



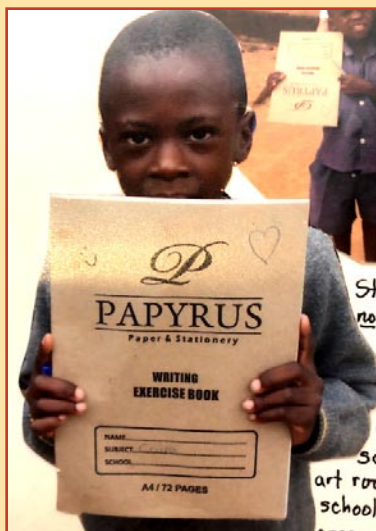
COVID-19

A Time to Write About Treasured Memories

LIVING ON THE ROAD - For Seven Years!
Gerry Blosser shares his experiences



In This Issue...



Matilda

by Nancy Sorensen, page 28

On the Road for Seven Years

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COVID-19: A Time to Help Others...

Making Good Use of My Time

by Jean Wilkinson, page 9



Vera Theophil

- A District 15 Moment

by Micki Clemens, page 10



Committed Grandmothers

by Marilyn Ortwein, page 14

President's Report



As I prepare this message in early February I admit that this new year 2021 has been slow in unwrapping our longed for hopes for more positive and uplifting times. With vaccine delivery delays, the slow rollout of vaccinations, a continuing rise of variant cases and the deaths in LTC homes, it has been a worrisome first month. However we need to be calm and

patient and have hope that life will evolve into a less chaotic situation, that we will thrive once again and that the old axiom "Good things come to those who wait" will be realized for all of us!

This will be my final President's Message. After three terms it is an appropriate time to depart this role on the RTOERO District 15 Halton Executive and move to that of Past President. When I step down on May 31st, 2021, **Jerry Powidajko** will assume the role of President. He will be an outstanding President for District 15!

For me it has been an exceptional privilege working on behalf of our District 15 Halton membership of around 3000 members, supported by the incredibly talented and collaborative members of our Board all of whom spend their time, energy and efforts to ensure that this organization works effectively for all of you! Perhaps one of you might be moved to consider assisting in a volunteer capacity and joining us as a member of a committee or on our Board. E-mail us at district15halton@gmail.com.

Please take time to read all of the reports from the Communication Coordinators and the Committee Chairs in this issue and to recognize and applaud the amazing accomplishments that have been achieved despite the challenges posed by the pandemic.

As we have been advised by RTOERO to continue to forgo all in-person district group meetings in the spring, we will be holding a District15 Virtual Annual Meeting. We have set the date for Wednesday, May 26, 2021. We will be advising you further on the development of this event through the E-newsletter *Rapport*, the District 15 website and Facebook. The RTOERO itself will again be conducting its own Annual Meeting with the 53 districts across Canada in a virtual format on May 17 with the Virtual Forum Meeting occurring on May 19.

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Visit us on the Internet at district15.rto-ero.org

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May I express my deep and sincere appreciation to all of the members of the District 15 Board and all our Committee Volunteers for their generous support, commitment and enthusiasm during these past three years. We have shared some tremendous experiences together!

Please, as we move forward with our careful recovery after Covid-19, be cautious at all times and continue to care for yourself and for others. We will delight in greeting you enthusiastically in person when we are all safe to do so!

VIRTUAL CONCERT FUNDRAISER
 THURSDAY, APRIL 15, 2021
 7:30 PM EDT



Learn more about the Concert at www.cdngrandmothers.com

Correction

I did it again, spelled Nancy Sorensen's name incorrectly. Her last name is spelled Sorensen with an 'e' and not an 'o'. My sincere apologies to Nancy for repeating the error. My age must be getting to me. *Peter Gnish*



We Get Letters, E-mails & Calls

By Peter Gnish



The COVID pandemic has been a boon to having members send me material. In addition to articles with photos, I received 13 e-mails from members and a Christmas card. Wonderful! So how about you? Have you sent me something recently about what you have been up to? Send me your messages by e-mail to pgnish@gmail.com, by Canada Post to 153 Fairleigh Ave. S., Hamilton Ontario, L8M 2K4 or call me (905-547-1628)

Gerry Blosser wrote, "Very nice spread, Peter. You are doing an excellent job on the whole magazine. Wishing you and yours a blessed and safe, healthy 2021.

P.S., My wife, Marcia, and I lived full time in our motorhome for 7 years in the winter months in the southern USA from Florida to California and in between in Canada the rest of each year. So I could send lots of pictures and comments?" (See *Gerry's first article on the topic on Page 25*)

Bill Brock sent an e-mail to say, "Happy New Year Peter!! Just read your excellent Season's Greetings 2020 article in the *Herald*. In talking with my retired friends we all agree that we are and have been extremely fortunate to live in these times. Yes, COVID is a pain. But it is nothing compared to what our parents and grandparents lived through. Thanks very much for your words of encouragement and hope! Thanks Very Much and Keep Up The Good Work!!"

Patricia Duxbury sent Nanci Wakeman an e-mail. She wrote "I just



wanted to share this photo (of a COVID Baptism). Thought it might give a good chuckle to RTOERO members in an upcoming *Halton Herald*. Congratulations to you and all for a very entertaining and informative January 2021 *Herald*. You do a fabulous

(We Get Letters...continues on Page 6)

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(We Get Letter...continued from Page 5)

job in your articles and layout. Best wishes for all the best that the New Year will bring”.

Cheryl Christoffersen e-mailed to say, “Thank you and all the staff at the *Halton Herald* for your skill and hard work keeping us informed”.

Norma and Jim Diell sent a message to say, “We both enjoy reading the *Halton Herald*, giving us a glimpse into what some of our former colleagues are doing. Thank you and your committee for the time, effort and expertise you put into producing this magazine”.

Donna Mae Fleet wrote to say, “I taught many years ago in Milton at Sam Sheratt and also in Georgetown. I ended my career at Glen Williams School in the beautiful village of Glen Williams.

After raising our three sons in quiet idyllic Milton we decided to leave Milton as the population exploded and return back home to family and friends as retirement loomed. My first 3 years of teaching were spent in Elmira. Ironically, when one of my sons moved to Elmira, his daughter, my granddaughter Morgan, went to grade 8 at Riverside P. S. - the very school in which I began my teaching.

I look forward to receiving the RTOERO *Halton Herald* and reading about former teaching colleagues. Thank you for all your efforts in creating this great newsy booklet.”

(Read Donna Mae’s article on her COVID Project on Page 8)

Geri Jackson sent this message for help from everyone. “Hello retired folks. Here is a photo of an artifact (5 foot diameter) from Frobisher Bay (Iqaluit) from March 1977. **Max Jackson** was principal at Maple Grove School, Oakville at the time. A trip was organized to the far north for Grade 5 students and a teacher. Their students were to return to visit Oakville, Toronto and the Falls. I found this artifact in the back of a closet. (COVID cleaning when bored!) I hope to donate this article to Canadian Museum of History in Gatineau, Quebec. I would like to have more information from a student or teacher who has any background



(We Get Letters...continues on Page 7)

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(We Get Letters...continued from Page 6)

on this event and any meanings behind the appliques and who made them. Thanks for any help. My telephone number is 905-844-6057.”

Geoff Knuff simply said, “Interesting reading”.

Verne and Mavis O’Neil e-mailed to say, “Thank you for your great work on the *Halton Herald*. We look forward to reading our copies with every issue that comes out.

I recall with fond memories your time as principal and VP at Milton DHS. I was there for 30 years. Congratulations as a long time cancer survivor. I, too, am a survivor of 14 years. I recall the many runs with you, **Brian Camani, Fred Stevens, Bert Vella** and myself. I still jog on a regular basis”.

Elizabeth Taylor wrote to say, “I enjoy reading the *Halton Herald*. Many thanks to you and all the people involved in its publication”.

Carol Todd-Skuce wrote, “COVID has been very difficult for some but I have been one of the lucky ones who has been healthy, active and become quite OK with ZOOM. Being at the cottage with my family for spring break, when school closing was announced, we just stayed. I came back after Thanksgiving. It was a wonderful time to get to really know three active funny grandsons, to enjoy the woods and play a lot of board games”.

Helen Van Sickle made a connection with us as well. Her relative, Rose, sent us a Christmas card on Helen’s behalf to say that Helen celebrated her 97th birthday in late 2020 with an outdoor visit from several family members. Helen is at Caressant Care where she is being well looked after by the staff - which is greatly appreciated.

(Editor’s Note: Electronic copies of the Halton Herald are also sent to those teachers who belong to RTOERO but are still active teaching. This time we received e-mails in response from two such members.)

Malerie Borbath wrote, “Thank you so much for sending along the *Halton Herald*. I just opened the publication and thoroughly enjoyed reading it from end to end. I especially loved the jokes. I literally laughed out loud! Then I read them to my husband who groaned - even better! Oh, and the large print was a nice touch too. Thanks!

(We Get Letters...continues on Page 8)

(We Get Letter...continued from Page 7)

As you mentioned in your e-mail, I'm not quite retired yet but find myself inching toward this major transition and it's wonderful to know that there are meaningful opportunities to connect with others once we're not working every day. Specifically, I can't wait to get involved in helping others access the sailing program. Being out on the water is good for the soul as is hanging out with friends on a dock. I'll definitely be looking to sign up for any or all of that! I'm looking forward to joining your community of intelligent, thoughtful, helpful people very soon so thank you for your willingness to include me in this way already".

Jacqueline Hart commented "I don't actually retire until June 2021. Still busy learning asynchronous/online/virtual teaching. If I get a moment will have a look at the publication. Thanks!"

COVID Project

By Donna Mae Fleet



I am a very proud Canadian and, over the years, have sewed and quilted many Canadian themed items (book marks, table runners, coasters, Christmas stockings, to name a few). Since I was able to use the leftover Canadian materials from my sewing stash and didn't have to buy any material a few days after COVID started - on the Tuesday of March break - I decided to design and create a Canada Cup wall hanging. Canada is such a warm and welcoming country and what says friendship better than a cup of coffee, eh? I only spent a few hours each day, in order to stretch out my time working on it. When I finished each cup block the overall look when I laid them side by side was boring. I decided to add embroidered red floss between each block and grey floss over each cup to show steam coming from above each cup.

The middle block does not have a cup because, I couldn't cut any small pieces for the cups from the large pattern (except for the word Canada in the first cup) and the dark piece showing hockey and the Canada flag emphasizes an important part of Canada for most of us. The second tea cup block has a red anchor surrounded with maple leaves and compasses to show how the fleet (my last name is Fleet) love living in Canada.

I have hung it in my front hall to showcase my great love for Canada!
(See the full colour photo of the quilt on the back cover)

Visit us on the Internet at district15.rto-ero.org

Making Good Use of My Time

By Jean Wilkinson

In response to the article in the RTOERO *Halton Herald* asking for other retired colleagues to write in and share how we are coping with extra long 'recess', I am willing to share two of my highlights of this time.

First, I've had an interesting time watching amaryllis bulbs grow. I bought a new bulb in November and decided to plant it immediately. In looking for a pot to plant it in, in my basement, I noticed another bulb which had bloomed last year. I was ready to throw it out when I noticed that it was firm to the touch and with a hint of green on the top. The usual process with an amaryllis bulb is to plant it in the garden and let it build up its strength for next year's growth. I had neglected this bulb completely; however, I brought it upstairs, watered it and set it in a sunny window along with my new bulb. Both started to grow.



It was fascinating to find that the old bulb grew faster than the newly bought one. Once started, they grew about an inch to two inches in one day. As it turned out the old bulb bloomed first with five pink blooms, whereas the usual is four. The new bulb produced four trumpet flowers a deep solid red. Interestingly neither plant produced a second stalk of blooms. Both produced four healthy long leaves. This held my interest especially when I did not expect to have two plants to follow in their progress. Each day they changed in size. At their peak, the old bulb grew 23" above the bulb before the bud broke open; the new one, 21"

It was fascinating to watch their progress each day.

(Making Good Use of My Time...continues on Page 10)

(Making Good Use of My Time...continued from Page 9)

The second activity, which occupied some of my time, was to make a 6' X 3' mat out of milk bags. I cut them in half, folded them, then wove them like paper chains and then placed them in a frame ringed with screws to hold them in place. To make a complete mat it took over 275 bags. I only use the coloured outside holding bag.

These mats are sent to hot countries where people sleep on the ground. The bugs do not like the taste of plastic so leave the person alone for a good sleep. Here is a photo of some of the mats I've made.



VERA TEOPHIL - A DISTRICT 15 "MOMENT"

By Micki Clemens

On the CBC National News the evening broadcast always concludes with an uplifting story entitled "THE MOMENT". Well, I would like to share a special "District 15 Moment" with you.

Part 1: One of our District 15 members, **Vera Teophil**, contacted me before Christmas. She wished to have some direction from our Board as to which LTC home in Burlington might be a recipient for a personal donation and some handcrafted gifts that she had made for residents. Members of the District 15 Board were polled and Wellington Park Care Centre on Hager Ave. in Burlington was selected. After I made contact with the Executive Director, Maria Clarke, and received her permission to proceed, Vera provided both her financial donation to the Resident's Council and shared her charming gifts of silk pouches, bracelets and key rings.

(Vera...continues on Page 11)

Visit us on the Internet at district15.rto-ero.org

(Vera...continued from Page 10)

Vera credited her mother as her inspiration and in her mother's honour has dubbed her charitable project "A Pela Smile".

Part 2: In early January of this new year Vera declared her intention to make a second donation and to provide a collection of her handcrafted gifts, key rings, zipper pulls and brooches to yet another LTC home before Valentine's Day. Some LTC homes were not allowing any outside contributions but we located a willing recipient in Creek Way Village and followed the protocols as instructed by the Life Enrichment Director, Emily Sforza. In time for Valentine's Day Vera visited this home to provide her monetary donation and gift items (see photos below and on Page 2). Vera ensured there was an item for each of the 144 residents.



Key Rings



Brooches

Here is a story of an individual member to inspire us all! The wonderful news is that Vera has declared her commitment to continue her efforts to create small gift items and may be ready in the coming months to bestow these goodwill offerings to additional LTC homes in the area.

This tribute to Vera's mother, "A Pela Smile", is not only a special moment where the power of kindness has been demonstrated so visibly but also a lesson in the importance and efficacy of small gestures that bring great joy!

Foundation Report

By Moira Plexman



The Mission of the Foundation is to fund research and invest in innovative programs to support healthy, active aging with a special focus on helping end social isolation among older adults.

The work of the Foundation continues during the Pandemic. The good news is that Dr. Paula Rochon has been awarded a second 5-year term as Chair of Geriatric Medicine at the University of Toronto and seeks to improve the aging experience of seniors. Covid-19 has placed a great demand on geriatric medicine. Dr. Rochon recently participated on the "Task Group on Long-Term Care & the Expert Panel on Covid-19 for the Government of Canada". Many of us have experienced the challenges of dealing with loved ones in long-term care. We hope that experts such as Dr. Rochon will have an impact on the future of long-term care policy.

Social Isolation continues to be a major concern for our members. The RTOERO District 15 Halton Goodwill Committee recently made calls to our more senior members over 85. Our members indicated they were quite bored after being shut in for so long. Here is where **you can make a difference**. Take on the task of calling a different friend on your contact list each day. This will help your contacts know that you are thinking about them and your call will brighten their day and yours. It costs you nothing but a few minutes of your time each day.

As always, the Foundation welcomes donations to support its work (416-962-9463). For more background on the Foundation and a full-some description of its projects, please visit the Halton District 15 RTOERO website where you can click on links to the Foundation.



Book of Remembrance

We remember with fondness

Stephen Austin
Keith Cairns
Joyce Groover
Henry Lewis
Douglas Needham
Richard Segee

John Briggs
Angus Elliott
Veronica Ion
Gloria Lillie
Lynda Rodgers
Shirley Taylor-Gilck

Jeanette Brown
Bill Gage
Annette Lewin
Panchal Mansaram
Josette Sanderson

Program Committee Report

By Jerry Powidajko



The Program Committee had a very positive start to the new year with a ZOOM presentation...our first! I would like to thank the current committee members: **Lynda Kozak, Paul Harper, Penny Hambly, Tony Pizzingrilli** and **Colton Roberts** as well as **Micki Clemens**. Their enthusiasm and hard work makes these events worthwhile and enjoyable! I would also like to thank Charles Tabone and Ruel Navia from RTOERO with the technical set-up/mailings. As always, we welcome suggestions and ideas for future speakers/presenters/events...please e-mail to district15halton@gmail.com.

On February 9th, 2021, we were pleased to welcome Carole Bertuzzi Luciani to our ZOOM presentation. Many of us may remember Carole who has delivered numerous keynote addresses for our members over the years. Well, it was time for another dose of her amusing look at life.



A self-described “Moodivational Speaker to Tickle Your Funny Bone”, Carole has delighted hundreds of thousands of individuals around North America during her 35+ year career. Her goals for each presentation remain ... to make you comfortable, make you laugh and perhaps, even make you view life a little differently. She is a Canadian best-selling author of a trilogy of books in her *I have a story for you ... Musings of the Moodivator* series, as well as an avid volunteer, both locally and globally. She loves to challenge herself with interesting social experiments and is an experienced viewer of life who strives to find something amusing in each day.

Carole guided us through her personal strategy to remain buoyant in these turbulent times. We are all being challenged, and like many of you, Carole admits, even as an extroverted optimist, it requires work. Her tried and self-tested strategies will no doubt work for you as well. Don't worry, it wasn't all doom 'n gloom as Carole used her props and humour to both support and keep each message upbeat. It was more uplifting than anything we might see or hear on the nightly news. She did remind us that we all have our own story...that we need to be reflective but optimistic...to be thankful for what we have.

Visit us on the Internet at district15.rto-ero.org

Committed Grandmothers

By Marilyn Ortwein

In March of 2020 I was told about a group called GASP (Grandmothers Act to Save the Planet). I learned that the organization is composed mostly of grandmothers many of whom are retired teachers in the Oakville-Burlington-Milton area. Because I believe that our generation has polluted the planet for our convenience and our greed for which our grandchildren will pay the price, I was eager to join these women as their goals were to leave our grandchildren a healthy planet and a livable, equitable society.

I was also encouraged that they wanted to model themselves on our Indigenous grandmother sisters, “the wisdom carriers”, who look out for the best interests of the next generations who will certainly ask, “What did you do, Nana, when you knew?” I don’t want to just tell them how I felt; I want to tell them what I did.

Here are just a few of the actions taken by GASP members:

- participated with students and grandchildren in protests to urge the government to take action against climate change;
- wrote hundreds of holiday cards to the banks to pressure them to stop funding fossil fuel projects;
- signed dozens of petitions;
- campaigned government to instate a guaranteed livable income;
- supported other environmental groups on issues such as water, plastics, wetlands, rural ecosystems, urban sprawl etc.;
- produced GASP Weekend Wrap-ups for our membership as a means of educating ourselves and encouraging activism;
- produced an outstanding educational website which motivates anyone who reads it to take action;
- initiated a Ford Watch Committee which inspired us to e-mail Ontario politicians about the undermining of conservation authorities and the startling number of Minister Zoning Orders which have been issued;
- showed our opposition to the proposed building of Highway 413 and commercial logging in Algonquin Park;
- pledged everyone to action which would reduce a member’s own carbon footprint.

(GASP...continues on Page 15)

(GASP...continued from Page 14)



Linda Middaugh, who is a member of GASP and a retired Halton teacher, sent this photo to me. It is a Town Hall on Climate Change put on by CBC and hosted by Matt Galloway. GASP members including Linda are in the photo with Matt. Linda is wearing a white top and is standing behind the bags on the floor. If you would like to

learn more about GASP please visit our website:
www.gasp4change.org

Welcome New RTOERO District 15 Members!!!

Our membership is now over 2900 people. Below are the names of retired teachers, other education staff and surviving spouses who became members since January 2021. Please welcome them and invite them to join you at one of our activities when we are permitted to gather once again.

- | | | | |
|-----------------|----------------------|----------------|------------------|
| Jean Banks | Leslie Butler | Claudia Carson | Geraldina Falbo |
| Darlene Fisher | Margaret Gage | Marta Hrelja | Marilyn Johnston |
| Barry Kirk | per kleefisch | Maria McLellan | Mike Morosin |
| Shirley Needham | Shari-Lynn Patterson | | Diana Pinkney |
| Bruce Rodgers | Christian Slomka | Mary Smith | Jocelyn Wiley |
| Greg Zilli | | | |

More COVID-19 Jokes To Keep You Sane

Why do they call it the novel coronavirus? It's a long story!

RTOERO District 15 Halton Contact List

NOTE: Recently, the RTOERO has advised all their Districts of the need to protect the personal security of our Executive and Board members and our District members in our publications. You may contact us in TWO ways.

1. To contact any of the Board members listed below, please use the following email address: district15halton@gmail.com. Please Indicate in your message, the individual Board member or members to whom you would like the message to be directed.

2. Go directly to our Contact Page on our RTOERO website, <https://district15.rto-ero.org>, and submit your inquiry.

Any contact information included in the committee reports found within this publication appears with the approval of the individual author.

Executive 2020 – 2021

| | | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Past President: | Claudia Stewart | President: | Micki Clemens |
| 1st Vice President: | Jerry Powidajko | 2nd Vice President: | Brad Fisher |
| Secretary: | Dianne Visschedyk | Treasurer: | Carol Pashkievich |
| Member Emeritus: | Jim Baker | | |

Committees

| | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| Archives | Blaine Adams |
| Awards | Penny Hambly |
| Book of Remembrance | Toni Pizzingrilli |
| Communications | |
| Webmaster | Jeannie Woodcroft |
| <i>Rapport</i> Coordinator | Brad Fisher |
| Newsletter Coordinator | Nanci Wakeman |
| Newsletter Editor: Peter Gnish - Design: Cate Roberts | |
| Editing: Nanci Wakeman | |
| Proofreaders: Micki Clemens, George MacRae, Marilyn MacRae, Eleanor McCulloch, Jordan Palmer, Ray Smith | |
| Foundation Champion | Moira Plexman |
| Goodwill | Toni Pizzingrilli |
| West Convenors | Ruth Roberts and Marina Lloyd |
| East Convenors | Warren McBurney and Dianne Visschedyk |
| North Convenors | Judy Rose and Susan Spencer |
| Out-of-Region Convenor | Catherine Fadyshen |
| Health Benefits | Colton Roberts |
| Committee Member: | Bonnie Cummings |
| Membership/Recruitment | Marilyn MacLennan |
| Committee Member: | Claudia Stewart |
| Members at Large | Bonnie Cummings and Susan Stavín |
| Political Advocacy | Claudia Stewart |
| Committee Members: Bev Balch, Olga Shewchun, Paul Sousa | |
| Program | Jerry Powidajko |
| Committee Members: Penny Hambly, Paul Harper, Lynda Kozak, Toni Pizzingrilli, Moira Plexman, Colton Roberts, Susan Stavín | |
| Social | Vacant |
| Committee Members: Lynda Kozak, Marilyn MacLennan, Patricia Mateja Carol Pashkievich, Claudia Stewart, Diona Szczerbak, David Wright | |

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Contribute to the *Herald*!

The next *Halton Herald* will be distributed in September, 2021.

- **Send a Letter to the Editor** (pgnish@gmail.com) on any topic that concerns you or **share a line** with our readers and let them know how you are doing and what you are up to.
- **Write an article** on any topic that may interest your retired colleagues. Please try to limit your article to a maximum of 750 words. The full version of longer articles will be published on the District website.
- **Share a funny story** with our many readers.
- **Provide us with pictures** to share with our members.

Send your article or correspondence to the Newsletter Coordinator, **Nanci Wakeman** by e-mail: nanci.wakeman@gmail.com.
Deadline - July 15, 2021.

ADVERTISING AND PROMOTION POLICY

It is the policy of RTOERO Halton District 15 that all advertising and promotion to or by its members must have prior approval by the District Executive. In this context advertising and promotion includes signage, verbal presentations, handouts, distributed material and display table material.

RTOERO Halton District 15 may accept advertising for the following purpose: To offer information to members about programs, services and products of potential interest and benefit.

RTOERO reserves the right to edit or reject any advertisement.

RTOERO districts do not accept paid advertising. Paid advertising is not permitted in district newsletters or on district websites. Districts are permitted to recognize sponsorships by trusted partners for events or special activities.

Publication of any advertisement by an outside group in the *Halton Herald*, in other District 15 printed material, on the District website, in our e-letter (*Rapport*) or at any District function or event, does not constitute endorsement of the product or service by RTOERO Halton District 15.

APPLY TO VOLUNTEER! RTOERO District 15 Halton



As we plan for the next year, 2021-2022, we have three open positions on the District 15 Board. In addition we will need a manager for our website once **Jeannie Woodcroft**, our current Webmaster, has assisted with the transition to our new RTOERO digital platform. It is so important that we have additional individuals who can step forward to ensure that the high standard of service, of which we are so proud, will continue to be maintained for our members.

Do you wish to make a difference for others, use your skills and talent for good and, when it is safe to do so, meet other members from our district?

Role descriptions for First Vice-President, Website Manager and Chairs of the Program and Social Committees are available on our website. Please let us know if you are interested in strengthening and supporting our organization. Contact **Claudia Stewart** or **Micki Clemens** for further information at district15halton@gmail.com.

EXECUTIVE MEMBERS - Slate for 2021-2022

| | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| President | Jerry Powidajko |
| Past President | Micki Clemens |
| First Vice President | VACANT |
| Second Vice President | Brad Fisher |
| Secretary | Dianne Visschedyk |
| Treasurer | Carol Pashkievich |
| Member Emeritus | Jim Baker |

BOARD MEMBERS

| | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Archives | Blaine Adams |
| Awards | Penny Hambly |
| Benefits | Bonnie Cummings |
| Communications: | |
| Facebook | Patricia Mateja |
| <i>Halton Herald</i> Editor | Peter Gnish |
| <i>Halton Herald</i> Editing | Nanci Wakeman |
| <i>Rapport</i> E-newsletter | Brad Fisher |
| Website | Jeannie Woodcroft (retiring) |
| Foundation | Moira Plexman |
| Goodwill | Toni Pizzingrilli |
| Membership | Marilyn MacLennan |
| Member at Large | Susan Stavin |
| Political Advocacy | Claudia Stewart |
| Program | VACANT |
| Social | VACANT |

Visit us on the Internet at district15.rto-ero.org

Health Benefits Committee Report

By Colton Roberts



Not only is RTOERO moving to a stronger national presence, our organization is taking a greater role in advocating for seniors. Of course, we are in difficult times at present with Ontario in some form of lockdown for the foreseeable future. Zoom, FaceTime, Skype, YouTube and other forms of social media have helped many of us to remain connected with families and friends.

Since travel is more limited there has been less need to inform members about the health plan issues associated with that experience. If you are a member of the RTOERO Health Benefits Plan you should have received information about the coverage available to members should you need to travel outside Ontario during the Covid-19 pandemic. You will have emergency coverage for this virus if, unfortunately, you require treatment. As with other insurance plans this does not extend to tests required by government agencies, vaccinations or other non-emergency treatments and costs. Should you find it *necessary* to travel be sure to contact Johnson Insurance if you have any questions about the available coverage. It appears that there will be some restrictions on travel outside of the province until September at least.

Because of the pandemic we will be offering a virtual seminar this spring on **Thursday, April 15th from 10 to 11:30 a.m.** Stephen Wong from the RTOERO office in Toronto will be the presenter. Stephen will address the plan with an opportunity for you to have any questions answered. Please go to the RTOERO District 15 website if you wish to register. It is recommended that you have your benefits booklet on hand to follow along with the presentation. There is no cost for this seminar for members of the health plan but **you must register**. Unfortunately you will have to provide your own refreshments!

It was a privilege to serve as Chair of the Benefits Committee for the last eight years. I am retiring from the chairmanship but will remain on the committee and will continue to serve on the Program Committee as well. **Bonnie Cummings**, a recent members of RTOERO Halton District 15, has agreed to take over the role of Chair of the Benefits Committee. Bonnie brings an excellent service record having worked on

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ETFO's provincial and local Health and Safety committees. She brings enthusiasm and an excellent knowledge of benefits to this new role. She also possesses excellent computer skills which will stand her in good stead as she becomes involved in her new role.

Awards & Service to Others Report

By Penny Hambly



Distinguished Service Award

It is that time of year when I ask for your assistance in identifying RTOERO District 15 members who deserve recognition for their significant and/or long term contribution to the work of RTOERO District 15. The application is available on our RTOERO District 15 website district15.rto-ero.org. You may e-mail the application to hamblyp@cogeco.ca. **Deadline is April 30, 2021.**

Johnson Scholarships

The information and application for the \$1000 Johnson scholarships for relatives who are in their first year of a post secondary program should be available on the Johnson website in the spring.

Community Grants

The RTOERO grant program formerly known as the Service to Others (PSTO) has been renamed Community Grants and Scholarships and has some revisions. Districts are eligible to receive up to \$2500 for community projects. Go to the RTOERO National website for the instructions and application form. Contact me if you have a project that could meet the criteria. **Deadline is June 1, 2021.**

RTOERO District 15 Academic Spirit Award

Our District is again offering an academic scholarship of \$1000 to one graduating student in each of the Halton District School Board and Halton Catholic District School Board. See the school boards' websites for further information.

Goodwill Committee Report

By Toni Pizzingrilli



Greetings from the Goodwill Committee! I hope that 2021 has been kind to you so far and that you have found moments of joy and laughter despite the difficult times that persist.

I am delighted to tell you about the RTOERO District 15 Tele-Wellness Campaign that the Goodwill Committee launched in early February with the assistance of a team of 14 volunteers. The primary goal of this Campaign was to personally connect, via telephone, with our Super Senior Members aged 85 years plus. We basically wanted to check in with these members to ensure that they were keeping well physically, mentally and emotionally especially during these challenging times.

At the time of writing this report we were about 10 days into the Campaign and I am pleased to say that even at this early stage, the feedback that I received from our volunteers was extremely positive. They shared that the members they had called were very gracious and extremely appreciative of the phone call. Our Super Seniors were happy to share how they were keeping active and engaged during this pandemic. It would appear that most of them are coping and managing quite well. They are keeping active through a variety of activities and hobbies such as: reading, sewing, walking, quilting, completing puzzles and wood carving just to name a few.

Needless to say, the 275 local and out of district phone calls could not have been achieved without the help of our 14 volunteers. It is with heartfelt gratitude that on behalf of the Goodwill Committee I say a huge thank you to the team of Volunteers that was comprised of **Micki Clemens, Colton Roberts, Judy Rose, Dianne Visschedyk, Warren McBurney, Penny Hambly, Patricia Mateja, Claudia Stewart, Moira Plexman, Cathy Fadysheh, Carey Mollenhauer, Leslie MacKay, Vera Teophil and Toni Pizzingrilli.**

It is also with much delight and enthusiasm that the Goodwill Committee welcomes our newest member, **Cathy Fadysheh.** Cathy is a valued addition to the Committee and we know that she shares the

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values of Caring, Compassion and Celebration that we strive to bring to our RTOERO District 15 members. We look forward to working with Cathy!

Please continue to reach out to Goodwill Committee members if you know of someone who is in need or simply someone who would benefit from a friendly hello from us.

Political Advocacy Committee

By Claudia Stewart



Vibrant Voices is the political advocacy arm of RTOE-RO. On the website <http://vibrantvoices.ca> you can find resources about RTOERO's seniors' strategy, about physical and mental health of older adults and about environmental stewardship.

The pandemic is raising awareness of concern for all people living in Long Term Care facilities. Halton County has 31 facilities and Ontario has 630. The numbers of deaths occurring in these facilities continues to rise. You can use the Long Term Care Advocacy form on the Vibrant Voices website to communicate your concerns to your provincial and federal politicians. If you have not already done so, we encourage you to do so! The website will forward your concerns to your representatives.

If you have additional suggestions as to how RTOERO District 15 might support residents and workers in these facilities or any of the three targets of political advocacy for 2021, please contact us at District15Halton@gmail.com.

COVID-19 Jokes To Keep You Sane!

- I washed my hands so much because of COVID-19 that my exam notes from 1995 resurfaced.
- What's the difference between COVID-19 and Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*? One's a coronavirus and the other is a Verona crisis.

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Membership Committee Report

By Marilyn MacLennan



To All Newly Retired and Active Members of RTOERO District 15

The focus of the last few months has been to improve communication with all members. Having the correct e-mail addresses for everyone is important as some information from RTOERO National and RTOERO District 15 is only available electronically.

The other issue is that e-mails we send are bouncing back mostly from subscribers to Cogeco. It seems that bulk e-mails are not accepted by most of those with Cogeco e-mail addresses. They have been contacted with suggestions to correct this. One suggestion is to add the District 15 and the membership@rtoero.ca and rto_ero@events.ca e-mails to your contacts.

Please remember to send us any changes in your status (e-mail and mailing address) by contacting us at district15halton@gmail.com with the subject line "New e-mail". I will ensure that the change is made with RTOERO National. Alternatively, you can do this directly with RTOERO using its e-mail membership@rto-ero.org.

WE NEED YOUR E-MAIL

If you have not been receiving our monthly eNewsletter *Rapport* or other RTOERO e-mails, then we don't have a correct e-mail address for you.

Please update this information by sending us your e-mail to:
district15halton@gmail.com subject line "New e-mail"

Another COVID-19 Joke To Keep You Sane!

My husband purchased a world map and then gave me a dart and said, "Throw this and wherever it lands—that's where I'm taking you when this pandemic ends." Turns out, we're spending two weeks behind the fridge.

Webmaster's Report

By Jeannie Woodcroft



We've weathered another Canadian winter with a pandemic twist! I think that most of us would agree that technology has helped us surmount the hardships of lockdown and isolation.



Your District 15 website continues to provide members with information

about our district. The members of RTOERO District 15 Executive and Board provide content to keep you informed. Your task is to simply go to district15.rto-ero.org and explore Home Page and its menus for the latest news.

District 15 is looking for a volunteer to take on the role of Webmaster/Web Manager as your current webmaster is looking to retire. The date of the new district website training and launch has not been set at this time. I am happy to mentor and work with a new volunteer on this project. A role description is available on the website: from Main Menu go to Resources then Role Descriptions for Board Members and look for Webmaster.

If you may be interested, please contact me or President Micki Clemens at District15Halton@gmail.com for more information. Remember to stay safe and keep connected!

CHANGE IN CONTACT INFORMATION

- If you are moving OR
- If your mailing address has been changed or is incorrect OR
- If your e-mail or phone number has changed or is incorrect

You need to let RTOERO know in one of the following ways:

- E-mail RTOERO at membership@rto-ero.org
- Phone RTOERO 1-800-361-9888
- Contact Marilyn MacLennan (District 15) with the change district15halton@gmail.com
- Use the contact form on the District 15 website – choose Membership

You will need your RTOERO membership number when contacting the RTOERO office.

Living On The Road For Seven Years (Installment #1)

By Gerry Blosser

Travelling the country in a motorhome was something I always wanted to do. So, in 2006, my wife, Marcia and I began planning for our retirement in 2010 by exploring the option of not only travelling, but living full time in a motorhome. We realized that we needed God's blessing for our dream to come true. Committed, we began researching the possibilities by talking with people who had lived this life-style. We met with motorhome dealers. With mechanics we discussed possible issues that might arise - important since buying a home that has an engine and wheels presents new challenges. By the way, anyone with a class G driver's licence can drive a motorhome with a gasoline engine, no matter how long it is. We researched the availability and costs of RV parks in Canada and in the USA.



We decided to sell our home in Burlington since we did not want to be absentee-owners. Once it was sold we bought a new 38-foot Winnebago motorhome. It was large enough to satisfy both our hobbies, mine for driving and maintaining a home and Marcia's for sewing (a must).



We picked up our motorhome from the dealership on July 7, 2010. I was excited driving it

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and the trailer on the QEW. It handled beautifully at 100km per hour - very smooth. The Ford Triton V10 engine (at 630hp) just hummed along nicely. The cruise control and the automatic shift as well as the two side-view cameras and one rear-view camera were all excellent features.



To familiarize ourselves with all the features of the home, we began by living at 50 Point Conservation Area near Hamilton where we stayed for two months. When, with only the push of a button the motorhome self-levelled or the

sides of the coach slid in and out, we squealed with amazement. When we discovered other features that worked the same way - like the king-sized bed extending and retracting, the living room couch sliding into a bed and the 36-inch TV rising up and down inside the cabinetry - we were delighted. While there, we enjoyed exploring the area on our bikes, going all the way to St. Catharines and Burlington. We felt wonderfully free and content.

We moved to a trailer park near Hwy 401 and Tremaine Rd from the middle of October to the middle of November. Kelso Conservation Area is close by – a great place for



hiking and biking, which we did with joy and gusto. Once a week we

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rode our bikes to Campbellville to a great pastry shop that had excellent coffee and marvelous fruit pies. We visited family in Burlington and Mississauga and took part in a lot of good-bye dinners receiving many best wishes. All this activity was overwhelming.

Motorhomes were coming into the park daily. Other people were doing what we were doing - last minute visiting with family before going south. It was a charged atmosphere with all the Snowbirds getting set to travel. The excitement was exhilarating! When people discovered that we were newbies, they gave us lots of advice like the best places to pull in for the night at no charge (Walmart and truck stops). Walmart in the USA has an unwritten policy that allows travellers to park on its properties if you let them know as do the Flying J Truck Stops in their huge parking lots. They also give gasoline discounts to RVers with their points' card and have propane fill up and sewer dumping facilities. And, over-night is free. We talked for many hours with fellow travellers over many days. The knowledge we gained was immeasurable.

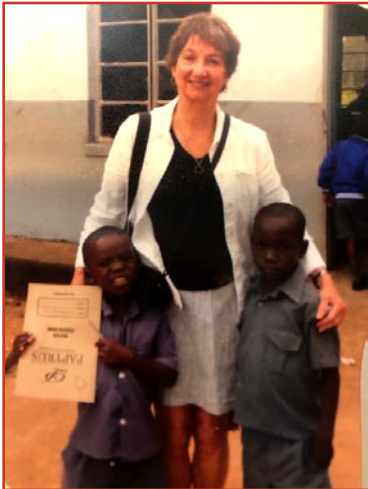
On the 14th of November at 7:00 a.m. it was time to head out for Detroit and Florida. The day was beautiful and sunny. We hadn't had much sleep but were excited and happy as two little children in a candy shop. The traffic was busy on the Hwy 401 west. In London we pulled into the En Route rest area and enjoyed a snack and Tim Horton coffee. Our motorhome was purring like a kitten. We stayed in a Windsor Walmart for the night and saw several other motorhomes already there. Next day we crossed over the Ambassador Bridge. The USA official was very polite, came into the RV to ask us questions, checked out the fridge and opened a few cupboard doors. He asked if this was our first trip, because the RV looked new. He wished us well, gave back our passports and said, "You're good to go". We pulled ahead to the next booth, paid our bridge fee and were off. Our adventure had started.

More photos of Living On The Road...on Page 2)

Visit us on the Internet at district15.rto-ero.org

Matilda

By Nancy Sorensen



No wonder the Dutch and English fought over South Africa! It is beautiful! Almost all tours there include a visit to Zimbabwe, to the north, to view Victoria Falls. After all, we have to compare with our own Niagara. Our guide, noted for providing extras on her tours, was taking us to see Matilda. Earlier, twenty dollars was collected from everyone to be used to purchase a gift for a school in the African bush outside of the Victoria Falls area. Our leader knew of this school and was sure we would be amenable to making donations.

The morning of our school visit was crackling with excitement. We didn't know what to expect! In addition to our formal donations, we raided the markets, stocking up on educational extras we felt would be useful to students attending an institution in the middle of nowhere.

In several vans, we bounced, jounced and zigzagged in tracks and ruts that seemed to lead to nothing seeing only the man-high grasses lining our route and blocking any views. At last, carved out in the midst of this bush, was a clearing with several buildings, a cook shack and a cow tethered to a lone tree. This cow was Matilda. This cow, when slaughtered, would supply the students with two to three months of meat for their lunches. Neither Matilda nor the students seemed aware of the impending fate of this animal that had suddenly materialized on school property.



Standing at attention, the students began their rituals with a national song followed by The Lord's Prayer, something no longer allowed here. The youngsters, primary to grade

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seven, then dispersed to their specific buildings. With a school population of forty-five, class size varied, depending on grade level and enrolment. Boys made up the majority. Most wore a uniform.



Classroom furniture consisted of various tables, benches and chairs with a desk for the teacher.

Blackboards were sheets of plywood painted black. Chalk practically disintegrated on its surface when you tried to write or draw something. With no bulletin boards, any displays were taped to the walls. The teachers had worked hard to make their classrooms colourful and interesting. Personal money was likely used for any niceties we observed.



Forget lessons! The students were too excited by our presence and our gifts. Every student received a scribbler and a pencil case containing a pencil, pen and eraser with some markers thrown in for good measure. One couldn't help but admire the teachers, valiantly trying to educate these young people in the African bush, with few or no resources. The lone male teacher (geography and

mathematics) had no atlases or maps. I had a large detailed map with South Africa on one side and the northern continent on the other and I gave it to him. He was thrilled! Up it went, immediately, on the wall, the students crowding around it. I don't believe any gift could have been more welcomed and appreciated.

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Along with visiting the various classes, we took a peek at the cook shack where Dinah, the cook, was busy preparing the upcoming lunch of porridge. Eventually, Matilda's contribution to lunches would make for fuller stomachs. We chatted, took pictures, explored and had an amazing experience in a most unusual venue. There were smiles everywhere.



It was the aftermath that really hit us. We felt the utmost respect and admiration for the teachers, stuck in the middle of nowhere, trying to make a difference, teaching in these conditions with meagre supplies. How could we ever forget the smiling faces of these young people, so proud to wear a school uniform and be learning things at a real school? There were no science labs, computer rooms, music programs, school libraries, gymnasiums etc. Here was education in its most basic form. I reminded my school attendee granddaughters of their good fortune to have educational facilities with all the perks.

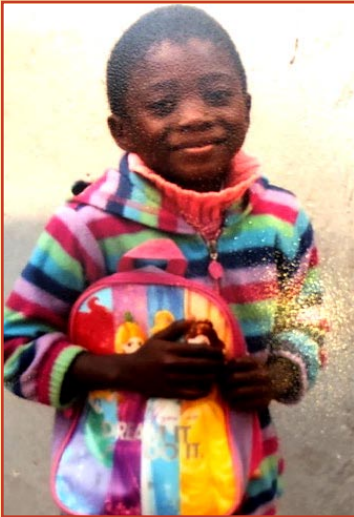
It is hoped that these African children, attending their school in the bush, with nothing but the will to learn, will expand their horizons and be able to make positive use of the knowledge they glean from their dedicated and self-sacrificing instructors. Perhaps it takes such a visit to appreciate the favourable working conditions we enjoyed in our own careers as teachers. Meeting Matilda had been an exciting yet humbling experience.

(More Matilda pics...on the Next Page)

SHARING A POSITIVE MEMORY...

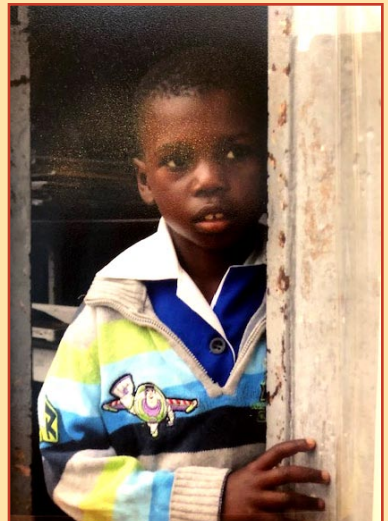


*Teachers
(and
Cooks)
Make a
Difference!*



*Nothing
but the
Will to
Learn!*

Photos by
Nancy
Sorensen



COVID-19

A Time to Start a Canadian Project!

Read about this quilt done by Donna Mae Fleet, page 8



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