled to regions where there are current



outbreaks or if you come into contact with someone who has the virus.

How do I protect myself and my family?

Basic measures to stay healthy include washing your hands frequently, for at least 20 seconds, maintaining social distance, and avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth. Stay at home if you begin to feel unwell, even with mild symptoms such as headache and slightly runny nose, until you recover.

What is the current risk in Canada?

The World Health Organization (WHO) reminds all countries and communities that the spread of this virus can be significantly slowed or even reversed through the implementation of robust containment and control activities.

How severe is it?

Many cases seem to be mild. But the elderly and those with pre-existing conditions (like heart and lung diseases or diabetes) are especially vulnerable.

What should I do if I want more information about COVID-19?

Best Doctors experts can answer questions, review risk factors, and share resources about the disease. Start a case today. Call [1-877-419-2378](tel:1-877-419-2378). Visit BestDoctors.com/Canada/Start. Best Doctors is now part of [Teladoc Health](#), the global leader in virtual care. (Last updated: March 20, 2020)

Article Number 2: Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)

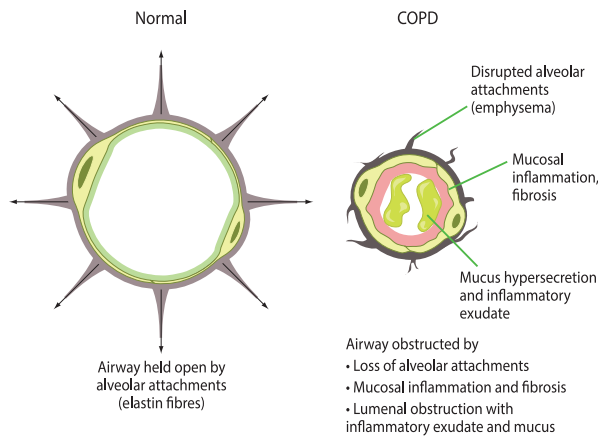
This is the name for a family of very common lung diseases that includes emphysema and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is the name for a family of very common lung diseases that includes emphysema and chronic bronchitis. COPD usually progresses gradually, causing limited airflow in and out of the lungs. It also adds to the work of the heart by reducing the amount of oxygen that goes to the blood. High blood pressure in blood vessels from the heart to the lungs makes it difficult for the heart to pump. Lung disease can also make the body produce too many red blood cells, which might make the blood thicker and harder to pump.

Smoking is the leading cause of COPD. Most people who have lung disease are smokers or former smokers. However, there are some exceptions. For example, long-term exposure

to other lung irritants - such as air pollution, chemical fumes, or dust - also may contribute to COPD. A rare genetic condition called alpha -1 antitrypsin (AAT) deficiency can also cause the disease.

Some of the symptoms of COPD are: • Shortness of breath • Chronic, productive cough (with mucus) • A feeling of “tightness” in the chest • Wheezing

There is no cure for COPD, but lifestyle changes can help reduce its effects. Smoking cessation is the most important key to healthy lungs. Limiting exposure to pollution or dust is also helpful for bronchitis. COPD usually progresses gradually, causing limited airflow in and out of the lungs. It also adds to the work of the heart by reducing the amount of oxygen that goes to the blood. High blood pressure in blood vessels from the heart to the lungs makes it difficult for the heart to pump. Lung disease can also make the body produce too many red blood cells, which might make the blood thicker and harder to pump.



A test called spirometry, where the patient blows into a measurement device, is the first step in diagnosing lung conditions, according to Gerald W. Staton, MD, a lung specialist and one of the expert consultants on the Best Doctors staff. “The most important step is smoking or environmental exposure cessation,” he said.

Next steps: Your physician can diagnose COPD based on your signs and symptoms, your medical and family history, and test results. If you have an ongoing cough, you should let your doctor know how long you’ve had it, how much you cough, and how much mucus comes up when you cough. Also, let your doctor know whether you have a family history of COPD. COPD can be difficult to diagnose because of the variety of factors that can cause it. But if you have been diagnosed with lung disease, your Best Doctors benefit can be an important tool in your overall approach to the problem. With comprehensive analysis and interpretation of your health care records, our medical experts can provide an objective, thorough second opinion that will guide your next steps and help you to breathe easier.

Article Number 3: Chronic Hypertension, or High Blood Pressure

The damage of high blood pressure starts in your heart and arteries. This is a very manageable condition that is most common in older adults. The most significant way that high blood pressure causes damage is by raising the load on the

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heart and blood vessels—making them work harder and less efficiently. Over time, the force and friction of high blood pressure harms the delicate tissues inside the arteries, eventually shrinking the arteries making the heart struggle to circulate blood. This can lead to other conditions that range from arrhythmia to stroke and heart attack.

“Hypertension is a known risk factor for heart attacks and stroke,”

according to Matthew Sorrentino, MD, a Chicago cardiologist and one of the medical experts at Best Doctors. “The absolute risk for a heart attack or stroke will be dependent on the age of the patient, how long hypertension has been present, and the degree of elevation of blood pressure,” he added. Usually, hypertension is defined as blood pressure above 130/80 and is considered severe if the pressure is above 180/120.

The symptoms of high blood pressure can often be related to other health problems, so that diagnosis of hypertension is sometimes a challenge for healthcare providers. As with many conditions, lifestyle considerations are central to the management of high blood pressure. Eating a healthier diet with less salt, exercising regularly, and taking medications can help lower blood pressure. Common symptoms are:

- Severe headache
- Fatigue or confusion
- Vision problems
- Chest pain
- Difficulty breathing
- Irregular heartbeat
- Blood in the urine
- Pounding in your chest, neck, or ears

While there is no cure for hypertension, lifestyle and medication are the keys to making it more manageable. And because it is so common and includes symptoms of other conditions, your Best Doctors benefits can be a valuable tool in your approach to your general health and wellness. With a consulting staff of the top medical experts worldwide, Best Doctors can give you the peace of mind that comes from an objective and thorough second opinion.

Article Number 4: Contacting Best Doctors is as easy as ...

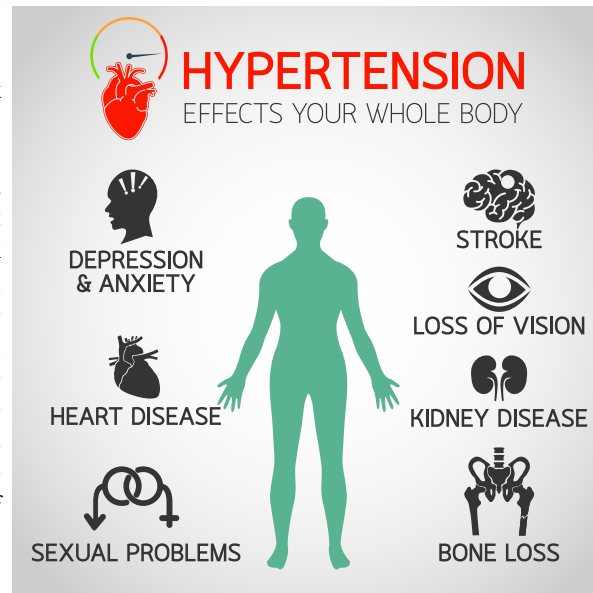
Visit bestdoctors.com/canada/rtoero, Best Doctors is now part of Teladoc Health, the global leader in virtual care.

- Access a range of services that can help you: Call toll-free [1-877-419-2378](tel:1-877-419-2378) or visit bestdoctors.com/canada/

rtoero. A series of demographic questions will be asked including: name, DOB, e-mail address, home address, phone numbers, and how you are covered. You will be asked how you (or your child, parent or parent-in-law if they are accessing) are covered for Best Doctors

Answer: through your RTOERO Extended Health Care plan

- Confirmation: Once your eligibility is confirmed, a member of the Best Doctors team will contact you to move your case forward
- Feel confident about your diagnosis and treatment options
- Answer your medical questions and concerns
- Find a specialist or treatment facility either within or outside of Canada
- Navigate the healthcare system with useful resources
- Get your diagnosis double-checked by a specialist. It could change



your life .

- Your available services include:
 - » Expert Medical Opinion Review of an existing diagnosis and treatment from a world-renowned expert to confirm them or recommend a change.
 - » Best Doctors 360° Get a variety of information that's condition-specific, including websites, articles, and community resources that can assist your medical needs.
 - » FindBestDoc: Provides names of local specialists who meet your specific criteria.
 - » FindBestCare: Provides names of specialists outside of Canada who meet your specific criteria.
 - » Medical Records eSummary: Receive up to 3 years of your medical records on a USB drive and an expert will review them to provide you with a Health Alert Summary

General Disclaimer: Information contained herein is intended to be used for general information and should not replace consultation with health care professionals. Consult a qualified health care professional before making medical decisions or if you have questions about your individual medical situation. RTOERO makes every effort to ensure that the information in 'Health Matters' is accurate and reliable but cannot guarantee that it is error free or complete. RTOERO does not endorse any product, treatment or therapy; neither does it evaluate the quality of services operated by other organizations mentioned or linked to 'Health Matters'. The source of many articles is Best Doctors.



Service To Others Project

by Maureen Capotosto – Convener, PSTO

“I cannot do all the good that the world needs. But the world needs all the good that I can do.” Jana Stanfield

Each year RTOERO District 23, North York supports a Project – Service to Others. We apply and seek funding which is greatly appreciated by the organization that we support. Our members support the project in whatever ways we request donating personal care items, gift cards and children’s books where appropriate. Additionally, our Needlework and Crafts group donates funds from their fundraising efforts and the funds raised by the Artisan Craft Sale at our Holiday Season event are donated to the organization chosen for the year.

This year the application process has been delayed and we have yet to submit an application. We are considering several possible projects nominated by members. In choosing a project we are guided by the Program Aims & Objectives and the Criteria.



Program Aims and Objectives

- To provide a means, via financial assistance, by which RTOERO members can participate in education, social and community projects (to a maximum of \$4,000.00 per District applying).
- To promote District participation in local, provincial, national and international projects which provide a service and give back to the community, and society at large.
- To demonstrate, through these projects, that RTOERO and its members care about their communities and about public education and are willing to help others who need assistance.
- To raise the profile of RTOERO and its members, including retired teachers, other educators, and educational support staff.
- To demonstrate to active education employees and to the general public that RTOERO members continue to serve after they retire.
- To demonstrate to potential RTOERO members that RTOERO is a dynamic organization they should consider joining before or after retirement.

The additional restrictions around involvement and participation are of concern as well. We will make our decision and submit our application in August. We have a long history of support and involvement through our projects and I am confident we will find a way to continue in our new environment.

Service to Others Projects

Year	Service to Others Project
2000	Willowdale Community Centre provides educational assistance to needy students
2001	Daycare Teacher training in Belo supports the training of Horizonte, Brazil daycare teachers
2002	Summer camp vacation for Inner city ESL Single Moms
2004	Circus! Circus! The Therapeutic Clown program at the Hospital for Sick Children
2006	Peer Support Groups for Young Women experiencing poverty and abuse
2007	Soul to Soul Webcast – Youth Program
2009	Eileen’s Project: Supporting Children and Families with HIV and AIDs through The Teresa Group
2010	Every Child a Reader: Supporting the Work of the Children’s Book Bank
2011	Supporting the Children at the North York Women’s Shelter
2012	Soaring Heights
2013	Sensational Seniors: Supporting the Work of the Downsview Services for Seniors
2014	Canadian Helen Keller Center
2015	Academics, Leadership and Learning
2016	Education Beyond Borders
2017	Room for a Child
2018	Turning the Page Libraries
2019	The Period Purse Projects: Menstruation Nation

*“Do your little bit of good where you are; it’s those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world.”
Desmond Tutu*



Living my Life through the Gift of Music

by Margaret E. Thibideau ~ member, RTOERO District 23

COVID has been such a challenging moment of history for all of us, but particularly for our senior population, as we miss our children and grandchildren coming by for visits and dinners. We miss our vibrant community, our morning outings and tea with friends on a sunny patio. This has been our reality for the past three months, and it will continue to be our reality in some form for some unknown period of time. As difficult as it has been, it has also been a time when I have tapped into my creativity in order to maintain my sanity, my usual fallback when I find myself in such a moment of my own personal health history.

Self-isolation is not only used in times of pandemic; those of us with suppressed immune systems or other illnesses which put us at risk must self-isolate from time to time when we are feeling vulnerable. This situation is one that I have learned to live with from very early childhood and must come back to from time to time. When I was six years old, I contracted pneumonia in both lungs. Living in a remote area of the province with limited access to medical expertise meant that my family had to be thankful for the advice and the drugs which were available at that time. There were also limited kinds of drugs used to treat pneumonia, as more sophisticated antibiotics had not been developed. The doctor decided that the best way to recover was to pull me out of school for an extended period of time, and keep me at home until I recovered to some extent in order to avoid becoming more ill by possible catching different other germs. For six months, there were no friends coming over, no big family Christmas parties, no birthday parties to attend. The only people coming in and out of the house were my parents, siblings, the family doctor and the occasional priest who would come to give me what was known as "The Last Rites" before a person might die.

After about six weeks of being completely bedridden, I was feeling somewhat better, but still not strong enough to do much. The slightest change in air temperature set me wheezing, coughing and gasping for breath. And in spite of my parents' attempts to assure me that I would get better eventually, it just seemed like an eternity that I had not seen my schoolmates, and life was really boring for a curious six year old mind.

And thus, I started to explore the sounds of the piano which was sitting in our living room. My entire family is musical,

having been influenced by my grandmother, who had been a concert pianist and violinist, and I loved to listen to my siblings practice on the piano, and my mother's singing in the kitchen. When I was feeling a little bored, I would just sit at the instrument and listen to the strings vibrating, trying to play very softly, and then very loudly. Finally, after several weeks of listening to this experimentation, my parents decided that as soon as I was able to return to school, that I would get some private music lessons as well. In that way, they thought, I could have a lifetime of enjoyment. My mother showed me a few basics in the meantime.

It just seemed like an eternity before I could return to school. Between the times that I felt well, there were still long stretches of days that I was so weak that I could not get out of bed. I missed my friends. And even though I eventually did go back to school, I was not allowed to participate in phys. ed classes and had to stay in for recess most days. But by late spring, I was well enough to sign up for that first piano lesson.



The next fall was not much better. My pneumonia, bronchitis and asthma continued as a perpetual cycle for the next five years. The good news was that my music teacher, who lived in a nearby city, was willing to offer me lessons when I could come, and she was not too worried about my progress when I was ill. She gave me extra music to practice for fun during the times when she knew I would inevitably be ill again. At these times, when I was feeling a bit better but not able to go out, I practiced, practiced and practiced. This was a positive use of my time and I did not have to worry about anything when I was sitting at the piano, completely absorbed in the amazing combination of sounds that could be created.

This interest in music while I was ill, did not stop with the piano. We had several other instruments in the house at my disposal, as well as a TV, where there was a show called "Folk Guitar Plus" with Laura Webber. My father had recently found a guitar, which my sister started learning, and I decided that I could try the guitar as well as ukulele, recorder and the pipe organ at our church. Since my illness was something that came and went with fall, winter and spring, year after year, learning to play music on several instruments. I kept piano as my first love as my saving grace in the absence of being able to socialize with friends when the pneumonia issues re-surfaced. I learned to play many other instruments

over my adolescence and into university, eventually studying music and becoming a music teacher as well as performing professionally.

Weakness in my lungs was likely a pre-cursor to the many other health issues which have come my way over the years, including auto-immune problems, and so, from time to time, I have to stay inside safely tucked away from germs and viruses. COVID-19 just seems like another episode of this minus the actually feeling ill part. Music has been my passion as a result of the boredom of the illness of my childhood.

Whatever you have been doing over these past few months, I would encourage you to try a new skill or throw yourself into a forgotten one if possible. If you are not musical, perhaps there is an artist inside of you, a poet, or a storyteller. There is a virtual world to explore that most people of our generation have no idea about. I have spent my time learning about virtual music making, as well as composing and creating a few videos of music that I love to sing, and look forward to the day when I can stand or sit in front of an audience again, and share my love for music in person.



Keeping Busy & Being Creative

by Margaret Schuman - Convener ~ Needlework & Crafts

The Needlework and Craft Group have continued to create many unique items. To keep in touch, we have had two ZOOM meetings. We enjoyed sharing ideas and creations that have been completed. We also shared ideas for future projects. Discussions were lively and the creativity was flowing.

New members are welcome to join the group.

We will continue with our meeting schedule holding Zoom meetings for the immediate future.

- Thursday, September 17, 2020
- Thursday, October 22, 2020
- Thursday, November 19, 2020
- Thursday, January 21, 2021
- Thursday, February 18, 2021
- Thursday, March 18, 2021
- Thursday, April 22, 2021
- Thursday, May 20, 2021

If you are interested in joining in or require more information contact: Joan Bourne jbourne@sympatico.ca or Margaret Schumann schumanmp@gmail.com

You are most welcome to join future Zoom meetings. Send your name and email to either Joan or Margaret listed above.

But we really look forward to having “real meetings” again!!

“Art is not what you see, but what you make others see.” – Edgar Degas.



Twiddle Muffs montage.jpg



How Can Estate Planning Contribute to Our Well-Being?

by Mary Valtellini – 2nd VP & Gwen Scriven ~ 1st VP

“How Can Estate Planning Contribute to Our Well-Being?”

Date to be determined

10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Guest Speakers: Chris Clapperton, Estate Law specialist

Bank of Montreal Representative, Estate Planning

Join us for our first Speaker’s Series session of the year, to find out from an Estate Law Specialist what we need to consider and prepare as our final plan for the management of our Estate. In this meeting, we can begin to examine what steps we need to ensure will make the process as simple as possible.

Cut-off Date: TBD

Register now by e-mail with Mary Valtellini: mary.valtellini@rogers.com.

This will be a virtual meeting powered by:



Registrants will receive instructions on how to join the meeting. Go to <https://district23.rto-ero.org/resources/e-devices> for information on zoom.



Good Coffee is a Pleasure. Good friends are a Treasure!

by Elizabeth Clarke – Convener ~ Have-a-Java

Have-a-Java is a very popular social event which was well attended up until February 2020. It provided an opportunity to gather, socialize, renew or create friendships as well as meet members and convenors of the many District 23 activities. Then Covid-19 raised its viral head and Have-a-Java went virtual in June. It was a great success. Twelve people signed up and seven people participated. Quite a change from our usual meeting place. This time we had to provide our own beverage and treat though we peeked into the homes of the participants and had a salad dressing tutorial.

Hopefully we can resume meeting at Bayview Village the third Wednesday of the month when we

get the go ahead from the Province and RTOERO. Until then keep the date and **join us virtually on Zoom**. Check the monthly E-newsletters for information on how to register and join.



Have_a_java.jpeg

Meeting Dates

- Wednesday, September 16, 2020
- Wednesday, October 21, 2020
- Wednesday, November 18, 2020
- Wednesday, December 16, 2020
- Wednesday, January 20, 2021
- Wednesday, February 17, 2021
- Wednesday, March 17, 2021
- Wednesday, April 21, 2021
- Wednesday, May 19, 2021
- Wednesday, June 16, 2021



Social in the Time of COVID!

by Mildred Frank ~ Social Convener

“I love those connections that make this big old world feel like a little village.”

– Gina Bellma

Each year the Social Committee traditionally holds three major events for members. As we plan for next year, we are living with the restrictions imposed provincially and by RTOERO not to hold events for large numbers of people. A good number of our members fall into the vulnerable category because of age and we do not want to put anyone in harm’s way. So as much as it would be wonderful to see each other in person, we are making an effort to adapt to current reality.



Our first event in September will be a **VIRTUAL** Champagne Breakfast to welcome new retirees and to introduce them to the variety of activities District 23 makes available. It will be held at **10:00 a.m.** on **Thursday, September 24, 2020**. As noted in several articles in this issue of **STONY Bridges**, due to necessity this will be a **virtual experience** using ZOOM. Make your favourite brew of coffee/tea and enjoy a breakfast you have created.

Both new retirees and regular members are welcome.

If you wish to attend, and we hope you do, please send an e-mail to Mildred Frank at speakingfrankly@rogers.com. You will then receive information regarding details of the event.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

We plan to celebrate the Holiday Season and hold our AGM at 10:30 a.m. on Wednesday, November 25, 2020. Stay tuned for details on how to join this event on Zoom.

On Hold

Life on hold

Fear, monotony, loneliness

Wake, shower, prepare blueberry smoothie

support the immune system

Walk a different route each day

exercise, read, watch a movie

The Waltons – a feel good moment

Daily rituals.

Look forward to

Dinner

Nightly rendezvous with

Tory, Ford, Trudeau, updates, bylaws, restrictions

We’re all stressed, disconnected, putting on weight

sales in liquor and junk food on the rise

restaurants, churches, parks closed

only essential services

that’s beer but not beauty salons.

Life punctuated by small miracles

purple crocus, sun and soft breezes

my cat’s purr as I stroke her fur

smiles, waves of strangers

sound of a human voice, cherished phone calls.

Browse photos of good times

Dances, travel, dinner with friends

Before this new reality

Face masks, gloves, hand sanitizer

Before grocery shopping became

an act of courage

Before social distancing, self-isolation

Before friends could unknowing

harbor the dread virus COVID – 19

I want to dance again.

by Gail Murray



Pastoral Prince Edward County – A Summer Tradition

by Gail M. Murray ~ Member

In the mid 1970's when rural Pickering exploded into suburbia, my parents, Grace and Bill Carr moved to pastoral Prince Edward County, on the eastern shore of Lake Ontario. This island boasts acres of shoreline, beaches, vineyards, farms and stately Victorian homes, many now B and B's. Picton, Bloomfield and Wellington are the main towns. Here we discovered fabulous Sandbanks Provincial Park.



Sand Dunes - Gail M. Murray

Living in Toronto, it didn't take long before I was spending huge portions of my summer in 'the county'. With my family I would drop by friends' farms for coffee and conversation, admire livestock at local fairs and enjoy family picnics at Sandbanks. It soon became my favourite respite and symbol of summer. Sandbanks with its long walking white sand beach, huge mountains of dunes and cool lake with rippling sand. With its waist deep water, not unlike the well-known Wasaga



Stallions - Gail M. Murray

Beach, it was the best place to experience summer.

Fast forward to today and it isn't summer until I visit 'the county'.

At the halfway point in the drive, the air is clear and clean, cows and horses graze, cornfields and sunflowers predominate. Stress melts away. Today PEC is firmly on the tourist map

but retains its rural charm.

En route I'll stop at P.E.C. Lavender to load up on lavender products and wander the fragrant fields. Mom used to make egg salad sandwiches and potato salad for our beach picnic but today I stop at Schroedter's Farm Market for great take out sandwiches and Gluten Free banana muffins from their in-store bakery -- after all I am a city girl, with a country heart.

After a day of walking the beach, hiking the dunes and frolicking in the waves I often stop by friends for a BBQ at the pond on their farm property. I bring fresh picked corn from a roadside stand and a bottle of wine to share. Our parents have passed on but we kids, now in our sixties, still get together.



Slickers Ice Cream - Gail M. Murray

The area, settled by Loyalists has wineries, Victorian architecture, fine restaurants, charming shops and cafes especially in Bloomfield which reminds me of a smaller version of Niagara-on-the Lake. There you'll find the best homemade ice cream at Slickers. They make small batches with local produce, so flavours vary depending on what's in season. Apple Pie has freshly baked apple pies crumbled into creamy vanilla ice cream. Other delectable offerings include:



Lake on the Mountain Inn - Gail M. Murray

Camp Fire Marshmallow, Rhubarb Ginger, Raspberry, Mango, and Coffee Toffee. It's a must taste stop on my visit.

I like to feel the wind in my hair riding the Glenora Ferry. It's free and fun for kids of all ages. My dad enjoyed this part of his day the most, riding the car ferry on his way to work. This local ferry crosses the Bay of Quinte to Kingston and is below 'the county's' natural wonder, Lake-on-the-Mountain. From this vantage point I gaze out at the smooth surface of the upper lake. Over lunch on the outdoor patio, I watch the ferries cross below in the bay – so soothing.



Glenora Ferry - Gail M. Murray

In the old days, of course, I stayed at my parents' home. Now I stay at a bed and breakfast and there is a huge variety on offer. I've found a favourite I return to over and over again called Nap-n-Nosh. It's run by a British couple who spent their careers in Asia and have furnished their charming rooms with furniture from China, India and Thailand. Their large perennial garden and pond offer pleasant respite and Slickers and the shops of Bloomfield are at your doorstep. I feel like I am visiting old friends each time I stay. But then Prince Edward County has that warm, friendly feel to it – my home away from home and summer tradition.



Gord & Monika & Joanne having dinner on the barge. - Gail M. Murray

Living on Hold

2013
devastating ice storm
trees fall, power out, city in a stand still
he was there, reassuring
making hot tea for them on his gas stove.

2017
"Hold her" he whispered tenderly
as her little cat drew her last breath.
He grounded her grief.

2020 COVID – 19 pandemic
She's relegated to a phone call every few weeks
"You're managing, coping well"
his allegiance changed;
"I was in Florida with her in February
so we self-isolated together upon returning."
Now they're practically living together.
With her, he was clear from the beginning
He'd no intention to marry or live together.

Before this pandemic
she could pretend
He was with her in *that* moment
He'd buy her brunch at their usual table,
hold her hand walking the boardwalk
like the sweethearts they once were
Now that's a steep fine if you're not living at
the same address thanks to Mayor Tory
doing his best to keep us safe, make us adhere
social distancing, avoid spreading the deadly virus.

He abandoned her long ago;
it's just sinking in now.

She can't even meet someone new
no large groups allowed to congregate
no meetups, hikes, dances, classes
restaurants closed
everything cancelled for months
the logic is sound
look what happened in Italy.

She lives on hold
growing older by the minute
running out of time to love again.

by Gail M. Murray



Just Zoom-ing. How About You?

by Vern Paige ~ Convener, e-Devices

Like many groups around the world, unable to meet safely in person since March, we have “gone online” to continue our activities. After unavoidably missing our meetings in March we resumed early in April with regular “virtual meetings” using **Zoom** software (see article on next page) and then augmented our resources with the messaging app **WhatsApp** (see the article elsewhere in this issue). How appropriate that a group interested in using “**mobile electronic**” technology to improve our lives is now using the technology more than we ever imagined.

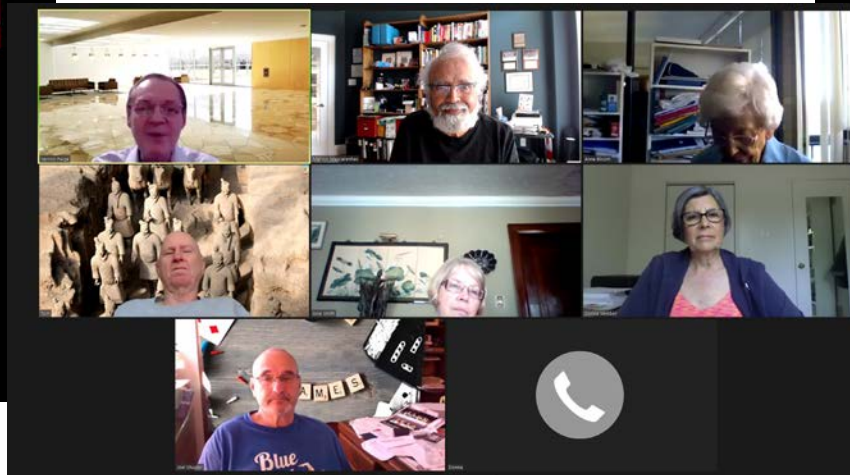
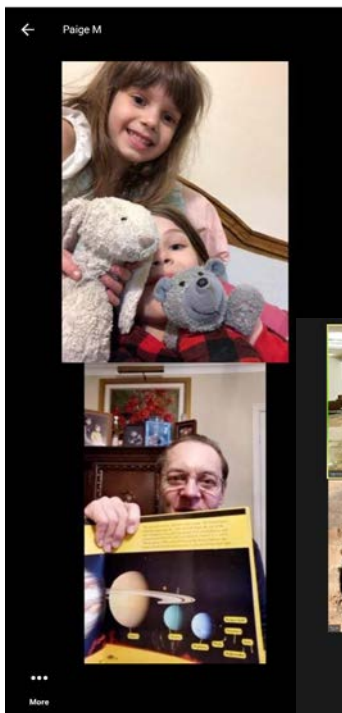
The Group “meets” alternate Fridays from 10:30 a.m. until noon by **Zoom** and shares information (and occasional humour) continuously through **WhatsApp** on smartphones. Upcoming e-Devices **Zoom** meetings are August 7 and 21, September 4 and 18.

On **WhatsApp** we have formed a “chat group” named “**RTO-23 versus COVID-19**”. You can join this group by following this link: <https://tinyurl.com/RTO23WhatsApp>. This will direct you to install **WhatsApp** on your smartphone if you haven’t already done so, and then connect you with the group.

Through these 2 means of communication during the pandemic restrictions, we have discussed how to use these same 2 technologies, and others such as **Twitter**, for the following purposes:

- Reading and sharing news and reliable information.
- Entertainment (our own and our offspring).
- Education (for us and our offspring).
- Socializing safely.
- Remaining physically active.

We hope you can join us!





Zoom: Putting the Social Back into Our Lives

by Vern Paige ~ Convener, e-Devices & Merv Mascarenhas ~ Webmaster

For most of us, for most of this year, the COVID-19 pandemic has all but eliminated in-person socializing. To try to limit the spread of a deadly new disease, to reduce risk to the health and lives of ourselves and loved ones, we have stopped meeting face-to-face with family and friends.

However, technology can let us socialize in other ways. One of these is through “virtual meetings” or online video conferences. This isn’t all new. In 2003 my nephew in Vancouver introduced his fiancée to his parents in London by Skype. Before video was possible, there were telephone conference calls. Before that, more than 100 years ago, neighbours shared “party-line” gatherings (not always willingly!)

Technology has improved of course, and the pandemic has driven us to it to mitigate our feelings of isolation. Skype is still used, much improved in 17 years, now sponsored by Microsoft. Among many alternatives, **Zoom** has found prominence for use in business and education as well as socializing.

Many group activities that were cancelled or suspended because of the pandemic have resumed in modified form, as “virtual” gatherings, online, using the Internet and software such as Zoom. Other software providing some similar features include Google Meet, Skype, Microsoft Team, Facetime, WhatsApp and Houseparty. Each has advantages and disadvantages. Zoom is often rated as the “best overall” as well as best in several specific categories. RTOERO has decided to use Zoom for meetings and many group activities. In District 23 we are using Zoom to continue bi-weekly meetings of our **e-Devices Group** (formerly Mobile Electronic Devices Group) and are considering it for several other activities.

Do not think of Zoom as just a poor substitute for in-person gatherings. It is much more, not just a substitute but an alternative and in many ways **better**. Zoom allows meetings of up to 100 people (up to 49 visible on your computer screen at one time) without the time or expense of travel and accommodation, without having to manage catering and cleaning. You cannot hug and kiss, but instead of rarely or occasionally you can meet as often as you want. Family in Toronto have met with family in Spain at least weekly since March; without Zoom there would probably have been only one or two phone calls monthly. A small effort to “learn” Zoom has paid back with opportunity and willingness to learn; the novelty intrigues children, and adults are motivated to improve their technology skills which is itself a benefit.

We use Zoom for music lessons, tutoring and homework assistance, bedtime storytelling, “Happy Birthday” singing - all more frequently than before-pandemic, novelty-enhanced, and without time-consuming travel.

By reducing travel, we have more time for other things, savings on car expenses leave a little more money (e.g. for more wine), and police report a significant reduction in accidents. “Screen-sharing” during Zoom meetings lets us discuss photos and information as we share them, a more involving experience than merely exchanging emails. Having intended to adopt Zoom as only a temporary accommodation to pandemic restrictions, many organizations have begun to recognize other benefits, among the obvious being the ability to provide services (education, information, entertainment, etc.) more efficiently to more people at less expense.

Even if all pandemic restrictions were to end immediately, many uses of Zoom will continue because of unexpected benefits that have been recognized.

Zoom meetings can be held by computer, tablet, smartphone, or any phone. Someone participating with only a “not-smart” phone cannot, of course, be seen by others nor enjoy the video experience, but it is at least an option to avoid complete exclusion. Zoom meetings can be recorded to re-live the experience or to share with others who could not participate.

You can participate in a Zoom meeting through the Zoom website, using most browsers, or by dialing with a not-smart phone, but at least one person must act as “host” and must install the Zoom app on their computer, tablet, or smartphone. The “experience” of a meeting is also slightly improved by using the app rather than a browser window. Meetings are completely free of advertising. The app is free to download and install, requiring only that you register your name, email address and birthdate. (I do not encourage dishonesty, but, just between us in confidence, you can give any date that shows you are over 18.) The only advertising is Zoom’s permanent but unobtrusive suggestion that you upgrade from the free Basic license to a paid license.

A free Basic license allows you to “host” unlimited meetings of 2 people for up to 24 hours, and unlimited meetings of up to 100 users for up to 40 minutes. A Pro license for \$20 monthly removes the 40-minute limit and allows some additional features. More information specifically for RTOERO members, is available on the District 23 website at: <https://district23.rto-ero.org/resources/e-devices>.



What's the Buzz? Using WhatsApp to share...

by Merv Mascarenhas ~ Webmaster & Vernon Paige ~ e-Devices

Four years ago, we were touring the British Isles and wanted a way to share our travels with family and friends without a roaming data plan for our phone. Email did not quite cut it. The kids had been using an app called **WhatsApp** to stay in touch with their siblings and cousins, and always seemed to be one step ahead of us in terms of knowing what's happening in the extended family.

I downloaded WhatsApp on my iPhone and created one chat group to share our photos and stories with our extended family - the rest is history! Thousands of messages and many chat groups later, we continue to slavishly look for the badge app icon for Whatsapp whenever we turn to our phones.

We look forward to daily doses of our grandchildren, grandnieces and nephews - their latest exploits captured in vivid photos or videos. We also share curated news articles - it's very easy to share a news item from Facebook, Twitter or the web directly into a WhatsApp Chat Group. They include video and audio messages. Margaret discovered that she could use it to call her far flung relatives in Australia, India and the US for free with WhatsApp. Since Facetime only works on Apple devices, our mixed technology family often uses WhatsApp for impromptu video conferencing.

WhatsApp was instrumental in the escape home from Spain of 2 RTOERO District 23 members in the first days of the pandemic lock-down.

WhatsApp has taken the world by storm. India has the most WhatsApp users — 400 million.

The countries with the highest market penetration are Netherlands (85%), followed by Spain (83.1%), and Italy (83%).

Text messages, voice calls, recorded voice messages, video calls – how do you want to communicate? WhatsApp gives you all the tools you need to stay in touch. And with more active users than any other messaging tool, it surpasses even Facebook's own marquee app when it comes to popularity.

WhatsApp was the first app of its kind on the market, and one of the biggest reasons people favor it is the simple, beautiful interface coupled with the fact that this program is completely **ad-free**.

Within WhatsApp you create one or more private chat groups, each with one to tens of users. Since all messages are stored together in a chat group, it is much easier than email to find messages, and catch up with the latest news/gossip within the group.



WhatsApp Stats¹

- WhatsApp has 68.1 million users in the United States.
- There are more than 2 billion WhatsApp users in 180 countries.
- Over 2 billion minutes of voice and video calls are made on WhatsApp on a daily basis.
- Facebook acquired WhatsApp for \$19 billion six years ago.
- 1 billion people use WhatsApp every day.
- Users spend approximately 195 minutes on WhatsApp each week.
- 27% of all selfies are shared through WhatsApp or text messaging.
- WhatsApp is the most popular messaging app in the world.

At the RTOERO district level, we have a chat group for the e-Devices group and the District 16 Finance group. They have been very useful for collaborating and sharing information in between meetings.

What are you waiting for? Download the app onto your smartphone and get chirping.

For guides and resources, please visit <https://district23.rtoero.org/resources/e-devices>

Caveat: While you can download an app for your Windows and Mac computers, you need to have your smartphone with the app nearby for the desktop app to work.

Reminder of Policy for Trips

All Cheques Must Be Postdated To The Cut-Off Date

Cheques will be deposited into the bank on the day after the cut-off date or shortly thereafter. Your canceled cheque is proof that you have a ticket to each performance. If your cheque has not been cashed within ten days after the cut-off date, please phone Gwen Scriven, Treasurer at [416-226-0226](tel:416-226-0226). Members who send in their cheques after the quota of seats has been filled, will be phoned and asked if they wish their names to be put on a waiting list. If no one cancels, the cheques of the people on the waiting list will be shredded. We do not mail your cheques back to you. As well, if you cancel your ticket(s) prior to the cut-off date, your cheque will be shredded. However, once the cheque has been cashed, there are no refunds, unless there is a waiting list. The onus is on you to find someone to use your tickets, but we will try to help you. On the day of a performance, if you are late arriving at the theatre, please go to the Box Office to pick up your ticket(s). Please note that all our seats are in the Orchestra section of the theatre. 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. And finally, if you have any suggestions of performances that you think our members would enjoy, please contact Mary Denise. Please be aware that we need about five months lead time in order to advertise in STONY BRIDGES.

Acknowledgment, Waiver & Release Form for RTOERO

District 23 Bus Trips, Excursions, Events Note: Participants in RTOERO District 23 bus trips will be asked to sign a release form. The participant in RTOERO District 23 Bus Trips, Excursions, Events acknowledges and agrees that RTOERO, including District 23, will not be responsible for any loss, injury or damage of any nature, including death, howsoever arising in connection with this trip/excursion/event. Participants in the RTOERO sponsored events are therefore hereby advised to carry their own insurance in connection therewith. By signing on attached pages and in consideration of the participant's attendance at the event, the participant hereby releases and forever discharges RTOERO, District 23, and their respective directors, officers, members, agents, employees and volunteers (collectively, the "releases") 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 at the event, unless such loss, injury or damage has arisen as a result of the sole negligence of one or more of the releases. Any Claims arising out of the participant's attendance at the event will be governed by the laws of Ontario, Canada, and the participant consents to the exclusive jurisdiction of the Courts in Ontario, Canada in any such action.

Registration Forms

When filling out your registration slips, follow the guidelines listed below. This will help our Assistant Treasurer sort and direct tickets.

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

Tickets, if required, are given out on the day of the function.

Refund Policy

1. All trips and events advertised in STONY Bridges and requiring a cheque and order form, will show 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.
2. Any booking can be cancelled at any time prior to the cut-off date by phoning Gwen Scriven, Treasurer at [416-226-0226](tel:416-226-0226) (trips/theatre) or Mildred Frank, Social Convener at [416-221-5328](tel:416-221-5328). Your cheque will be shredded when you cancel an event prior to the cut-off date. We do not mail cheques back to you.
3. Cancellations beyond this date will only be accepted if we can sell your ticket(s) to someone on the waiting list.
4. Ticket holders are welcome to sell, give or transfer their ticket(s) privately

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



Good Times and Coming Together

This issue we look back in time at photos from a variety of activities that District 23 has provided over the years, and in many cases, continues to provide for its members


by Mary Cairo – Archivist



Change Of Postal/ Email Address or Other Information

Please send changes to: RTOERO, 18 Spadina Road, Suite 300, Toronto, ON, M2R2S7 or to membership@rto-ero.org; or call the RTOERO Membership Section at [416-962-9463](tel:416-962-9463) or [1-800-361-9888](tel: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. If you did not receive your copy of STONY Bridges, contact **Gerard MacNeil** at [416-481-7411](tel:416-481-7411) or email him at: g.macneil@bell.net.

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STONY BRIDGES

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1407-88 Erskine Ave.
Toronto Ontario
M4P 1Y3