



**RTO
ERO**

District 15

Halton Herald

April, 2022



***When YOUR Pandemic ends,
where will you go
to Rejuvenate?***



Photos of Tenerife and La Gomera by Cate Gnish-Roberts

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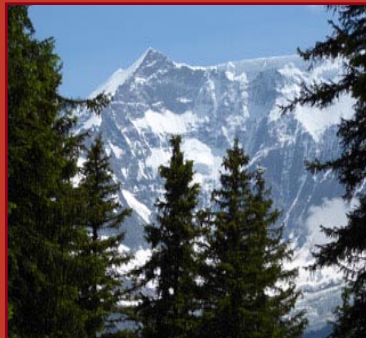
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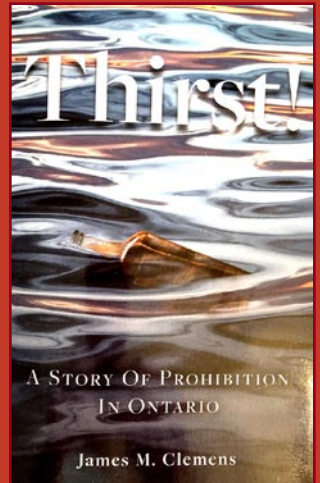
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President's Report

By Jerry Powidajko



By the time you receive this newsletter I am hoping that we are all putting the shovels and/or snowblowers away until next winter. There were many days and nights when the temperatures seemed colder than in previous years but, that being said, it is Canada!

Through hail, snow and freezing wind-chills **Blaine Adams** continues to work indoors...smart man...on archiving all the documents, minutes and a variety of relevant papers from District 15 into a more meaningful digital record. We all know that unless paperwork is properly filed and catalogued it really becomes impossible to make rhyme or reason from it. Thank you, Blaine, for continuing this important work for our District!

As we are all aware by now the provincial election will be held in the next few months. Our Political Advocacy Committee, led by **Claudia Stewart**, is very active in bringing issues to the forefront, especially those that affect seniors. Working with the central RTOERO group, we are focusing on questions that can be asked of all candidates, no matter the party. Some focus areas include:

- the privatization of hospitals and LTC homes;
 - the wage gaps and lack of benefits between health care workers in hospitals and staff in private care facilities;
 - the urgency for recruitment and retention of staff at LTC facilities and in Home Care services;
 - the overall need to strengthen the accountability in these facilities.
- Information will continue to be made available on our website, Facebook page and the Central RTOERO website.

Vibrant Voices, a central RTOERO initiative, held its first webinar of the year. The presentation by Dr. David Suzuki, focussed on creating a lasting legacy through environmental stewardship. Dr. Suzuki spoke about his life's work to help humanity understand, appreciate, respect and protect nature. He challenged webinar attendees to:

- use the power of one and of many to help restore mother earth
- understand the role older adults play in their communities as elders.

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- learn practical tips to leave a better environmental legacy.

I have had the good fortune to see and meet Dr. Suzuki a number of times and have always appreciated his passion and support with respect to our environment.

Our Program Committee held our first session of the year in January with a presentation by Ian Elliott, owner of A Different Drummer Books. Ian spoke about a variety of interesting authors and books available in the coming year. A list of his recommendations are below and we hope you have a chance to pick up some of these great reads:

Fiction

Daughters of the Deer, Danielle Daniel; *Mansions of the Moon*, Shyam Selvadurai; *Mink Returns to Tkaronto*, Lee Maracle; *My Face in the Light*, Martha Schabas; *Pure Colour*, Sheila Heti; *Still Life*, Sarah Winman; *When We Lost Our Heads*, Heather O'Neill; *Young Mungo*, Douglas Stuart

Non-Fiction

And a Dog Called Fig: Solitude, Connection, the Writing Life, Helen Humphreys; *The Betrayal of Anne Frank: A Cold Case Investigation*, Rosemary Sullivan; *Burning Questions; Essays and Occasional Pieces, 2004-2021*, Margaret Atwood; *The Eye Test: A Case for Human Creativity in the Age of Analytics*, Chris Jones;

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Forest Walking: Discovering the Trees and the Woodlands of North America, Peter Wohlleben and Jane Billinghamurst; *Generations: The Sobey Family and Canadian Art*, edited by Sarah Milroy; *The Greatest Polar Expedition of All Time: The Arctic Mission to the Epicentre of Climate Change*, Markus Rex; *It Was Dark There All the Time: Sophia Burthen and the Legacy of Slavery in Canada*, Andrew Hunter; *Son of Elsewhere*, Elamin Abdelmehdi

Mysteries

Autopsy, Patricia Cornwell; *Deep House*, Thomas King; *Take Your Breath Away*, Linwood Barclay; *Every Cloak Rolled in Blood*, James Lee Burke

Books for Young People

Picture Books

Home: A Peek Through Picture Book, Britta Teckentrup
It Fell From the Sky, The Fan Brothers (Terry and Eric)

Fiction

The Beatrice Prophecy, Kate Di Camillo; *Da Vinci's Cat*, Catherine Gilbert Murdock; *Beatrice and Croc Harry*, Lawrence Hill

Biographies/Memoirs

Buster Keaton: A Filmmaker's Life, James Curtis; *Hemingway's Widow: The Life and Legacy of Mary Welsh Hemingway*, Timothy Christian; *Run Towards the Danger*, Sarah Polley; *Stories I Might Regret Telling You*, Martha Wainwright

In February we were fortunate to have Terry O'Reilly who discussed his latest book, *My Biggest Mistake*, about people who made catastrophic career decisions but these "mistakes" ended up being the best thing that ever happened to them. Certainly this goes to prove the saying "Every cloud has a silver lining!". The book is made up of short chapters focusing on a variety of real life situations that happened to people and how they made the best of it, even more!

Kevin Donovan, *Toronto Star's* Chief Investigative Reporter, joined us in March to discuss his many award-winning projects for the news-

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paper. He is the author of several books including *Secret Life: The Jian Ghomeshi Investigation and Dead Times* (a novel). Kevin also discussed his many engaging stories and spoke about the Barry and Honey Sherman murders in Toronto which proved to be very interesting and insightful!

At District 15 we are not planning any in-person events this coming spring. Come September we will be better able to reassess the situation and hopefully can return to in-person meetings and presentations! News will be posted on our website as available.

We encourage you to visit our website <https://district15.rto-ero.org> for up-to date information, a calendar of events and support documentation. Thank you **Jeannie Woodcroft**, our current Web Manager and **Carey Mollenhauer**, our future Web Manager! As well, thank you **Patricia Mateja** for managing our Facebook page.

Have a great year!

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, 2022. Please welcome them and invite them to join you at one of our activities when we are permitted to gather once again.

Douglas Cockell

Louise Colussi

Michelle Davis

Linda Devey

David Evans

Teresa Eves

Bernadette MacDonald

Margaret Maynard

Tracy O'Connell

Livia Pusztai

Sophie ren

Andrea Taylor

Catherine Vasas-Brown

We Get Letters, E-mails & Calls

By Peter Gnish



What a wonderful response we got this time around - the most ever, 15 e-mails and letters. Thank you all for sharing your stories with the members of District 15. Now it's time for **YOU** to tell us what is happening in your life these days. E-mail me (pgnish@gmail.com) by July 15th with as few or as many details as you like for posting in the September issue.

Gerry Blosser wrote to say he felt we did a great job on the composition of the Halton Herald. He said "I'll be busy sharing it with family and friends."

Micki Clemens e-mailed to say "Just picked up my January *Halton Herald* and love the theme you chose of 'rejuvenation'. It is a handsome edition, as ever, and I thank you both (*Editor-includes my wife, Cate*) for all your efforts in the preparation, layout and design involved in the creation of this District 15 booklet. Hope you both are safe and sound in Hamilton, but if you did fly off to Florida, I hope you enjoy the warmth and sunshine and then bring it back with you to Halton!!!"

Lynda Danahy wrote to say "I wanted to pass along a fun and positive visit that I had recently with a former Principal from Halton, **Jack Leadbeater** - now 103 years old! He is very healthy! We had a long chat about education, lifelong education and living life to the fullest. Just thought I would pass along the information."

Lynn Gapes sent an e-mail to say that since her article appeared in the last issue of the *Halton Herald* she had now "lost my almost life-long friend, **Carol Thomlinson**. She has suffered from M.S. for many, many years and has been totally incapacitated for a long time now. She recently moved into the Long Term Care residence beside Jo Brant. We became neighbours and friends in 1949 when I moved to Aldershot from Hamilton. We walked to school together, rode our bikes together, went for swimming lessons together, Brownies, Guides, Rangers, St. Matthew's canteen dances, held season tickets to Tiger Cat games, travelled Europe, Canada and the U.S. together and stood up with each other at our weddings. Our friendship continued as cou-

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ples as we hosted each other at dinners, visited restaurants together – both here and in Florida. We have laughed together till our sides hurt and we have cried till our eyes were dry. Now I am crying alone but with amazing memories of our times together. Carol gave me a diary she found a few years ago and we talked about how much time we spent doing things often way later at night during working days than we should have and wondering how we managed to do it. We probably all have memories that make us wonder how we survived things like this.

(Son) Wade and wife, Marianick, arrived on the 26th. Grandson Jonah, granddaughter Taia (and boyfriend) arrived on the 27th. Yesterday was Jonah's 23rd birthday, as well. That has been a wonderful blessing for me and I am enjoying every minute with them. I had a second trip to visit (son) Ryan in October as he realized he had 2 more weeks vacation and wanted me to return since being there in August. So all in all, I am managing to keep busy and not feeling at all confined by the COVID mess."

Re **Margaret Gray**: Daughter Kathy Gray Clodd sent an e-mail to inform us "that our beloved Mother Margaret Anne Gray passed away on January 11th, 2022 at Allendale Long Term Care in her 89th year. Her funeral was on January 15th, 2022. Mom taught at Milton District High School from 1961 until her retirement in 1991. We are hoping to have a celebration of life for Mom in the spring when it is safer to do so."

Al Greyson e-mailed me to say "It's always wonderful to receive the *Herald* and to learn of the journeys former colleagues have embarked upon. I especially enjoy finding out about new members, though it is sobering when one realizes that some of the retirees were just beginning their careers as our generation was moving on. Thanks to you and the team for all the work you do. It must be a challenge getting articles when COVID has limited our travel and personal contact with others."

Krishan Gupta wrote to say "I would like to thank Antonietta Pizzingrilli of Burlington for sending me happy birthday wishes on my 88th birthday, January 5. I just wanted to say thank you so much for a great birthday gesture. I had a lovely long teaching career, global in nature. I wish to express and share my teaching experiences, possibly in an informal meeting of the Halton District 15, if feasible."

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Penny Hamby e-mailed me to say “**Lynn Gapes**’ article brought tears to my eyes. Lynn and Bob bought our house when we severed our land and built behind them. They were the best neighbours that anyone would want. Bob was such a friendly kind person who brought joy to everyone he met. He helped us move our furniture into our home and was always there to help if needed. Their children Ryan and Wade were so friendly and Ryan the older boy used to come over and visit with us and he even got to babysit my kids. I especially remember when they used to have everyone sit on their front lawn to watch fireworks on Canada Day. We were sad to see them leave.

We do not know why things happen to good people but it seemed that Bob died doing what he loved to do - taking care of animals. I am sure that it happened quickly and he did not suffer. We did get to go to a memorial for him in Burlington and got to see Lynn and the family. I enjoyed seeing pictures that Lynn sent to the *Halton Herald* few years ago.”

Susan Hoicka sent an e-mail to say “Thank you for putting in a lot of effort to produce this (newsletter). Wishing you lots of hope for a healthy & joyous New Year.”

Andrea Longo, an Active Teaching Retiree wrote to say “Thank you very much. It is a very valuable and informative newsletter and I appreciate being on the mailing list.”

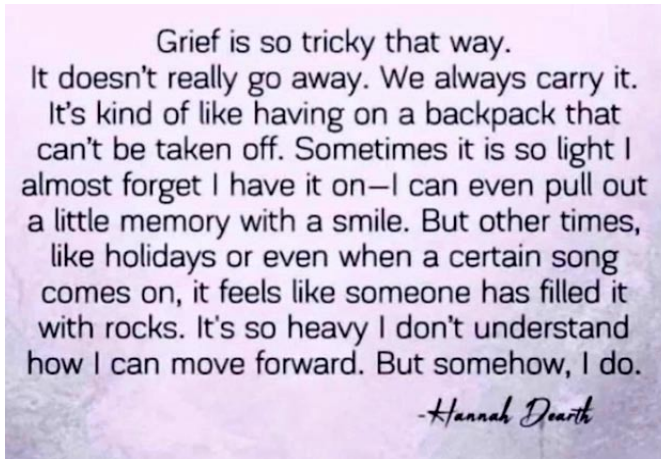
Katherine McArthur, another Active Teaching Retiree, also wrote “Thank you so much, Peter. I appreciate you sending my contact information to the Hamilton / Halton chapter. I’m just beginning my retirement journey but I know I’m interested in this type of adventure. Thanks again and Happy New Year!”

Anne Milford sent this message: “Thank you for publishing *A NOTE TO OTHERS* by **Lynn Gapes**. Also, thank you to Lynn for having the courage to share her sorrow as it served as a reminder that many of us are trying our best to deal with such a loss. Losing a spouse is devastating in “normal” times but COVID has intensified the grieving process due to lack of personal contacts and social interactions. I recently read

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a message about grief by Hannah Dearth that expressed grief so eloquently. I am sharing it with you in the hopes that others may find the message comforting. When I first read the comparison of grief to a light or heavy backpack, I was astounded at how it so aptly described my grief. What a wonderful way to explain it to someone who has not experienced such a loss and does not understand.”



Jaan Pallop e-mailed me to say “Congratulations and thanks for all the work you do on the publication. I always enjoy receiving it and then thinking back to those good old days at Nelson. Please pass on similar greetings and kudos to your *Herald* colleague, **Nanci Wakeman**. I remember her fondly. I really enjoy the photography in all of the issues. Marilyn’s photo essay on trees was so simple, yet so beautiful!”

Janet Perigo wrote “Sorry to be so slow in sending this. I thought I had done it some time ago. I taught for the Burlington Board of Education at Tuck then at John A. Lockhart in the 60s and Purdue in ESL in the 70s. My final years in teaching were at Mohawk College. My pension comes from CAAT but I joined RTOERO due to health coverage. It's been fun to receive the *Halton Herald* and I read about many people whose names I remember from the Halton Board. Thank you for all the time and effort you put into the publication.”

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Sue Rietchin sent a Christmas card with her annual Christmas Greetings letter. In it she brought us up to date on all the happenings of the kids and grandkids as they are growing up as well as the connections they valiantly tried to keep during the COVID crisis. Sue and husband Jurg managed a week at a cottage in Connecticut with family seen in the photo. She said they "...continued to bike, ski and be active at home and at our cottage on Lake Eugenia. With almost no chance to travel we made the most of beautiful Ontario. So grateful for good health."



She also said "Always nice to get the newsletter that keeps us in touch. Really feel for all our educators and the difficulties they face at the moment. The big problems of our day seem small compared to the issues students, schools and the staff face at the moment. And ongoing problems will continue long after COVID releases its hold on us."

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. Advertising may be accepted 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 and is not permitted in district newsletters or on district websites. Districts may 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.

Memories

By Jackie Poppe

Richard Szymczk's musings about days long gone have triggered a lot of memories for me. I too was part of the teaching crew in those days. After my marriage I moved from Toronto to Burlington in 1957 and found a job with School Section #1 East Flamborough. There were four schools: Fairfield, Glenview, Maplehurst and King's Road. My interview (and hiring) took place in the living room of the secretary of that small school board. I was hired to teach Grade 5 at King's Road. It couldn't have been more different - at one floor and just opened in 1956 - compared to the three-story building in Toronto built in 1884.

In January 1958, amalgamation of East Flamborough and Nelson Township made for a much larger Burlington and very different administration. Sorting everything out meant we operated each school on \$50 per month petty cash until the end of June. By then you could hardly get a pencil. I had other things on my mind and retired/resigned in June because I was pregnant. It is hard to believe now but pregnant women weren't allowed to teach in those days.

Following my son's birth I was rehired and returned to King's Road in September 1959 to a school double in size. By this time Burlington and Oakville had become one board. In March 1961, I was pregnant again and offered to resign at Easter. I was told that I had to resign at the end of February. Well, as it happened, my good friend in the class next door had been in an accident and her doctor only allowed her to work half time. And that's where I ended up - supply teaching next to my own class and leaving at Easter - as I had wanted. (In those days it wasn't spring break; it was Easter break). It was OK to be a pregnant supply teacher but not a pregnant teacher! Those forced resignations haunted me years later with pension requirements and it took some maneuvering to buy back 'maternity time'.

Everything old is new again with how shortages are handled! In the news lately I have heard that, to make up for shortages caused by the pandemic, unqualified people are making up for the shortfall. We had numerous staff in the elementary panel that arrived after grade 12 with six weeks of summer school training. They taught two years, went to Teach-

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ers' College for a year and came back fully qualified. In the 60s and 70s, with shortages reaching high school, people came in with experience in their trades and taught on a Letter of Permission and attended summer school to finish qualifying. Actually that is the route I took in re-qualifying to teach high school. I had a department head who reminded me that I was one of "those people". I outlasted him!

So many memories! Thanks for the opportunity to dump them.

(See the photo on page 2 of Jackie, standing 2nd from the left and her 1957 class.)

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 national Membership Services at membership@rtoero.ca
- Phone RTOERO national 1-800-361-9888. Receive a call in a day or so.
- Contact Marilyn MacLennan (District 15) with the change using the District 15 e-mail address District15halton@gmail.com - use "Change in the subject line. You will need your RTOERO membership number when contacting the RTOERO office.

If you have not been receiving electronic communication from RTOERO national or District 15, then your e-mail address is not receiving bulk e-mails. This may be solved by adding the following e-mail addresses to your contacts: Rto_events@rtoero.ca; district15halton@gmail.com.

Puns To Make You Laugh!

Two hydrogen atoms meet. One says, 'I've lost my electron.' The other says, 'Are you sure?'

The first replies, 'Yes, I'm positive.'

There was the person who sent ten puns to friends, with the hope that at least one of the puns would make them laugh. No pun in ten did.

Richard Remembers...

By Richard Szymczyk

Hopefully this brief explanation of why the Guelph Line office of the public board was named after **J.W. Singleton**, the first Director of Education of the Halton District School Board - plus his other personae - will be of special interest to principals and teachers of the 60s - 70s.

The story begins in August, 1960 when I was bed-ridden, post-surgery at Joseph Brant Hospital after summer school had ended. One morning **Bruce Lindley**, Finance Superintendent, dropped in, inquiring whether I had seen Jim Singleton, recovering from a health issue a few doors away.

“Of course not!”

Later, Singleton stood in the doorway dressed in hospital gown and attached to a rolling tripod carrying his IV!

“What the h*** are you doing lying on your back instead of preparing for the school year?” he asked jocularly... and then it began...

For two days we discussed strictly non-education issues and that's when I got to know him well. He shared his WW2 experiences – (at 23, Lt. Col. in the Canadian Tank Corps in the African Campaign). Subjects we discussed included history, language, politics, Halton Region, reconstruction of old buildings - some single-handedly!! He was planning to rebuild an old stone farm house on Guelph Line which is now the Stonehouse of Campbellville, selling stained glass from around the world.

When Halton amalgamated several School Boards around 1980, JW was selected as the new Director of Education. He called an initial meeting to be held at an Oakville high school with Halton principals and all staff - as a “command performance”. Scheduled for 1 p.m., over 100 were present, some seated, many chatting in hallways and in the auditorium. At about 12.58 p.m., Director Jim Singleton stood up, placed his speech on the podium, adjusted his glasses, checked his watch and precisely at 1 p.m. began his presentation! As he continued to speak a hush fell in the entire room and halls with everyone quickly finding a seat!

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(Richard...continued from Page 14)

This welcoming speech - unfortunately not transcribed - was unforgettable, laying out the plans for bringing together the diverse education systems he was now heading.

Later, I asked why he hadn't waited for everyone to sit down before beginning. His reply was, "When you're unknown and initially placed in charge, you start from a position of strength!!" And that's the way he "ran" the system - highly respected and admired but sometimes apprehensive, but for the right reasons.

A few years later, the inspectors were directed to learn details about their schools' principals and the schools' operations. "Executive Committee Interviews" lasting about two hours were initiated. Each inspector was to document the answers to about 30 questions.

Some sample questions:

- Who are your top 3 and bottom 3 teachers ? – Explain why.
- Number of written reports made? I'd like to see a few.
- Quality of custodial staff, secretary, condition of the school?
- How are school activities communicated to parents and community?
- How do you handle parent complaints?
- What have you read recently or what education courses have you taken in the last 3 years?
- What are the best and worst things about your school since amalgamation?
- What can I do as your inspector to assist you to improve in your role?

As a result of these interviews, the senior administration had a comprehensive view of the system, being able to identify needs for professional development and improvement. And principals learned what the leadership expectations were!

JW's vision ensured that we became a collaborative efficient working model to make diverse Halton – not necessarily the best – but a leader in education in the province. He was firm in his belief that a principal should be the educational leader, knowledgeable about changes and advancements in education, as in the quotation - "As is the Principal, So goes the School!"

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I had the distinct privilege of knowing Jim Singleton outside of education, and had the greatest admiration for his leadership, command of English and unwillingness to accept less than the best possible from himself and from everyone else. I must add that, as a team, JW and Assistant Director **Doug Lawless** initiated and implemented these new policies. Who was basically responsible? Only they would know! Or does it really matter? They worked!! Naming the Board Offices after James W. Singleton is fitting and a wonderful tribute to an unusual and outstanding educator.

Webmaster's Report

By Jeannie Woodcroft



I have enjoyed volunteering as your District 15's webmaster for the last 10 years. The website underwent 3 updates during that time. I hope you have availed yourself of the information that it provided. The training for the new Web Manager, **Carey Mollenhauer**, began Dec. 6, 2021 and will probably last for a few months.

During this time the present url, district15.rto-ero.org, remains 'live' on the web. You are invited to have a last look around the site. Enjoy the memories that you will find under the Pictures menu.

I will be retiring from the District 15 Board when the new website goes 'live'. I wish you well as we face our new "normalcy" of the pandemic.

Contribute to the Herald!

The next *Halton Herald* will be distributed in September, 2022.

- 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 limit your article to a maximum of 750 words.
- 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, 2022.

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 2021 – 2022

Past President: Micki Clemens
1st Vice President: Vacant
Secretary: Dianne: Visschedyk
Member Emeritus: Jim Baker

President: Jerry Powidajko
2nd Vice President: Brad Fisher
Treasurer: Carol Pashkievich

Committees**Archives**

Blaine Adams

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Penny Hambly

Book of Remembrance

Toni Pizzigrilli

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Jeannie Woodcroft

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Goodwill

Toni Pizzigrilli

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Marina Lloyd and Liz Takalec

East Convenors

Dianne Visschedyk

North Convenors

Susan Spencer

Out-of-Region Convenor

Catherine Fadyshen

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Bonnie Cummings

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Colton Roberts

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Marilyn MacLennan

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Susan Stavin

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Claudia Stewart

Program

Jerry Powidajko

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Toni Pizzigrilli, Colton Roberts, Susan Stavin

Social

Vacant

Committee Members: Lynda Kozak, Marilyn MacLennan, Patricia Mateja

Carol Pashkievich, Claudia Stewart, Diona Szczerbak

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Playing a Round With History

By Vaughn Perusse

It is a pleasure to submit an article as a recent retiree. My wife, Rosana and I both retired in June 2019 after a combined 59 years at the TCDSB. We taught at a School for the Arts (St. Patrick) in Toronto. We moved to Georgetown in December of that year and love it up here! We enjoy daily walks at the Credit Valley Conservation in Terra Cotta with our two Rat Terriers (Rory and Phoebe). We also enjoy golf as a pastime and have done so for a number of years.

About ten years ago we took up Hickory Golf and use these historic clubs exclusively. We are longstanding members of the GHSC (Golf Historical Society of Canada) and we wish to share the enjoyment we derive from this wonderful sport.

The GHSC offers opportunity for both casual and serious play. We also help Golf Clubs celebrate their significant anniversaries. It's also fun to dress up in period costume and play. I especially enjoy golfing in a kilt!

(See the photo on page 2)



The clubs we use are from the 1870's to 1900 with smooth faces and hickory shafts. We also play with clubs made between 1900 and 1920. It is amazing to use these relics for the same purpose over 130 years later. You would be surprised with the results of a well-struck shot. It is a completely different experience to modern golf.

You are probably asking yourself, aren't these clubs too valuable? What if I break one? We thought the same. Indeed, some clubs are quite valuable; however, countless numbers of these clubs were manufactured and are available for sale (not expensive) and use. Many of us trade, repair and lend equipment.

If you are a golfer and wish to experience a brush with history, please consider hickory golf. It truly is a pleasure! We invite you to visit the GHSC website. Should you wish to try, it's as easy as joining us on "Hickory Fridays" at the Cambridge Golf Club. We can even lend you a set of clubs!

The Book of Pandemic Hours

By Micki Clemens, Past President

The theme of “rejuvenation” suggested by the title of our January issue of the *Halton Herald* resonated strongly with me and I found it an appealing concept that I wanted to reflect on more deeply entering this new year of 2022! How to lift ourselves up from the morass of recurrent disappointment, those moments of loss and sadness, and the feelings of dislocation and downright depression that we all have experienced during the past two years?

During these seemingly endless pandemic months, when I have felt stressed or overwhelmed by events beyond my control, I have tried the practice of journaling. My first step has always been to head out to Indigo to find just the right journal. Will it be a classic leather one, or a colourful, artistic floral rendering to cheer me up, or a practical no-nonsense cardboard covered journal? Hmm... are my thoughts really worthy of the price of a leather journal? Maybe the floral one is just too upbeat and cutesy, so I would end up with a cardboard-covered version with the plain phrase, My Notebook, stamped on the cover.

But in the days of lockdown, what was there to journal about?

Well, one regular occurrence in my life has been our monthly book club, comprised of both men and women. I have kept a journal record of the thoughts, ideas, and comments that were shared within that group. I have enjoyed returning to those notes, post-discussion, to reflect on those elements of the book that were either new to my way of thinking or which confirmed the first impressions that I had of a particular book. I have been so grateful for our Halton Readon book club throughout the pandemic (we safely Zoomed!) and for all our members for their insightful, humourous, exhilarating, controversial, and, sometimes, delightfully provocative comments. The reading choices have always been eclectic; fiction and nonfiction are generally equally balanced. Examples: *White Fragility*, *Washington Black*, *A History of Canada in Ten Maps*, *A Gentleman in Moscow*, *A Good Death*. Each book selection has allowed me to learn something new, to stretch my thinking, and to inform my journaling exploits.

While I have written professionally for education publishers in the past

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and, while as President of RTOERO for three years, I wrote many letters, applications for grants, monthly messages to members, and countless emails, one unique writing exercise that did help to reinvigorate me over the past year, was helping my husband with his bucket list project. He had always hoped to put to paper a story about the Ontario prohibition era, told to him as a youngster by his father. This story was about a ship loaded with Corby's liquor that foundered on the sandbars of Lake Erie, in 1922, close to where the family farm was located. Always curious and intrigued by this story as a child, Jim decided to investigate and chronicle this tale. Undertaking research at the Ontario Provincial Archives, Jim discovered that his grandfather, Malcolm Stanley Clemens, had been called as a witness during the trials of certain farmers charged with theft or wreckage and offences against the liquor restrictions of the time. Now that surprising discovery was assuredly a personal spur to continue to work on this story! And during the pandemic, we had the luxury of time to realize this dream of publication.

My part was to work on early drafts to try and assist Jim to determine the right structure for the book. It was not to be just a chronological story but one that was to be embedded in the context of the prohibition era in Ontario. From my English literature studies, I always remember the trivia fact that Dylan Thomas revised his poem, "Fern Hill," fifteen times. Well, this story was reviewed and revised and reworked way more than fifteen times! However, the work made the days pass and gradually the story took on a framework that was satisfactory to us both. And I have to say that I drew on my past professional experiences as Coordinator for English, Language Arts, and Drama for the Halton Board and the many workshops we offered on the writing process and the need for a recursive approach to written content.

As it turns out the book came together more quickly during this last year of the pandemic, perhaps influenced by both of us feeling that we wanted to have some concrete accomplishment to mark this year. At this writing in February 2022, we are awaiting the release date of the book, *Thirst!* by Jim Clemens. If district members or their friends wish to investigate the culmination of this pandemic writing activity, and enjoy a good yarn in the process, you are welcome to check out the FreisenPress publisher's link: <https://books.friesenpress.com/store/title/119734000170788521>.

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So the journaling process and the writing process have been a couple of avenues we explored during this pandemic to infuse more energy, more optimism, and more hope into our daily life. And now, as I launch myself in 2022 on a fresh theme of mindfulness, my new journal is getting a daily workout!

Awards & Community Grants Report

By Penny Hambly



Distinguished Service Award

Each spring we ask for your help 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. You may also e-mail the application to hamblyp@cogeco.ca. Deadline is Friday,

May 6, 2022

Johnson Insurance Scholarships

The information and application for the \$1000.00 Johnson Insurance scholarships for students who are in their first year of a post secondary program should be available in the spring. Check their website under *Johnson Insurance Scholarships*.

RTOERO District 15 Halton Academic Spirit Award

Our District 15 Board offers a \$1000 scholarship to a graduating student who has overcome a challenging situation in order to succeed. We provide one scholarship to the Halton Catholic District School Board and two to the Halton District School Board. See our RTOERO District 15 website for more details in the coming months.

Community Grants

If you have a project that might qualify for the RTOERO Community Grant of up to \$4000.00, go to the RTOERO Provincial website to see the criteria for submitting an application. You need to contact me to discuss your project as it has to be approved by RTOERO District 15 .

Health Benefits Committee Report

By Bonnie Cummings



Hamilton District 13 and our own District 15 had a joint webinar entitled “Know your Health Plan” on Feb. 8, 2022. Stephen Wong, Director of Benefits presented this webinar. 100+ members from various regions attended this informative presentation and many common member questions were thoroughly discussed.

Stephen started off the webinar by reminding members that you don't have to wait for a presentation to get your questions answered. Feel free to contact RTOERO anytime with your general questions by emailing insurance@rtoero.ca or membership@rtoero.ca or calling 1-800-361-9888 or 416-962-9463. For more specific questions, contact Johnson Insurance at 1-877-406-9007 or you can also chat directly with someone on line at rto-ero.johnson.ca or email healthbenefits@johnson.ca.

After retirement many people are not prepared to cover health costs. Health insurance is unique. Most people don't have a financial plan for unexpected health emergencies. That's why Johnson has over 82,000 members across Canada.

We are affiliated with many other organizations: Sunlife is our underwriter, Johnson administrates our plan and are our consultants, Global Excel - travel claims, Teladoc (Best Doctors) - independent medical advice, Venngo MemberPerks - member discounts, and Express Scripts - prescription delivery. The RTOERO insurance plan is fully owned, managed and operated by RTOERO.

Member input is very important. Plan suggestions come from our members and are looked at for feasibility in the fall. Our premiums are set to cover costs, not to make a profit. Premiums are used exclusively to provide the most comprehensive and affordable benefits for our members. With long term stability of our plans in mind, rates are reviewed annually based on member usage of plans from the previous year. Looking at our 2021 usage of the plan, there will be no rate increase for 2022.

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Some changes to our plan were implemented in January 2022. These are best reviewed on the RTOERO website as it has the most current up-to-date booklet. A new hard copy is only printed every 3 years and the next one is due out in 2023.

Some member questions were answered as follows:

- Dental treatments while traveling, especially in the USA are okay. Some members like to get their dental work done in Mexico as it is cheaper. Just let them know you have insurance.
- Medical marijuana is not covered as there needs to be more studies done for it to be covered.
- Pharmacists should submit their invoices directly to Johnson for you, just bring your card into the pharmacist and reimbursement is immediate and you will only have to pay for the uncovered cost.
- Not all medications are covered by the government after age 65. Some vaccines are covered although travel vaccines are not. Sexual dysfunction drugs are also not covered by the province among others.
- Many practitioners will submit your claims for you, just ask them to set it up. You can have the money come to them or to you.
- It is best to use direct deposit for your claims because as of late many cheques seem to be getting lost in the mail delaying reimbursement. To set up, send a void cheque in the mail with your claim.
- Use the digital portal if possible as it is a single sign on and you will get immediate claim processing. The members only portal has a step by step process on the website for new or old members. You can call Johnson for help if you have any issues.
- Your income tax summary of health claims is given yearly in mid February and is available on line.
- Member perks and Venngo are the same thing.
- Late sign-up for medical will need a questionnaire answered.
- Late sign-up for dental will automatically be accepted but you must stay signed up for 2 years.

Teladoc (Best Doctors) gives you an expert second opinion. If you have a diagnosis, they will check that it is okay. Their stats show 64% receive a new diagnosis, 80% a new treatment. If necessary you will be sent to several different specialists. Your parents and children, even

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when not covered by your plan, can use this service. Even your children over 30 have access to this service.

Express Scripts, sends out 90-100 days of medication at a time, free delivery, blister packages are available, higher reimbursement rate, 100% for generic, 90% for brand name.

Travel:

- Cost of medical emergencies can be expensive, heart attack in Florida could be \$100,000+
- 93 day coverage per trip
- 100% coverage up to 10 million dollars per person, per trip
- \$6000 per person per trip for trip cancellation/interruption and delay
- Travel questions call 1-877-406-9007
- Medical stability clause:
 - Covered even with a diagnosis if stable
 - A reduction of medication is okay
 - Routine adjustments to medication is okay
 - Waiting for an appointment with a specialist or for test results are NOT considered stable
 - Waiting for routine test results is okay
 - Stable is 90 days before your trip
 - If you get COVID 19 while traveling you are covered
 - Trip cancellation pages 72-76
 - If a travel company issued you a voucher, you cannot claim trip cancellation due to COVID 19 until after your voucher has expired
 - Early return due to COVID 19 is NOT covered; may be eligible for reasons not related to COVID 19
 - No reimbursements for COVID 19 tests for traveling or for quarantining after the trip
 - For trip cancellations - you are covered for day trips to the USA if your condition is stable. You are covered within Canada you but not within the province - multi leg trips you are covered
 - Botox for neurological pain - you may be eligible for coverage, contact Johnson
 - Take your insurance card with you when you travel
 - Keep proof of travel dates in case of an emergency, airline ticket, passport stamp, transaction for gas, hotel bill, coffee on credit card etc.

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Discount Partners:

Hearing Life- offers discount programs info@RTOERO.ca.

Venngo - discount member, travel, hotel, car rental, Ripley's etc., food services, electronics through The Source, download their app, any issues contact the membership team for help.

For those traveling, always remember to bring your health card with you. All the information you need in case of an emergency is on the card. Safe travels and enjoy the spring weather.

Goodwill Committee Report

By Toni Pizzingrilli



On behalf of the Goodwill Committee, I hope that 2022 has been a good year for you so far and that you have experienced good health and treasured connections with your loved ones.

In keeping with the Goodwill mission, my deepest gratitude continues to go out to the Goodwill Convenors:

Susan Spencer, Marina Lloyd, Dianne Visschedyk, Cathy Fadyshen and our newest member **Liz Tkalec** for their diligence and dedication in making connections with our RTOERO District 15 Senior Members, via cards, emails or calls. This past Holiday Season, an estimated 522 cards were sent to our local members aged 80 years plus. We hope that these cards brought our members some joy during a special time of the year.

It is with great joy that we officially welcome **Liz (Elizabeth) Tkalec** to the Goodwill Team. Liz started her role as one of the West Area Convenors in February, 2022. She is a much welcomed and valued addition to the Goodwill Committee. The enthusiasm with which Liz has embraced her role is admirable. We are so happy to have you on board, Liz!

Remember to please contact a member of the Goodwill Committee if you know of someone who would benefit from a friendly connection either via a phone call or written correspondence. We can only hope that by the time you receive this issue, we may even be allowed to do in-person visits. Have a wonderful Spring and Summer! Stay well!

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Political Advocacy Committee

By Claudia Stewart



The provincial election will be called shortly after this issue reaches your hands. This is a very important moment for each of us to express our concerns to the candidates who will be running in Halton about issues we feel are important.

Mental and Physical Health - Long Term Care

The pandemic has drawn back the curtain on conditions in Long Term Care homes. We know that the vast majority of seniors wish to remain in their own homes and receive care there rather than enter a facility. After reading the reports from the military about some of the long term care facilities in the province, we don't want to imagine ourselves having to live in a facility. We need to reimagine care and live up to our values as a caring compassionate society. We know caring for an elderly person can be a challenge and that waiting lists for care are long.

Building new facilities is not the only strategy to address this issue. The alternative is for us, as retirees, to advocate for new ideas, improved conditions and to learn as much as we can about suggestions for improvements to ensure no one else has to endure neglect at the end of their lives. It is no longer adequate for us to merely ask questions of the candidates when they appear at our door seeking our votes during the election. Please read the party platforms carefully, ask questions, hold candidates to account and speak to your friends and families. Let them know that we are looking for direct action to improve conditions inside the LTC facilities, not just increases to the number of beds available. Without compassionate staff who feel valued and are compensated with full time hours and benefits, the beds themselves do not improve care.

Now is the time to confront this uncomfortable issue and not allow it to be swept under the rug to avoid dealing with the neglect we have seen over the past two years. Don't allow this issue to fade to the background of the news cycle. Please help advocate for improved home care and long term care. If you have a story to share or want to learn more, please contact me at District15Halton@gmail.com.

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Environmental Stewardship

Ask questions about proposed use of farmland for highways or new subdivisions. Can we afford to lose the rich farmland in Halton to more malls and housing? Our climate is in crisis; how can we prevent further deterioration? What are the candidates going to do to solve the issue of climate change? Which parties have a climate plan and how will it work? I have been checking out the CTV News weekly email "The Climate Barometer". If you know other websites with climate related information that you would like to share with our members please do so at district15Halton@gmail.com and we will list them in the *Rapport* and in the *Halton Herald*.

COVID Humour!

Today's weather? Room temperature. Day 31 of social isolation and it's looking like Las Vegas in my house: We're losing money by the minute. Cocktails are acceptable at any hour. And nobody knows what time it is.

Get the *Halton Herald* Electronically!!!

Close to 300 members have made the environmentally friendly choice to receive the *Halton Herald* electronically only, resulting in savings of about \$600 in our printing and mailing costs. If you would like to change your subscription preference from print to online only, please e-mail **Peter Gnish** at pgnish@gmail.com. I will add your name to my list to receive the e-version and not the hard copy for the next issue.

To ensure that this preference continues in the future you must send an e-mail to RTOERO at membership@rto-ero.org or telephone RTOERO 1-800-361-0888. You will need your RTOERO membership number when contacting the RTOERO office. For security reasons, they will not allow me to do this for you. Inform them that you wish to have your District Publication News in Print Form designation changed to NO in order to be ensure that you will not receive a hard copy of district publications.

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Foundation Report

By Moira Plexman



On the 10th anniversary of the Foundation a new strategic plan was developed:

Vision

We envision a society in which all seniors live with dignity and respect.

Mission

We invest in programs, research, and training to support healthy, active aging for all Canadians. Our activities aim to improve seniors' health care, end social isolation and combat ageism.

Initiatives of Note:

The **Chime in Program** is a moderated, computer-based weekly Zoom program. It offers Seniors the opportunity to connect and participate in break-out room discussions. The goal is to reduce isolation. To date the program which began in the fall of 2021 has been successful and plans are being made to expand it.

The **Women's Age Lab** was developed by Dr. Paula Rochon and her team to address the unique needs of older women. It has 4 areas of focus:

- Addressing gendered ageism
- Re-imagining aging in place and congregate settings
- Optimizing therapies
- Promoting social connectedness

For more information, please visit www.womensagelab.ca.

The Mental Health of Seniors – A new program is being developed at the University of Alberta to address mentally healthy living after social distancing.

The Foundation is on Facebook

Check out various programs and seminars offered to RTOERO members on Facebook.

These initiatives have been made possible as a result of the donations made by RTOERO members. Your donation can make a difference in the quality of life experienced by seniors.

WANTED - Articles & Photos on How You Plan to Rejuvenate!

The January, 2022 issue of the *Halton Herald* labelled **2022, The Year to Rejuvenate**. The last 2 years have been particularly difficult for most people. We have all managed to cope with the COVID pandemic in our own particular ways. Hopefully, the worst is over. It is time for us to look forward, time to make new plans, time to **Rejuvenate**.



We would like to hear from you as to how you plan to **Rejuvenate** over the next few days, months or years. As an encouragement we are going to give you a special RTOERO commenerative gift if you send an article (and photos if you have them) telling us what you are planning to do and how this will help you to **Rejuvenate**. Your article will be used in the next edition(s) of the *Halton Herald*.

Here is what to do:

1. Tell us a bit about your plans. The article can be as short as you like but no more than 750 words, please.
2. Submit as many photos as you like - we will make a selection.
3. Attach the article and photos to an e-mail and send them to pgnish@gmail.com or by Canada Post to Peter Gnish, 153 Fairleigh Ave. S. Hamilton ON L8M 2K4.

All hard copies will be returned. Deadline is July 15, 2022.



Book of Remembrance

We remember with fondness

James Baker
 Vernon Browne
 Sheila Dionne
 Margaret Gray
 John Maynard
 John Singular

Dorothy Bauer
 Helen Cloutier
 Daniela Giecewicz
 Margaret Hood
 Joseph Pusztai
 Anne Tingay

Dorothy Blakey
 Robert Devey
 Mary Gillis
 Eva Kurtz
 Patricia Ross

Hiking Through Switzerland

By Jenny Peace

In June 2017 I had the wonderful opportunity of taking a hiking trip through Switzerland with Adventures Abroad. The trip was unique in that we took local trains to get from place to place which was much more interesting than having our own designated coach.

We began in Zurich where we met our group and guide at a designated hotel and had dinner together and a short tour of the city. The next day we were off to St Moritz and a beautiful hike in the mountains above this famous ski village. The hikes were all led by a guide but everyone was free to walk at his/her own pace and our guide made sure that no one was left behind. The views were spectacular and the mountain air so fresh. It was invigorating!

Next we hopped onto the Glacier Express and travelled through more incredible landscape to Zermatt, the home of the Matterhorn. The following day was spent hiking at the foot of the Matterhorn. It was clear, with a blue sky and we caught some incredible views of the mountain.

Our next stop was the Interlaken area, and the beautiful Alpine town of Grindelwald. We spent two nights there and hiked underneath the awesome peaks of the Jungfrau. We found some beautiful alpine meadows full of flowers. There were a few tricky passages, which had us using both arms and legs and sometimes

our bottoms to navigate the path. We all arrived safely, though, and each evening we celebrated with a group dinner at a local restaurant.

Our final stop was the beautiful city of Lucerne. We did one last day of hiking above the city, a swim in the lake and a final celebration dinner before the tour broke up and we all made our separate ways home.

In summary, outstanding scenery, fresh air, exercise, amazing food, a few challenges but lots of camaraderie and the chance to make new friends made this one of the best adventures I have experienced.

(Hiking Switzerland photos on the next Page)

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Hiking Trough Switzerland

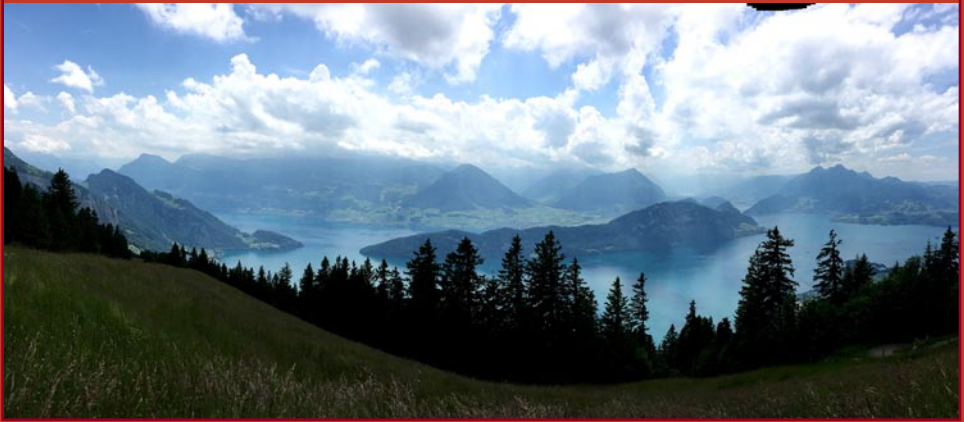
Photos by Jenny Peace



Above St Moritz



Alpine Flowers



Above Lucerne



Zermatt

A Place to Rejuvenate

Memories of Tenerife & La Gomera by Cate Gnish-Roberts



At the Beach



Hiking on La Tiede



At a Local Gallery



Visiting a Winery



Enjoying Mardi Gras

*Marilyn MacLennan, Membership Chair
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