

news & views

The Magazine of the Alberta Retired Teachers' Association

WINTER 2021

Connecting Issue

Bonds to Last Beyond Retirement

Finding Companionship

That Connected Feeling: ARTA's Branches

ARTA

ALBERTA RETIRED
TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION



**“I’D HATE TO GET
THROUGH THE
PANDEMIC JUST
TO END UP IN
THE HOSPITAL
WITH THE FLU.”**

**Help protect yourself
from the flu.**



You’re doing everything you can to protect yourself from COVID-19. But what about the flu? If you’re 65+, you’re at high risk for serious complications from the flu – including hospitalization and death. This year, help prevent infection – be sure to get your shot.

**Get your flu vaccine from
your doctor or pharmacist.**

Influenza vaccines do not treat influenza and will not prevent hospitalization or complications after the onset of illness. As with all vaccines, immunization does not provide 100% protection.

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On the Cover:

Five of the "Bonds to Last" friends stayed safely socially distanced by being photographed one at a time in the spinner and then were gathered into this photo through the magic of technology. Read what connecting means to these retirees on page 28.

Photographs and composite by Virginia Quist.

ARTA supports an engaged lifestyle after retirement through member-centred services, advocacy, communication, wellness, and leadership.

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Avoiding the Wrong Connections

As you read through the many stories about connecting in this issue of *news&views*, it's important to remember that not all connections are desirable. ARTA takes every precaution to protect member information from prying eyes and digital scammers. We encourage all members to take similar steps in their own lives, to protect themselves and their data.

Beware of suspicious emails that mimic people or organizations in your life, and never give out any personal or financial information without verifying the source of the request. If you're suspicious, don't reply to the person who contacted you. Instead, contact the organization directly using the phone number or email listed on their website.



Member Services



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Wellness



Organizational Excellence

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From the President

Lorna McIlroy | President, ARTA



Making Connections

“In nature we never see anything isolated, but everything in connection with something else which is before it, beside it, under it, and over it.”

— Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Making connections made money for me almost sixty years ago as a telephone operator. The simple act of connecting two phone plugs into the appropriate jacks facilitated conversations between two people who had no other immediate means of communication.

We are now digitally connected around the clock. Social media connectivity has become a competitive exercise as some brag about their number of friends on Facebook or the number of retweets on a Twitter post. This is, however, a very superficial connection. It serves a purpose. It conveys information. Meetings can be held electronically, the tasks are accomplished, but the social connections are sorely missed.

Over the past twenty months, our physical connections have been severely restricted. We have been isolated from family, friends, and colleagues. We have had to cancel social, religious, volunteer, and travel experiences. Uncertainty has surrounded the resumption of those activities that provide valuable connections.

Many of us seek out connections with the past by researching our family histories. Using genealogy records, census papers, ships' passenger lists, military service records, cemetery gravestones, and DNA tests, we piece together our family trees and treasure that connection with the past. Others try to connect to their past by recovering memories from a previous existence through past

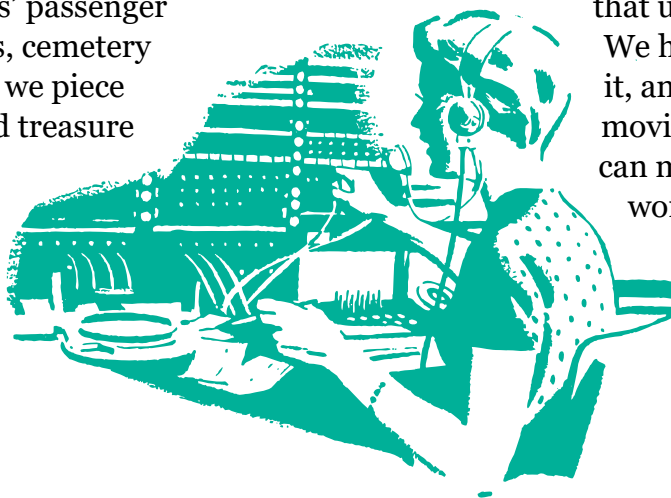
life psychic readings or past life regression therapy.

Similarly, some try to connect with the future via psychics or clairvoyants who promise to predict the future using tea leaves, astrology, tarot cards, numerology, or dream interpretations. A very real way for us to connect with the future is to leave a legacy gift of a charitable donation, perhaps to the Alberta Retired Teachers Charitable Foundation (ARTCF), where it will outlast us and provide future benefit.

Our need for a spiritual connection can be satisfied in many ways. Those who regularly meet with a large congregation have suffered during the past restrictions. For others, that spiritual connection is best felt in nature where everything is connected and interdependent. In nature, we comfortably find our place within the complexities of life, death, and renewal.

The past two pandemic years have seriously endangered our connections. Isolation has become a real issue. Our need for connection and community has been severely compromised. As members of ARTA, and quoting from our vision statement, “We are all part of something special, a bond that unites us and our community.”

We have that connection; we cherish it, and we are looking ahead and moving forward to the time when we can meet and greet our colleagues and work together again in person. ●





YOUR MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

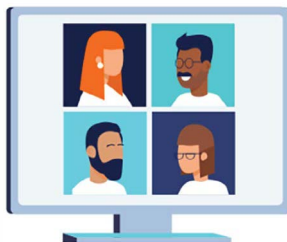


Through Inkblot's Member Assistance Program (MAP), members of the ARTA Benefit Plans and their dependants can receive five hours per year of counselling for a variety of services, including mental health counselling, couple counselling, and financial and legal consultation.

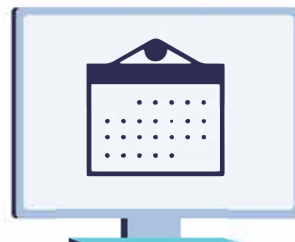
After a member's covered time is expended, they can continue to see their counsellor without interruption by using ARTA's health care coverage for paramedical practitioners.

HOW TO GET STARTED:

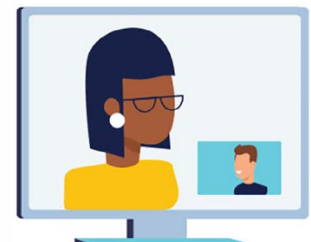
Log into **arta-map.net** and click on Get Started.
Appointments are available within 24–48 hours.



Match with a qualified counsellor based on your needs and preferences



Book a session with your chosen counsellor



Engage in confidential counselling at a time and place that suits you

Reach out to the Inkblot support team if you have any questions. We're happy to help.

SUPPORT@INKBLOTHERAPY.COM

Our Inkblot services are available to ARTA Retiree Benefit Plan members starting **November 1, 2021**. Additional sessions at **below the national average cost** are available for ongoing counselling if you have used your annual allocation.



From the CEO

Daniel Mulloy | Chief Executive Officer, ARTA



Connection Through Disconnection

“There is no Wi-Fi in the forest, but we guarantee you’ll find a better connection.”

— Unknown

English business magnate Richard Branson was once quoted as saying, “Succeeding in business is all about making connections.” I’m not sure he is entirely right. I think that succeeding in business, and in life, is all about connecting with the right people at the right time, while learning to disconnect from the right people at the right time.

In today’s digital age and with growing life stresses, it’s becoming harder and harder to disconnect. With the advent of technology and social media, it seems like we are always within reach.

While these technological advances definitely have their place, they also make it hard for someone to spend some quality time with oneself. As with most things, there is a time and place for everything. A time to connect with business colleagues, a time to connect with friends and family, and a time to disconnect and spend quality time doing something that helps us find and refocus ourselves.

Quality time alone helps you “recharge your batteries” and helps you focus on the life challenges that are ahead of you. As silly as it sounds, we are better at connecting than at disconnecting, but when you find that place where you can separate yourself from life’s distractions, it is amazing what happens. When you disconnect:

- You calm your mind, opening new avenues of awareness.
- You find simple answers to difficult questions.
- Revelations appear for what you want to do in the coming days, weeks, and months ahead.

- Your way of thinking becomes amazingly clear and determined, which makes your thoughts more productive and useful.
- Your quality time away makes quality time with loved ones more meaningful.
- You can hear your own thoughts.
- The world keeps on turning. Emails will still be there when you “plug back in,” and during the time you were disconnected, you’ll find that nobody really missed you.

There are benefits to disconnecting, but a new question arises. How do I disconnect? There are some simple things you can do to disconnect, including:

- turning off your computer, tablet, television, or smartphone
- scheduling “alone time” in your calendar
- taking a walk (in the forest perhaps)
- Being in the present, and enjoying the surroundings that you are in. If those are not ideal surroundings, find someplace that brings you a feeling of calm.
- actually saying goodbye to people
- powering down before bed
- doing something that you love to do.

While it is not always easy, trust me, disconnecting to improve your personal, physical, and mental health and wellness is also the perfect way to clear your mind and to see all of life’s possibilities. •

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MOVING AHEAD TOGETHER *A Wellness Conference for Retirees*



Thursday, September 22, 2022

Chateau Louis Conference Centre, Edmonton, Alberta

The Second Wind Conference is back in 2022. The Second Wind Conference organizing committee is pleased to announce that a ninth Wellness Conference for Retirees will be held in Edmonton in September 2022.

A schedule, list of topics to be offered, and associated speakers will be posted on the website, secondwindconference.ca, by the middle of March 2022.





From the Editor

Margaret Sadler | Editor-in-Chief, *news&views*, nveditor@arta.net



Whatever Happened to the Common Good

When did the individual become more important than the community? At what point in our history did individual rights and freedoms appear to trump our sense of community and the common good? North American culture prioritizes the individual, where each of us is king or queen — we deserve so much! I encountered the other extreme in communal Japan where “the nail that sticks out gets pounded down.” Ouch. Neither self-centredness nor fear of drawing attention to oneself grasps what so many African cultures embrace in the concept of *ubuntu*. I learned this word in Namibia, which roughly translates as “I am because we are” — acknowledging a universal bond in “a person is a person through other people.”

As we know, democracy extends beyond voting. Democracy exists when each citizen has equal rights and corresponding responsibilities, including responsibilities to the whole. In a recent series, Nahlah Ayed on CBC’s *Ideas* asks, “Whatever happened to the common good?” Series titles include “The common good: What do we owe each other?” “The limits of us,” “What is common? And what is good?” Surely Canada has held a strong sense of the common good, but have we drifted away from recognizing that we are responsible for each other?

I’m reminded of the entertaining TED talks by Swedish physician Hans Rosling, in particular one entitled “How not to be ignorant about the world.”¹ Hans and his son Ola illustrate how we naturally interpret the world as being worse than it is. If only we can realize that most things in the world are improving (e.g., more education for girls, less death from disease and natural disasters); that the majority of the world’s population is in the middle range of income (rather

than there being a void between poor and rich); that social development (education, health, housing) is more important than wealth development; and that the media cover rare dangers (shark attacks, suicide bombers) rather than common place issues (poverty, climate change).

An email list called “Reasons to be Cheerful” sends me weekly reminders of good things happening around the world in the fields of climate, culture, science and technology, and civic engagement, among others. Examples of achievements and progress bring attention to how we do work together for the common good.

— Frederick Buechner So what does this have to do with connecting?

By remembering that there are more people to trust than to fear, we become more aware of our interconnectedness.

Life is good. If we act out of that realization, our attitudes change. We improve our lives and the lives of everyone else. We draw nearer to the universal bond of *ubuntu*. ●

“Your life and my life flow into each other as wave flows into wave, and unless there is peace and joy and freedom for you, there can be no real peace or joy or freedom for me.”

¹ youtu.be/Sm5xF-UYgdg



Health Benefits

Gary Sawatzky | Chief Operating Officer, ARTA

Changes to the ARTA Retiree Benefit Plans Effective November 1, 2021

Each year, the ARTA Health Benefits Committee reviews potential changes to the ARTA Benefit Plans. These potential changes often arise when covered members submit change requests to the Health Benefits Committee for consideration. Each request is reviewed to determine if our group benefit plans are allowed to cover the service or device and to ensure that a significant number of members would benefit.

The following changes became effective November 1, 2021, for all members covered by the ARTA Extended Health Care plans:

1. The combined annual maximums for paramedical practitioners have increased by \$200: to \$1,200 per person per year for Health Wise and Total Health plans, and to \$1,400 per person per year for Health Wise Plus and Ultimate Health plans.
2. The triennial hearing aids maximums have been increased by \$400: to \$1,300 for the Health Wise and Total Health plans, and to \$1,500 for the Health Wise Plus and Ultimate Health plans.
3. A Member Assistance Program, provided by Inkblot (see page 6), for members and their families has been introduced.
 - On-demand counselling is accessible via telephone, online video, or in-person. Members can select their own counsellor.
4. The purchase or rental of cryo-cooling units is now covered at 80% to a five-year maximum of \$250.
 - Cryotherapy (or cold therapy) is the use of low temperatures to treat a variety of tissue lesions and to relieve muscle pain, sprains, and swelling after soft tissue damage or surgery.
5. CPAP battery packs have been added to the plans under the current CPAP benefit.
 - CPAP machines are used to help people with obstructive sleep apnea to breathe more easily during sleep. Portable, battery-powered CPAP machines are used for travelling or camping.
6. Coverage for continuous glucose monitors and sensors has been reallocated from the insulin pump benefit to the annual diabetes supplies maximum.
 - This change provides greater benefits to members claiming these devices.
7. CPAP machine sanitizers and cleaners are no longer covered.
 - Sanitizers can damage the CPAP machine, voiding CPAP machine warranties and potentially causing higher CPAP machine expenses in the future.
8. Usual and customary charges are updated to reflect marketplace charges for certain medical aids, devices, and services claims.
 - These fees ensure that most claims will be covered, but claims that are significantly higher than marketplace standards do not introduce excess costs into the plan.
9. Psychotherapists are now considered eligible paramedical practitioners.
 - A psychotherapist is a physician or psychologist with special training in psychotherapy. Psychotherapy is offered mostly through talk therapy.



The following changes became effective November 1, 2021, for all members covered by the ARTA Dental Care plan:

1. The two \$800 annual Major Services plan maximums under Dental Care Option A have been combined into one \$1,600 annual maximum.
2. The exclusion in the Dental Care plan defaulting to the cost of amalgam fillings for posterior teeth has been removed.
 - The previous policy wording only allowed up to the cost of amalgam fillings for posterior teeth, even though these fillings are not usually offered by dentists; composite resin (white fillings) are now most common.

Considering the past year's claims experience for each plan and these plan design changes, the calculated renewal rates for each plan, by sector, are:

- Education Sector: Extended Health Care rates decrease by 7.4% (a decrease of 2.8% for plans which do not include Emergency Travel coverage) and Dental Care rates increase by 6.9%.
- Public/Private Sector: Extended Health Care rates decrease by 7.0% (a decrease of 3.3% for plans that do not include Emergency Travel). Dental Care rates do not change.
- Supplementary Travel rates (to extend a single trip beyond the base 92-day trip duration maximum) decrease by 18%.

In addition to these changes to the current plans, new plans are being introduced:

1. ARTA's Comprehensive Coverage plans provide coverage to members who retire before age 65 or transition to a new career. Once a covered member reaches age 65, they can transition to one of the traditional ARTA plans. These new plans went into effect November 1, 2021.
2. The ARTARx plan allows members residing in Alberta to have their medications dispensed by ARTARx, providing higher coverage, lower rates, and home delivery. This plan will be available, effective January 1, 2022.

Detailed information on these coverage changes is included in the plan text, which is available online at artabenefits.net/plan-text.

ARTA will continue to review potential plan enhancements while keeping plans affordable for our covered members. Please continue to submit plan change suggestions for the Health Benefits Committee's consideration. Suggestions may be mailed to the ARTA office or emailed to info@arta.net. •





'Tis the Season of Giving

What do you get for that person in your life who already seems to have it all? Why not make a charitable donation in their name? The Alberta Retired Teachers Charitable Foundation (ARTCF) works to support Alberta's seniors and ensures they have access to appropriate health care, accommodations, and education opportunities.

By donating this holiday season, you'll be making a huge difference in the lives of seniors across the province, and you'll be eligible to receive a tax receipt in recognition of your generosity.

Curious about how your generosity is making a difference?

Visit arta.net/artcf to read about how Alberta seniors are benefiting from your donations.



To make a donation, visit
arta.net/advocacy/artcf/give/



Bright Things on the Horizon for ARTCF

Robert Michon | Communications Specialist, ARTA

The past two years have been a difficult time for everyone, including charities like the Alberta Retired Teachers Charitable Foundation (ARTCF) and its many partners. Hosting events has been all but impossible, donations suffered as uncertainty became the norm, and the resulting downsizing at charitable organizations meant that many staff moved on, removing those critical points of contact. In short, the COVID-19 pandemic made it difficult to make connections, which is a critical component of any successful charitable organization.

While the pandemic in Alberta hasn't completely faded from our lives, increased vaccination rates and widespread safety protocols mean that Albertans have begun to connect safely again. It's hard to say when we'll be out of the woods completely, but this increased ability to connect has been great news for charities, including ARTCF and its partners.

Events aren't a guarantee yet — anything can happen, as we all know by now — but ARTCF has a few exciting opportunities on the horizon. First, the foundation has been approved for a casino licence from Alberta Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis, which will create a new stream of funding to go toward ARTCF's charitable efforts. The casino will be hosted in Edmonton in the upcoming year.



On June 16, 2022, ARTCF will finally, after two years of postponements, host its annual golf tournament at the Ponoka Golf Course. This long-awaited event will raise money for the foundation and is always an incredible amount of fun for all involved. A special “thank you” goes to the sponsors who have continued to support the event throughout all the uncertainty of the last two years.

Donations to ARTCF are essential to the work the foundation does in bringing proper health-care, housing, and ESL education opportunities to Alberta's seniors. If you've been wanting to support that goal but don't have the funds to give, consider donating your time to one of these events instead. Look for calls for volunteers in the months to come in ARTAfacts and future issues of *news&views*. ●





That Connected Feeling: ARTA's Branches

Inge Coates | Chair, Communications Committee

Retiring from teaching meant freedom to me. It meant freedom to travel, freedom to pursue my creative side, and freedom to stretch my body and endurance in physical activities. I was a busy lady when I first retired.

I did not miss the stresses of teaching; however, I soon began to miss my colleagues and the sense of community that was part of teaching. I missed feeling connected. A few years later, after the heady rush of retirement's freedoms had passed, a friend introduced me to our local branch of retired teachers. Why did I not know about our district's retired teachers' association? The answer to this question came later, when I found out how FOIP makes it difficult for a branch to get information about new retirees.

At the first event I attended, I met not only former colleagues but also teachers who had taught me! I wanted to be part of this group, so I joined the branch and also volunteered to become part of its executive. That was almost ten years ago, and the sense of community and sense of purpose I felt then is still with me now.

The social events organized by our branch included a joyful breakfast in early September when we celebrated our freedom from the school bell, and a Christmas turkey lunch enjoyed by those who looked forward to connecting with friends at Christmas and who may have craved a turkey dinner but did not find it practical to cook one. There were also smaller events like a Segway tour in the river valley, tea at the legislature, paint night, and a wine tasting event. Since COVID-19, such activities have been on hold, but our social committee is eager to plan them again soon.

At this time, Calgary, Edmonton, North West, and the Heartland branches offer mini-conferences online, often not only to their members but to members from other branches as well. Branch ties with ARTA have been tremendously helpful, and ARTA has sponsored Branch Zoom Grants to enable branches to continue with both executive and member meetings.

Most branches reach out to members through their website, a branch newsletter, or by email

or phone to keep them informed about relevant local or provincial updates. Additionally, information about retirement is often shared through these media, providing articles, links, or virtual sessions that report on housing, volunteer opportunities, health, financial wellness, and more.

Each branch president is also on the Board of Directors

of ARTA and represents their members in ARTA's decision-making.

There are eighteen branches of retired teachers — seventeen in Alberta and one in British Columbia. Each branch is unique.

Although large urban branches have many members, smaller branches often consist of a community whose members know each other well.

Some branches have existed for a long time, while others are relatively new. All of them are run by volunteers who believe in maintaining a community of engaged retired educators where members can feel connected to each other through their experiences in the classroom.

Community
*a feeling of fellowship
with others as a result of
sharing common attitudes,
interests, and goals.*

Note: ARTA and the branches are connected in many ways, and are mutually supportive; however, they are distinct entities that are independently governed.

Almost all branches have websites. Although some branches pay for and maintain sites by themselves, many others are sponsored by ARTA for the cost of development and their upkeep. The websites include information on how to become a member, the history of the branch, its bylaws, contact information, and reports on past and future events. Membership forms and bylaws explain whether the branch is limited to retired teachers or if membership is extended to educational assistants or ARTA members in associated public and private sectors.

Although most branch members have worked in the area where the branch is located, some members have joined branches in the location to which they have retired. Most notably, the branch in British Columbia includes members who relocated there from all over Alberta.

Some retired teachers are members of more than one branch. This option allows them to stay in touch with colleagues from home as well as make new friends who share similar backgrounds.

Whether someone is recently retired or has been retired for a long time, they will be welcomed at a retired teachers' branch in their area.

If you are searching for an organization that you can feel connected to, please contact someone at the location you are interested in joining; they will be happy to answer your questions. •

To find a branch near you, visit artabranches.net



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From the Branches

Ron Thompson | President, Heartland Alberta Retired Teachers' Association (HARTA)



HARTA's COVID-19 Activities

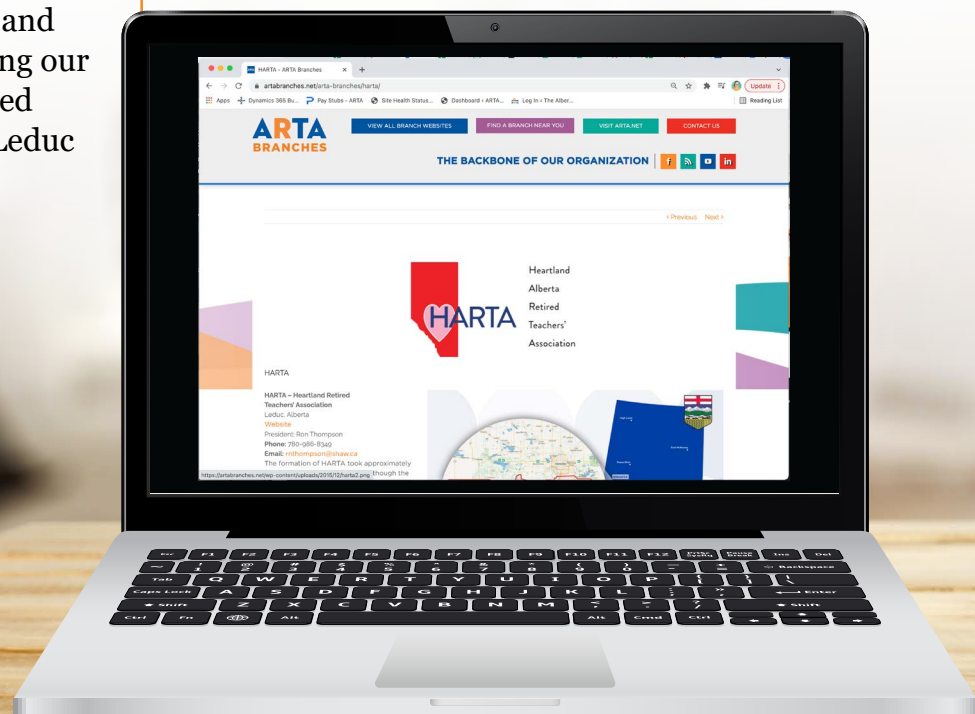
HARTA's 2020 was an extremely challenging year for running programs. From mid-March 2020 to the end of August 2021, HARTA had to cancel all in-person activities within the branch, as did other ARTA branches. It took our branch until July 2020 to decide how we were going to meet. Since July 2020, HARTA has held all executive meetings online. In October 2020, we held our first virtual AGM. Between November 2020 and August 2021, we offered five presentations as well as our yearly mini-conference, all virtually.

As a result of the past year's experience, we held our next AGM as a hybrid meeting in September 2021, using Zoom to connect in-person groups in both Drayton Valley and Leduc as well as five members from their homes. We followed all the COVID-19 protocols at the in-person locations, with all those in attendance having completed the series of COVID-19 vaccinations. In person and online, a total of twenty-six members attended our 2021 AGM. After the official part of the meeting, Leduc members visited over lunch at St. David's United Church in Leduc, and Drayton Valley members enjoyed a meal and visiting together at the Clean Energy Technology Centre. After lunch, we all reconnected for a virtual presentation from Gary Sawatzky on ARTA's benefit plans.

Later in September, we met again online and in person at a Wetaskiwin restaurant, enjoying our meals and visiting. After lunch, we were joined by our presenter, Kimberly Moreside, from Leduc

Blackgold Toastmasters, who gave us a short presentation on the benefits of Toastmasters. Kimberly presented from her home in Leduc while we watched online in Wetaskiwin and Drayton Valley.

HARTA intends to offer these hybrid programs as long as COVID-19 restrictions continue and beyond. Hybrid meetings have given HARTA members more ways of meeting, and we can envision inclement weather simplifying gatherings, particularly in the next few months. Various configurations of our mini-conference are also made possible through technology. HARTA thanks ARTA for making the Branch Zoom Grant available to all branches. ●





Exclusive Discount for ARTA Members

Stay warm this winter with conversations that melt your heart. Hear every joke, whisper, and special announcement with our new rechargeable hearing aids. These rechargeable aids have improved hearing technology to help you hear the sounds that are relevant and minimize the sounds that are not.

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*A comprehensive hearing assessment is provided to adults ages 19 and older at no cost. The results of this assessment will be communicated verbally to you. If you request a copy of the Audiological Report, a fee will apply. Offer is valid for private sales of select hearing aid models and accessories and cannot be combined with more than 1 partner or promotion. The discount is applied after any Government funding has been deducted and the extra 10% will be applied to the remaining balance after all other discounts. Offer not valid in Quebec. Some conditions apply, see clinic for details. AIR MILES available only at participating locations. ®™ ***Reward Miles value is non-transferable and is based on select models purchased. Offer expires 01/31/2022.

Unveiling the ARTA Bookshelf

With a photo of the book cover, a few publication details, and a brief description of the book, ARTA members who are recently published have a chance to share their success with our readers.

If you're interested in reading the books, search them out through the publishers or other book sellers. While we proudly celebrate our authors, displaying them on the bookshelf is not an endorsement of any of these books.

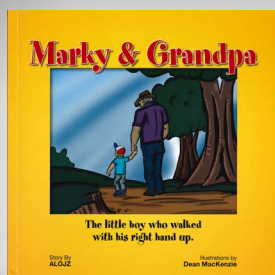
There are three options in *news&views* for recently published ARTA authors:

- a 400-word article in keeping with the theme of any issue; or
- a place on the ARTA Bookshelf; or
- a paid ad

For more details on each option, visit arta.net/bookshelf. •

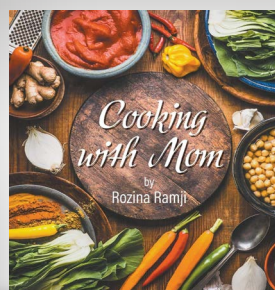


Profile of an Effective School Superintendent by Dale Boddy. Friesen Press, 2021. Non-fiction. Ed Noyce is revealed as a masterful school superintendent. With trust and respect, his team cooperatively developed the directions for their district. Would such leadership work now?



Marky & Grandpa by Alojz Horvat. Self-published, 2021. Children's. Marky and Grandpa walk everywhere together, and Marky always holds Grandpa's hand. In the story, Marky navigates grief and loss the year following Grandpa's death.

Write to nveditor@arta.net for Al Horvat's contact information.



Cooking with Mom by Rozina Ramji. Litfire Publishing, 2019. Cookbook. Come experience these culinary treasures, a blend of African and East Indian cuisine. These recipes with their exquisite spices will whet your appetite for more.



Highlights of the 2021 ARTA AGM

Vi Oka | Governance Committee

Due to the ongoing pandemic, all ARTA board and committee meetings this year have been online, including the annual general meeting that began on October 5, World Teachers' Day.

A total of seventy-eight delegates and staff members along with six guest speakers met virtually to receive executive, committee, branch, and liaison organization reports, as well as to elect officers and committee members. ARTA is pleased to welcome Mary McDougall (Communications), Gordon Cumming (Health Benefits), Ron Thompson (Governance), Blair Lowry (Pension and Financial Wellness), Carl McColl (Strategic Planning), and Erika Foley (Wellness) as new committee members. The three returning ARTA officers and five of the six committee members were elected by acclamation. Highlights from this year's AGM follow, while the full 2020-21 Annual Report can be viewed at arta.net/annualreport.

- To facilitate the move to self-administration of the benefit plans, the **Communications Committee** oversaw the development of MyARTA, a new member portal, so members could manage their own benefit information.
- Plan improvements, effective November 1, 2021, were approved by the **ARTA Board of Directors** to ensure that ARTA continues to offer the best retiree plan in Canada.
- New benefit plans were introduced by the **Health Benefits Committee** — Comprehensive Coverage plans for retirees under age 65 and ARTARx, a pharmaceutical program that will provide home delivery of prescriptions along with a range of other services.
- The **Governance Committee** awarded a total of \$40,000 to twelve of this year's 101 scholarship applicants.
- The **Pension and Financial Wellness Committee** shared advice with prospective ARTA members through the ARTA marketing booklet, and with active ARTA members with book reports in each edition of *news&views*, and virtual seminars throughout the year.
- The **Strategic Planning and Advocacy Committee** hosted two Joint Committee Chairs meetings and a virtual retreat and advocated on behalf of active and retired teachers regarding emerging issues.
- The **Wellness Committee** submitted articles and activities to *news&views* that aligned with the specified theme for each issue. Lower participation in the annual Wellness Challenge was noted.

ARTA
MEMBERSHIP
GROWTH RATE
(2020-2021)

6.12%

MEMBERS WHO
ARE **100** YEARS
OF AGE OR
OLDER

24

AVERAGE
MEMBER AGE

71.4

- The **Alberta Retired Teachers Charitable Foundation** reported that isolation imposed by the pandemic has made connections with partner organizations more difficult.
- Gerry Tiede, on behalf of ARTA's national counterpart, shared **ACER-CART's** progress on its goal to advocate for the development of policies to protect and enrich the lives of seniors across Canada.
- Rod Matheson and Julie Joyal outlined the **Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund** operations and reported that AIMCo's role as the investment manager has been clarified.
- Jason Schilling and Dennis Theobald from the **Alberta Teachers' Association** reported on issues facing teachers across Alberta and thanked ARTA for their support in advocating for changes to education policy. •

26,518

MEMBERS

source: 2020-2021 ARTA Annual Report



2021 ARTA Wellness Challenge Results

Jennifer Hope | Affiliate Marketing Advisor, ARTA



Just when we thought that COVID-19 was over and we could start enjoying our regular physical activities at our recreation centres and classes, we were shut down once again. Finding alternative ways to stay physically active did not seem to pose an issue for the members who participated in the annual wellness challenge. From gardening to tai-chi, our members tallied over half a million minutes spent on physical activity.

Results of the Wellness Challenge

- Reporting 11,281 minutes, **Mike Romano** from the Calgary Retired Teachers' Association won the Individual Winner Award.
- The **Okanagan Alberta Retired Teachers' Association** received the Branch Participation award with just over twenty per cent of their members participating.
- The **Calgary Retired Teachers' Association** submitted the most minutes with a total of 203,719 — a stellar performance.

Prizes were handed out to the top performers and twelve randomly selected participants from the many submissions from members who either do not belong to a branch or whose branches opted out of the challenge this year.

Stay tuned for exciting updates on the 2022 Wellness Challenge. •



Spirituality and Wellness

Lloyd Den Boer

Building Connections

Just outside the window, the late fall afternoon was glorious. Our farm dog sprawled lazily in a patch of sun on the lawn. Across the farmyard, the pigs lay about in their pens, quiet in the warmth of the afternoon sun — except for an occasional piggy scuffle. The cows grazed placidly in a distant pasture. My dad crossed the farmyard on a tractor, pulling a heavily loaded wagon, and the dog trotted off to join him at the grain bin. If I waited patiently, I would see Dad return with an empty wagon shortly, crossing the farmyard again, on his way back to the fields.

What I observed was no more than an ordinary fall day, but, from my perch on a counter in Mom's kitchen pantry, each piece of it seemed marvellous. I longed to burst out of the house, to feel the contrast between the warm fall sun and the cool fall breeze on my skin, to run with our dog to meet Dad at the grain bin, and to beg for a ride to the field on his tractor. However, I was confined to my perch, too sick to be allowed outside, and too well to spend more time in bed. Some six decades later, I still remember the longing of that afternoon. These days, I sometimes recognize a similar feeling in my response to life during COVID-19.

A desire not to be separated from life, but to be with others and take part in joint activities, lies deep within us. As John Donne, the seventeenth-century British poet, wrote, "No man is an island entire of itself." Nor is any woman, as we now would add. If we didn't recognize our need to belong before, the experience of a pandemic has taught it to us. In the last two years, who among us has not longed for free access to the people, places, and activities that we used to enjoy? These connections once seemed ordinary. Now they seem precious.

COVID-19 taught us more about belonging. We also learned that there is no "us" and "them" in



a pandemic — everyone is “us.” Distinctions that rank or separate people mean nothing to a virus. Whether we are wealthy or poor, whether we are persons of colour or white, whether we are citizens, immigrants, or refugees, whether we live in cities or rural areas, or whether we lean right or left politically, we are all potential hosts for this virus. From the virus’s point of view — so to speak — we are one undifferentiated herd.

Many of us have noticed the advantage of adopting the virus’s point of view to combat it. As a province, we have suppressed the virus best whenever we have behaved as a united community to which each member fully belongs. When we allowed our distinctions to divide us — whether by providing inadequate supports to certain groups or by creating divisions in our response to the virus — COVID-19 gained ground. On the other hand, to the

extent we supported everyone and worked together, we pulled ahead of the virus.

With many new starts and disappointing retreats, something like our past is returning. As it does, will we apply what we have learned? At the level of our biology, we have no choice about being a single community to which each one of us fully belongs. However, our social and political lives do not come to us fully formed. Generation by generation, we have a hand in shaping the attitudes and building the connections that give our society its character. That’s why John Donne advised us to remember that no one is an island. So did the virus. ●

Lloyd Den Boer is a retired educator who lives with his wife in Edmonton. Having relied on technology to maintain their connections for far too long, they hope to be face-to-face with others soon.

2022 PHOTO CONTEST

ARTA is proud to sponsor its **tenth annual photo contest**. All ARTA members — regular or affiliate — are eligible to enter. This year, we will have two different categories. If you have won in the past, you will fall under the Masters category; if you have not been a past winner, you will enter the Novice category. Winners will be announced in the autumn 2022 issue of *news&views* and posted on ARTA electronic media sites.

Contest Categories

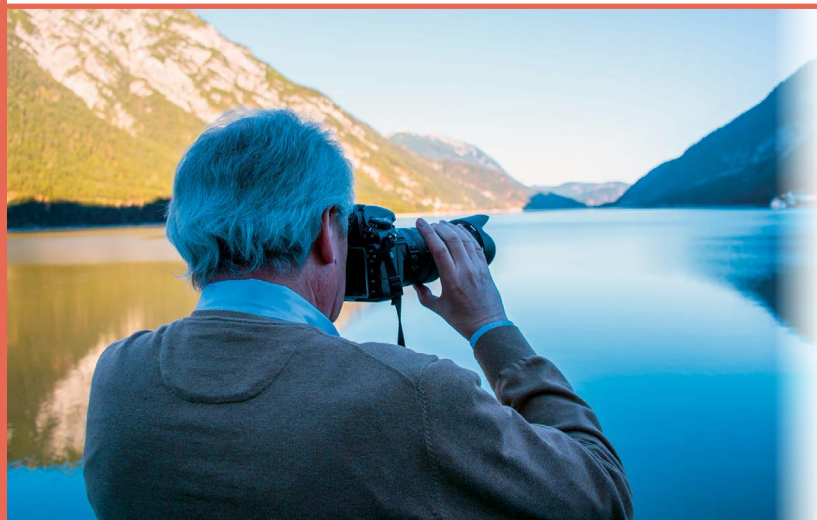
- Nature
- Making It
- Travel
- Ten

All entries must be received by ARTA no later than 4:00 p.m., May 31, 2022.

Entries should be mailed to

ARTA Photo Contest
15505 137 Avenue NW
Edmonton, AB T5V 1R9

Digital images can be emailed to
contests@arta.net



Visit arta.net/photo-contest for contest rules and entry form.



Stress-Free Indoor Plants

Confused about what type of potting soil to use for your indoor plants? How about plants with no soil? *Tillandsia* spp. are epiphytes that grow in nature on other plants and are usually found on tree branches. Tillandsias belong to the family of bromeliads and have developed the remarkable ability to absorb water and nutrients through small scales on their leaf surface rather than through roots like other plants. These plants are often called “air plants” because of their ability to survive on air alone, and they may be the epitome of the low-maintenance plant.

The beauty of these little plants is that they truly do not need any soil to grow and can be placed on almost any substrate. The roots of the plants will grow like little wires to attach themselves to the substrate. You can even hot-glue these plants in place wherever you like. A common practice is to

attach them to pieces of driftwood, along with some pebbles and perhaps shells, creating a natural “scene.” They

can just as easily be placed into a miniature terra cotta pot giving the illusion of a potted plant.

One of the new trends with these plants is linked to the increasing popularity of indoor fountains. Tillandsias make great plant subjects for these miniature fountains and can easily be attached to your favourite fountain for some instant indoor plantscaping. The key thing to remember is to allow water to drain away from the base of the plant if it is permanently attached to a substrate. If the water pools around the base, the plant will rot.



Even the life cycle of these plants is rather unique. A single plant grows to maturity and then blooms. These blooms can be quite spectacular and can last from a few weeks to a few months. Once the bloom dies, small new plants begin to form at the base of the original plant. As the original plant dies back, the new plants grow up, starting the cycle again.

Lighting for most Tillandsias should be filtered sunlight, not direct. They will do nicely in a room that faces east, west, or south. Good air circulation is very important to these plants. In the summer they do enjoy being outdoors, but remember to keep them in filtered light. When placing the plants, keep them away from both hot and cold drafts that can dry them out. Bathrooms and kitchens make ideal locations due to the higher humidity levels in these rooms.

Watering is critical for Tillandsia. In a dry environment, they should be totally soaked a couple of times a week. Misting the plant is usually not enough. Ideally, they should be removed from their display, placed in the sink and soaked thoroughly with water from the faucet. Allowing the plants to dry is just as important. After watering, shake off any excess moisture gently and place the plant in a spot to dry. Misting them every second day will help keep them looking fresh and is especially important during the dry winter months. Look for signs that your air plants need more water by watching for drying leaf tips, rolling leaves, or browning.

The plants can be fertilized once a month from March to October with Bromeliad food (17-8-22). If you have problems finding this food, you can use Miracle-Gro at quarter strength for misting, or simply add the fertilizer to the soaking water bath.

Tillandsia Varieties To Try

Tillandsia bulbosa — 10–15 cm. Native to southern Mexico, the West Indies, Colombia, and Brazil, these plants can be found growing in dense masses on open trees. The plant is distinguished by its bulbous base from which bright green leaves originate. These leaves are 2.5 cm wide at their base and reach 15 cm

long. They twist, turn, and contort as they spread out. The tubular flower is bright red and short with bright violet petals.

Tillandsia aeranthos — 7.5–10 cm. Native to Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, and Paraguay. Compact rosette of stiff grey leaves. Forms colonies of plants. One of few Tillandsias to bloom annually. Inflorescence 12.5 cm long with brilliant colour, bracts are purple-reddish, and flowers have petals of bright blue violet.

Tillandsia argentea — 5–7.5 cm. Native to Cuba, Jamaica, Guatemala, and Mexico. Soft grey leaves, 5 cm long. Rose-coloured inflorescence that bears six bright purple flowers. Plant resembles a pincushion. Good choice for beginners.

Tillandsia ionantha — 5 cm. Native from Mexico to Nicaragua. Miniature rosettes of greyish-green leaves. Flowers are a striking purple. Prefers full sun. Good plant for beginners.

Tillandsias can transform the smallest spot in your home into a piece of the tropics. They can also transform that indoor fountain into a living piece of nature, without a lot of fuss and bother. If you would rather not permanently attach your Tillandsia to an object or substrate, you can tie it down with fishing line or florist wire that can be easily removed when you need to put them in the sink for a drink. In addition to being very attractive, many of the plants are reasonably priced, making them highly collectible. Try your own piece of the tropics with Tillandsias, and don't worry about the potting soil. ●

Gerald reminds us that gardening is a year-round form of entertainment both indoors as well as out. He has been the gardening columnist at the Edmonton Journal for more than thirty years and has been a writer for ARTA news&views since 2017.

She Called Her Joy: A Sister Lost and Found

Tamela Georgi



"I hope the old guy doesn't have a shotgun."
I'm sitting in the car with my sister in a strange driveway. I'm about to confront a stranger about his love affair with my mother that resulted in a child, a girl my mother gave up for adoption over seventy years ago.

The journey began when I got my DNA tested. Like a lot of people, I wanted to know my ethnic mix. That done, I soon got a close-relative match, a woman I'll call Lane. But she didn't appear on any branch of my family tree.

Who are you? I emailed.

She couldn't tell me. She was adopted.

"This is truly as close as I have got to actual family," she wrote.

What would it be like not knowing who your people were? This connection to me was the first contact in her life to a blood relative. I had to help her.

My mother, the family historian, couldn't help. She had dementia.

At this moment she lay in a hospital bed as we scrambled to find long-term care for her. We'd lost our dad a few years before and I'd just uprooted myself, my semi-retired husband, and two reluctant cats to move across the country to help. I'd only

been home for occasional visits over the past several decades.

My mother might have forgotten a lot of things, but she remembered that she was furious with me for some reason I would never know. It made our time together challenging, to say the least.

And now this. A mystery relative.

Who *was* she? All I had to go on was a vague family rumour. But one clue led to another, and then another.

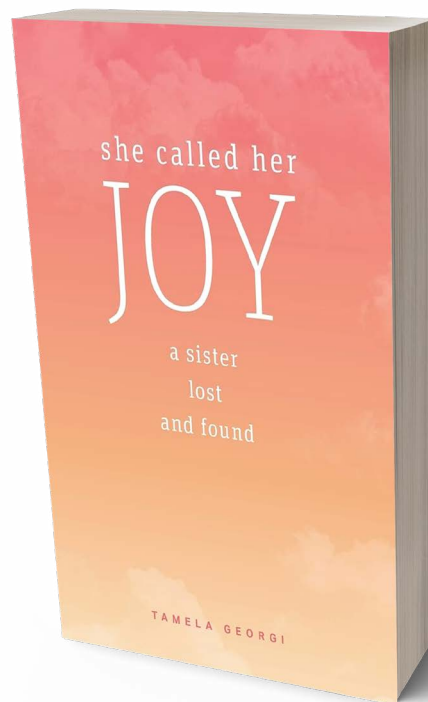
It was the Second World War. My mother left home at 14 to help support a large family of brothers and sisters. Then, at 17, she fell in love with a boy with eyes as blue as the sapphires in an Indiana Jones statue.

And now as I waited in his driveway, I realized he might not even know he had a baby girl seventy years ago — my sister, who was hidden from all of us.

It was time to uncover the rest of the story. My story. Lane's story. No more secrets.

I got out of the car and made my way to the house of the boy with the blue, blue eyes. ●

Tamela Georgi and her retired teacher husband moved across the country to care for her mother but have returned to Alberta. Tamela doesn't think she'll ever retire from writing.



ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DES ENSEIGNANTES ET DES ENSEIGNANTS RETRAITÉS
CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED TEACHERS



Do you enjoy taking photos of our beautiful Canadian landscapes? ACER-CART invites you to submit up to five of your favourite local landscapes to be shared on their website.



For more information: acer-cart.org



Meet Your Pharmacist: Yatin Patel

Yatin Patel is ARTA's Director of Pharmacy Services, and he has been working hard to build ARTARx over the last several months. He has worked as a pharmacist for seventeen years, after earning degrees in pharmacology and pharmacy from the University of Alberta. We asked Yatin a few questions about what being a pharmacist means to him and why he's excited to join the team as ARTA's Director of Pharmacy Services.

Why did you want to become a pharmacist?

After my pharmacology degree, I discovered that I wanted to have a little more social interaction in my work. I enjoy working with people, helping them achieve their health goals. The highlights of my career are the relationships I've built with patients.

What is the role of a pharmacist, in your opinion?

Grappling with a new diagnosis and the ongoing management of chronic conditions are journeys with physical, emotional, and financial considerations. Pharmacists are in a unique position to support their patient's decision-making with evidence-based information. That can mean supporting a patient's lifestyle modification, collaborating with other health professionals on behalf of patients, or assisting with insurance coverage for medication. In my practice I've tried to be an accessible advocate and provide the best evidence-based clinical information possible to support my patient's decisions.

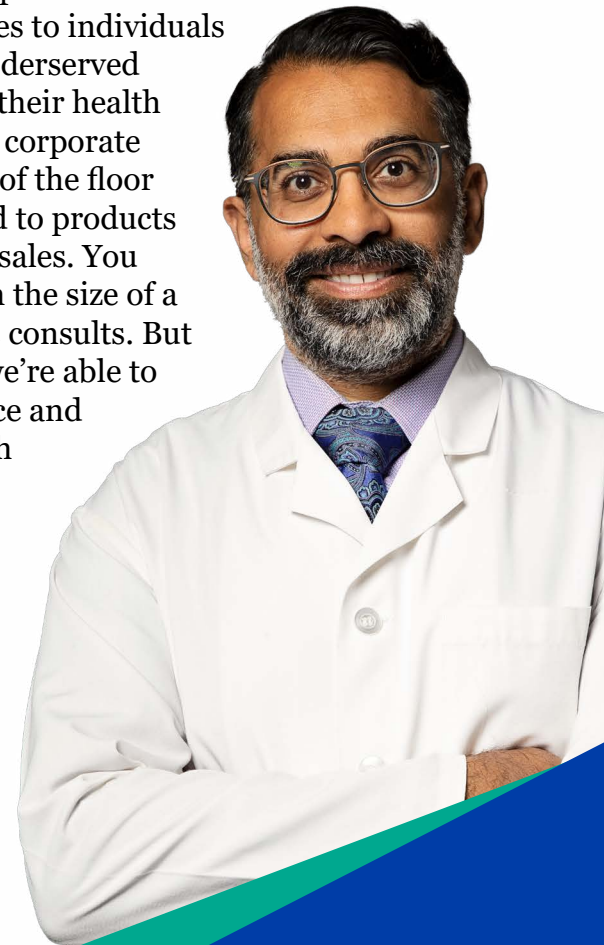
Why is it important for a patient to understand their medications?

One of the biggest challenges in medicine is adherence — getting people to understand why they're taking their medications. One of the best ways to improve adherence is to create a meaningful understanding of the medication itself. Instead of a patient saying, "I'm taking this pill because my doctor told me to," we want patients to say, "I'm

taking this pill because it will reduce my blood pressure and improve my life in the following ways." Health outcomes tend to improve when understanding improves.

What has been the most exciting part of building ARTARx?

The idea of a health benefit plan owning its own pharmacy is so unique, and there are many opportunities to provide relevant pharmacy services to individuals who might be underserved in that aspect of their health care. In a typical corporate pharmacy, most of the floor space is allocated to products in order to push sales. You might get a room the size of a closet for private consults. But with ARTARx, we're able to dedicate the space and offer an approach that prioritizes patient well-being, whether in-person or virtually. It's something that excites me, and something that members will see a lot of benefit in. ●





#ARTAstory

Robert Michon | Communications Specialist, ARTA

Bonds to Last Beyond Retirement

When you finally decide it's your time to retire, it's usually an independent departure. You make your announcement and prepare to leave. You say goodbye to your coworkers, and they say goodbye to you. Sometimes people manage to keep in touch, while others find their working relationships fade. But for six women at Michael A. Kostek School in west Edmonton, retirement was not just a group event, it was the start of a new stage in their friendship.



Carol Anne Konkin, one of the teachers at the school, decided to retire in 2011, and the next year, co-worker Susan Blanchard followed suit. “I decided I was ready to retire, and I made my announcement,” Susan says. “And another teacher, Joane Sather, said, ‘If you’re going, I’m going too!’ It snowballed from there, as Nancy Allen, Penny Macinnis, and even our principal Nancy Iriye decided they were ready to retire too!”

These six women had been working together since 1994, when they transferred to the newly opened Michael A. Kostek School. They quickly became a tight-knit staff and formed friendships that went beyond that of typical co-workers. So, when they all said goodbye to teaching, they knew they didn’t want to lose touch.

“We wanted to stay connected,” says Susan. “When you separate yourself from a place where you are used to meeting every day, it can be hard to find time and reasons to get together. We decided that the very least we could do would be to get together once a year.”

And so that’s what they did. That year, on the first day of school, the women met for brunch at Susan’s house. “When we retired, we each got an old-fashioned school bell as a gift. Right when the bell was ringing at Kostek, we rang our bells too, and toasted all our old colleagues, the students, and the parents and wished them a good year.”



Carol Anne Konkin



Nancy Iriye



Susan Blanchard

Nine years later, the tradition they call “To Hell with the Bell” is still going strong. Even in 2020, during the COVID-19 lockdown, they met in the park for a socially distanced brunch of muffins and coffee to celebrate the day. “When you first retire, it’s quite a different feeling,” says Susan. “One moment you’re at the top of your game, and then suddenly, you’re wondering what you’re going to do that will make you feel like you’re a part of something.”

The women meet throughout the year too, in smaller groups, for barbecues, game nights, camping trips, and more. Anyone who is interested is always invited, but it’s always anticipated as an opportunity to catch up and reminisce.

“Our retirements took each of us down a different path,” says Susan. “Some of us became grandmothers, some of us started travelling, Penny even opened her own businesses. As we were getting used to this new part of our lives, it was nice to be able to lean on each other for support. Retirement can be a tough adjustment for some people, but because we had each other, we faced it with smiles on our faces.” ●



Penny Macinnis



Nancy Allen



Joane Sather



2021 Scholarship Recipients

Maria Lentz | Chair, Governance Committee

The ARTA Governance Committee administers the ARTA scholarship program and evaluates applications for both degree certificate and diploma program scholarships. Six winners are selected in each category. This year we received 101 applications; the award recipients are listed below.

Thanks go to TW Insurance Brokers and ARTA who sponsor the degree awards. Degree applicants must have completed one, two, or three years of an undergraduate or transfer program. The certificate awards, sponsored by ARTA, are for students who have completed one or more full years of a certificate or diploma program.

On behalf of the Governance Committee, I would like to thank all those who applied and congratulate all those who have been selected for an award.

The following excerpts from the students' responses address the questions: What impact have teachers had in your life? What was your favourite subject in school? Where do you see yourself in the next ten years? If you could be a superhero, what superhero would you be?

ARTA-TW Insurance Degree Scholarships



\$5,000 EMALY COOKE University of Calgary, Kinesiology

Biology was the most engaging subject for me in school. Learning about the systems and how they work together to keep our bodies functioning is extremely intriguing and I always look forward to learning more. I chose a degree in kinesiology to further my knowledge on these topics, with a focus on muscles and body movement.



\$5,000 CONNOR BRAUN University of Calgary, BSc, Honours Neuroscience, Mathematics

My plan is to pursue graduate studies in applied mathematics or neuroscience. With some luck I'll do something clever and get to keep doing science and mathematics professionally. Otherwise, I'll have to hope that the programming skills I pick up along the way will be useful for some software development job somewhere. I'd consider myself very lucky to wind up doing either!



\$3,000 AIDAN SANDER Queen's University, Medicine (QuARMS)

Ten years from now, I hope to have either started my private practice as a physician or to have founded a small tech start-up within the field of public health. Whatever I do, I want to ensure that my actions have a beneficial impact on society and increase long-term health outcomes for those most at risk.



\$3,000 EMILY ELSENHEIMER University of Alberta (Grande Prairie Collaborative Teacher Education North), BEd

I have had so many amazing teachers throughout my childhood, and they were instrumental in forming me into the person I am today! I am so thankful to have a grandmother who is a retired teacher. She taught me how to be a hard worker, and I learned so much from her example. I hope to make a positive impact on my own students in the same way.



\$2,000 ELISE SHERIDAN Thompson Rivers University, Bachelor of Social Work

My favourite subjects in school have always been the social sciences. Collective human behaviour has fascinated me for as long as I can remember. Social studies class in high school opened my eyes to a world much larger than my own. It gave me the passion to travel, to remain inquisitive about cultural diversity, and showed me how I can use my career to help others without the same advantages as myself.



\$2,000 JAIDEN ROMANUK Medicine Hat College, Bachelor of Nursing

If I could be any superhero, I would be Spider-Man. I look for superheroes with similar traits to my chosen profession, nursing. Spider-Man demonstrates kindness and compassion to anyone he encounters, other heroes, victims, or even his enemies, and is always willing to go out of his way to help those in need. He fights to create true change, and I will bring those superhero qualities with me when I become a registered nurse.

ARTA Certificate/Diploma Scholarships



\$5,000 BRIANNE DAUDLIN NAIT, Magnetic Resonance Diploma

If I could be a superhero, I would choose to be Rogue from X-men! The ability to absorb the energy, memories, knowledge, and abilities of others would provide deep insight into humanity. Living with a team of exceptional mutants would be a bonus!



\$5,000 SAMANTHA STATCHUK Vancouver Island University, Tourism Management

Growing up with a mom who was a teacher, I learned quickly how important academics were and how teachers drastically impact the lives of each student they teach. I was privileged to have many different teachers influence my education and ultimately my life. They are a huge reason why I succeeded academically, was driven to chase my dreams, and have not been afraid to jump into something new.



\$3,000 DAVID KIMMEL Bow Valley College, Addiction Studies, Aboriginal Focus

Thanks to all the teachers who gave me their time and believed in me. I am continuing to build more self-confidence and belief in myself as a learner. I feel lucky to have been around teachers who made my classes interesting, challenging, and rewarding. Their positivity and honest feedback have helped me improve my own work as well as my ability to help others in my classes and in my life outside of school.



\$3,000 CARTER SMITH Okanagan College (Kelowna), Mechanical Engineering Technology

In the next ten years, I see myself working as a mechanical engineer in the energy sector to help develop new technologies to bring clean, safe, and reliable energy to Canada and the world. In addition to this, I would like to work with Engineers Without Borders to help design a better world that empowers developing communities.



\$2,000 JANET LEBLANC Vancouver Island University (Nanaimo), Business Diploma

In ten years, I would like to have completed architecture school and joined an architectural firm in Edmonton. Although my career and success are my main focus, ideally, I would also be happily married and starting a family. My partner and I would both be successful in work, and we would be planning to start our own renovation business. We would have also moved home to Vancouver Island so our children could frequently visit their grandparents.



\$2,000 EMMA GARRETT Utah Valley University, Utah, Dental Hygienist

Teachers have influenced me for the better! Most importantly, they have shown me my academic potential. In return, I have been able to accomplish more than I ever thought I could because of that influence. ●



Making Connections in Africa

Elaine Junk | Board Member, Tanbur African Aid Society

In 2019, I took a leave of absence from my teaching position and headed to the small African country of Burundi to work with teachers at the Burundi English School. My mind swirled as I tried to take in all the new experiences of my days in Burundi. Each moment reminded me that I was far from home. The cockroaches in the shower, the little chameleons that skittered across my wall, the abundance of greenery, and the ever-present hot humid air were only a few reminders. The babble of Kirundi mixed with smatterings of French, the rooster that woke me each morning at 4:00 a.m., the feeling of standing out, passersby often calling out *mzungu* (“foreigner”) as I walked along the road — just in case someone missed how much I stood out. This posed a definite challenge to my shy nature, pushing me far out of my comfort zone.

Each morning on my way to school, I crossed the main road, where I dodged across haphazard lanes of traffic, sidestepping bicycles and pedestrians, many with huge loads balanced precariously on their heads, and evading cars, vans, and tuk-tuks, all of which were racing erratically down the road. I would arrive at school in time to participate in morning exercises at 7:30 a.m. The students gathered in the courtyard and sang the Burundian national anthem before heading to class. There was something beautiful about the melding of all the voices in song, even when I did not understand the words. Many of the students would run over to greet me with a handshake and a “Good morning, Madam,” while younger children would just wrap their arms around my knees and offer a hug. It was the intentional, respectful touch and time taken to greet me that was so heartwarming each day. Truly, it was the

experience of a lifetime, made possible through the Tanbur African Aid Society (TAAS).

TAAS has been bringing hope through education to the children of Burundi for the past thirteen years. The school was started because of the vision of a Burundian man who saw the importance of an English education for the future. The school has grown from thirteen children in kindergarten and Grade 1 in 2008 to 350 students all the way up to Grade 13 in 2021. With the financial assistance of TAAS, a new school is being built to accommodate the growth. Volunteer mentor teachers from Canada are vital to the continued success and growth of the school. Our website tanburafrican.org has a wonderful summary of our Burundi English School project.

We invite you to take a step on a new journey! ●





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Los Libros: Teaching With and Without Books

Lorianne Tenove

One never thinks about where to get a book to read in Canada. Apart from online choices, you can buy books at bookstores or many different shops, including second-hand bookstores. We are also so fortunate to have access to public libraries that have a plethora of free resources for all interests and age levels.

In Mazatlán, there are few libraries, fewer still that are publicly accessible, and very few bookstores. English literature is also hard to find, so when one finds a second-hand book somewhere, it is a treasure.

In August, we experienced hurricane Nora, and there was a lot of water damage throughout the city with houses flooded, cars underwater, and sometimes no power or internet. The school fared well, but many books were destroyed from seeping rain.

I wouldn't be so devastated in Canada because books are in abundance and easily replaceable. Not here. Every English book is so darned precious.

Last year, I asked everyone in my circle to donate books, and the response was awesome. We had a truckload of books to bring to Mazatlán, but guess what — the border was closed. If only I had a private jet, because we could certainly have flown across the border!

Good literature and picture books are a big part of helping children learn to read and increase their interest in reading. Many of the books that were destroyed were stories that I had read to my children and students over the years. They are really like your friends.

Reading for me during the last eighteen months was a lifesaver, as it was an activity that helped pass the time as well as keep my mind off world events.

I love the author Eric Carle, who is famous for writing stories such as *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. Recently I tried reading *Panda Bear, Panda Bear, What Do You See?* It's a sweet book, but maybe the vocabulary was a little too sophisticated for three-year-olds who are learning English for the first time. Like, what is a whooping crane?

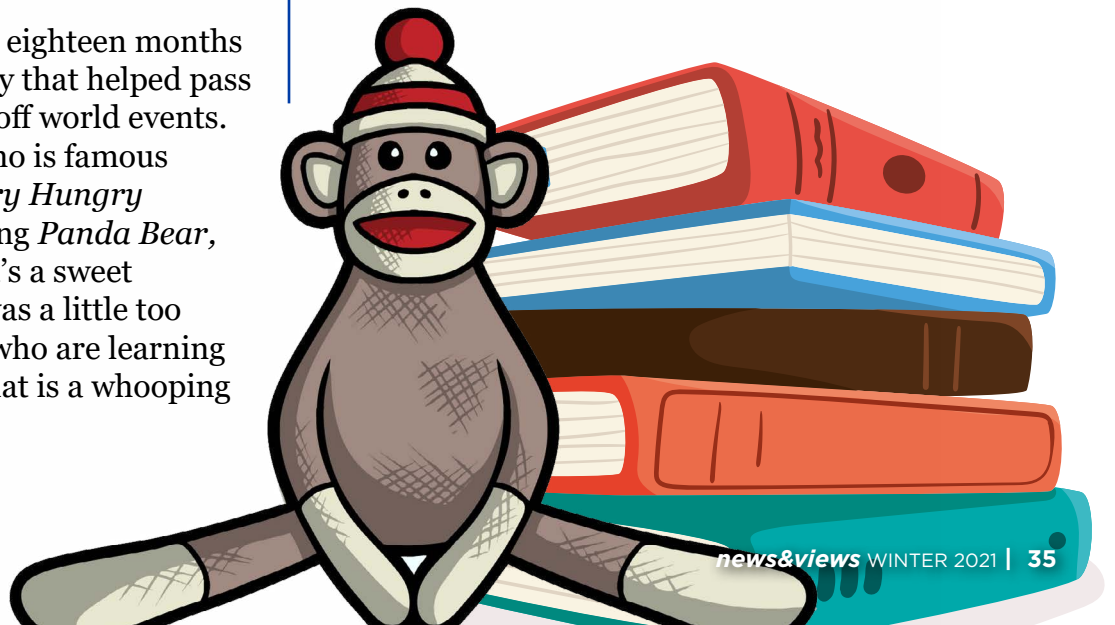
The Mexican teacher was trying to correct me when I said "water buffalo." She said, "No, it is boooooofalo," and I said, "Si in *Español*, but bufffffalo in *Ingles!*"

She forgot I was teaching in English — awesome.

So, out of all the animals I taught them, which one did they remember and kept repeating? Monkey, of course, because children love monkeys. I prepared materials to make monkey puppets. Every child received all the necessary body parts to piece together a puppet. They all came out one hundred per cent perfect — because the teachers made them for the children! As I watched this unfold — which it did for the rest of the week — I thought, there is a lot more teaching that needs to happen in this class, my friends.

Three-year-olds need to do their own thing, even if they put the monkey tail on its head! That's all I have to say about that. ●

Lorianne Tenove continues to make vibrant connections with students and teachers at the Canadian International School in Mazatlán. As this article goes to print, she is eagerly awaiting a truckload of books from Alberta.





Finding Companionship Online

Jane Thrall

With fewer options available for indoor recreation and socializing, it may seem that the pandemic is putting up barriers for meeting new people. If you haven't tried online dating, now may be the perfect time to give it a go.

Whether you're looking for a friendship, a new romance, or just an opportunity to network, the internet is one of the most popular places to make new acquaintances.

Online dating sites first appeared in 1995 in North America and quickly became popular among people hoping to meet their perfect match. Not surprisingly, they have become ubiquitous in today's fast-paced society, with over 1.7 million users in Canada alone.

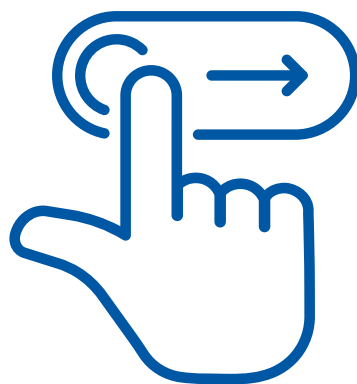
According to one dating site, thirty-six per cent of Canadians have used an online dating site and fifty-four per cent of those users are men. Twenty per cent of today's committed relationships began online.

Statista reports that 11.4 per cent of online daters are aged 55 to 64. Two out of three use non-paying

sites, while one third pay for premium features or customized matchmaking services.

I've tried a couple of dating sites with mixed success, but some of my friends are avid users. The top five dating sites in Canada are available pretty much everywhere, but there are a number of smaller, lesser-known sites that cater to specific genres such as religion, political beliefs, professions, or hobbies. There are several sites that specifically cater to people over 50 years of age.

Which online site you choose will depend on what you're looking for in a relationship, as well as where you're located. It may take a few tries to find the best online community for your needs. Other than through word of mouth, the best way to find out if there really are "hot singles in your area



waiting to meet you” is to sign up for a free trial. Before paying for a dating service, be sure there are sufficient people in your community to connect with. You don’t want to find that there are only three women in your preferred age range and two of them are your ex-wives.

Setting up a profile can be intimidating, but the more information you share, the more likely you are to garner responses. Here are a few tips for success.

Be honest. Most users admit to embellishing their profile, but don’t be tempted to present yourself as someone you’re not. The most common things people exaggerate are their age (reporting younger than they really are), weight or figure, job situation, and current relationship status.

Post current photos. You might have some great pictures from ten years ago that you’d like to share, but your potential date wants to know what you look like today. Have a friend help you take some new pictures; make an effort to look put together. Be sure to include at least one photo that shows your body from head to toe. Smile and ditch the sunglasses.

Write an interesting biography. Include information about what you enjoy doing and what sort of person you hope to meet. Be clear about your expectations and what sort of relationship you’re looking for. Don’t go for the clichés such as “I enjoy long walks and cuddling by a fire.”

Cast a wide net. Don’t be tempted to use too narrow an age range or reject someone on the basis of their ethnicity or other superficial attributes. Your perfect match could be among those you’ve eliminated on the basis of some small feature they lack.

If you haven’t heard of catfishing, you need to educate yourself on how to spot an imposter. There are people on the internet, dating sites in

particular, who misrepresent themselves in order to take advantage of naive individuals. Seniors are particularly at risk because they tend to be more trusting and sincere.

Be cautious of anyone who doesn’t live in your province or country. Ask questions to assure that they are actually from your community. Use reverse image search to determine if their photos are posted elsewhere and not theirs. Do not give out any personal information such as your phone number or address. Be wary of any talk of being in love, especially if you’ve never actually met in person. Steer clear of anyone who repeatedly cancels an in-person meeting at the last minute. Never send money to anyone you meet online, ever. This bears repeating for those in the back: **Never send money to anyone you meet online, ever.**

If you’ve communicated with someone for a while and decide to meet in person, be sure to choose a public space such as a coffee shop or mall. Never go to someone’s home or invite them into yours until you’re completely confident you know and trust them. My apologies if this sounds like advice for a teenager, but never get in a vehicle on a first date and don’t meet anyone in a remote location.

Online dating portals can be a doorway to meeting new friends, networking, or finding that special someone. Be bold, be adventuresome, and be open to new experiences. At the same time, use common sense and trust your instincts. Go out there and meet your match. ●

Jane Thrall is retired and enjoying life from behind her mask. If you see her profile online, swipe right.



POETRY: SECOND PLACE

Neighbours

Marianne Cole

We usually think of neighbours
As just the guys next door
But there are often times
A neighbour is much more.
For sure it is the helping hands
That are so freely given
And go so quickly back and forth
Whene'er the need's arisen.
Or then there are the special times
That neighbours get the call
Like branding in the springtime
Or drives home in the fall.
But yet the role of neighbour
Can often go beyond
When news of trials and hardships
Cause far-off strangers to respond.
A tragedy's reported
And hearts kick into gear
With thoughts of love and caring
They quickly volunteer.

And distance is not a barrier
To giving with the heart
In ways distinctly varied
As many do their part.
The help may come in money
In time, or goods, or words
But each so specially given
By compassion each is spurred.
Yes a neighbour can be someone
Who's really close at heart
And feels the grief, the hurt, the loss
And now some comfort does impart.
So you see, it's just not living
Beside the guy next door
But the role of being a neighbour
Is really so much more.
It's sharing, caring, helping
As each one does a part
But most of all it's giving
With an understanding heart. ●



The last of the 2020 Writing Contest winning entries. Winners of the 2021 Writing Contest will be announced in the spring issue of *news&views*.



An Author Connects

Glen Huser

During author visits I am often asked where the ideas for my books came from. Answers are as varied as the books: connections to people I've encountered, places I've lived, my work as an instructor, my development as a visual artist, historical and social issues that have caught my attention. Sometimes the answer is simply, "This book is something I wished I had at my fingertips when I was a teacher-librarian."

Firebird is a novel that can pretty much fit all of these connections. Foremost it is a dark, largely hidden chapter of our history: the fact that during the First World War, thousands of immigrants (mostly Ukrainians) were herded into concentration camps across Canada and put to work, virtually as slave labour. Although I grew up in a small Alberta community with a large Ukrainian–Canadian population, I never heard anything of the internments until I was an adult working in Edmonton and stumbled across the information.

A story to be told? Remember that gap on my library shelf? A narrative began to take shape in my mind. Characters? Alex Kaminsky, a teenager recovering from burns from a farmhouse fire, searching for an older brother who has disappeared. Marco, the brother, was an itinerant farm hand, but also an artist with his pencils and paints. Scenes grew — the fire, Alex being nursed by a rural midwife, riding the rails in his search for Marco, given sanctuary by a Norwegian immigrant family in Edmonton, and eventually the horrors of the concentration camp at the Cave and Basin in Banff.

Researching *Firebird*, I spent countless hours poring over texts on the internments written by Ukrainian–Canadian scholars and reading accounts

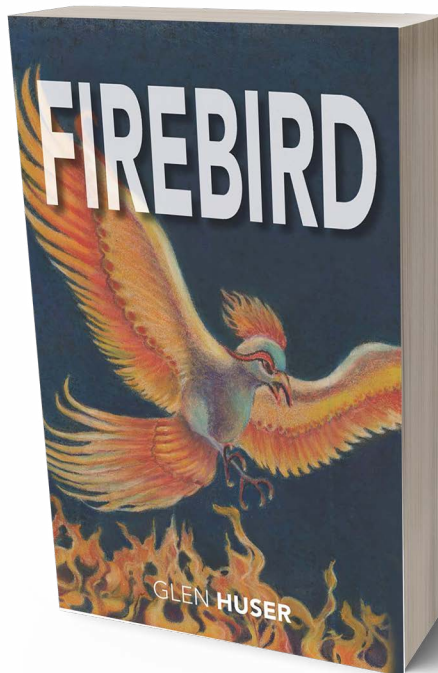
of families who emigrated from Ukraine in some of Alberta's community histories. What were the towns of Vegreville and Banff like in 1916 — and the cities of Edmonton and Calgary? Community histories helped here, as did Alberta's provincial archives and Edmonton's city archives.

For the sequence in which Alex spends time with a Norwegian immigrant family in Edmonton, I drew on my own experiences with my paternal grandmother who came from Norway in 1916 and, with her children (following her husband's death), eventually homesteaded in the Lac La Biche area in Alberta.

As a final connection — which is actually the first noted in the novel — I'll leave you with its dedication:

"In memory of my father, Harry Huser, an immigrant boy, artist, and musician." •

From his earliest years, Glen Huser loved to write and read and draw and paint. In retirement, he reports that life has been good, and he has been able to continue pursuing a career as an author. He had his first novel published while working for Edmonton Public Schools as a teacher-librarian and learning resources consultant; he's now published twelve books for readers from children to adults.



Finding Connections in My Address Books

Sharon Goerg

As I was setting up a new address book (my daughters have informed me that they have all their contacts and addresses on their phones), I realized that this task was necessary because of changes in my life, like the passing away of family and friends or the additions of new addresses. I came to understand, however, that an address book can bring forth memories. So take out your address book (fancy, plain, big, small, new, worn) and let's begin with the possibilities.

In the B section I see the name of my best friend in high school (still a good friend). Seeing her name always makes me smile and reminds me of our fun times in high school. We have never lost contact and continue to visit and email each other after many years. Recently we both lost our husbands, so we recall humorous incidents to make us laugh rather than cry.

Next, in the C area of my address book, I see a name I never cross off even though contact hasn't been established for perhaps thirty years. When we

spent a year in Ireland with our young daughters, we met a British couple and their three children. We were all in a new country with our young families, and a bond developed. We later learned that after we returned to the States, they returned to England where the husband vanished one day on his way to a university class. A whole mystery is part of this entry in the address book.

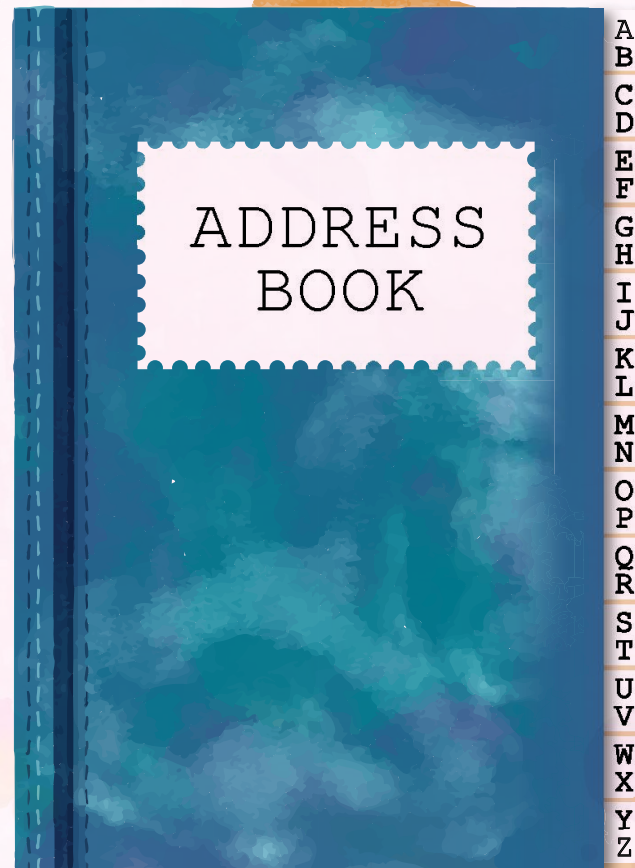
Throughout my address book are crossed off names of relatives and friends who have passed away or who are no longer part of my life. My address book did not look this way

when I was younger. I imagine there will be more crossing off of names and addresses ahead for me.

I notice in the G and H sections there are names with question marks beside them. These are people my husband and I met on various trips and now I do not know their locations.

For some reason I can't delete their names. I don't want to forget that at





one point in our lives, they represented new and interesting friends. For example, in Spain we had an apartment where our neighbour had a tattoo from a concentration camp.

I notice that my three grandchildren have had several address changes as they leave home, go to university, get jobs, and have new relationships. These changes will continue as their lives progress. My daughters' addresses have been stable but may change when they reach retirement age.

There are always the necessary and practical addresses of doctors, dentists, and specialists that are important to everyday life. And today we include phone numbers and email addresses (new additions to address books) of providers for recycling, window washing, lawn mowing, and snow removal. These aids would never have appeared in my earlier address books.

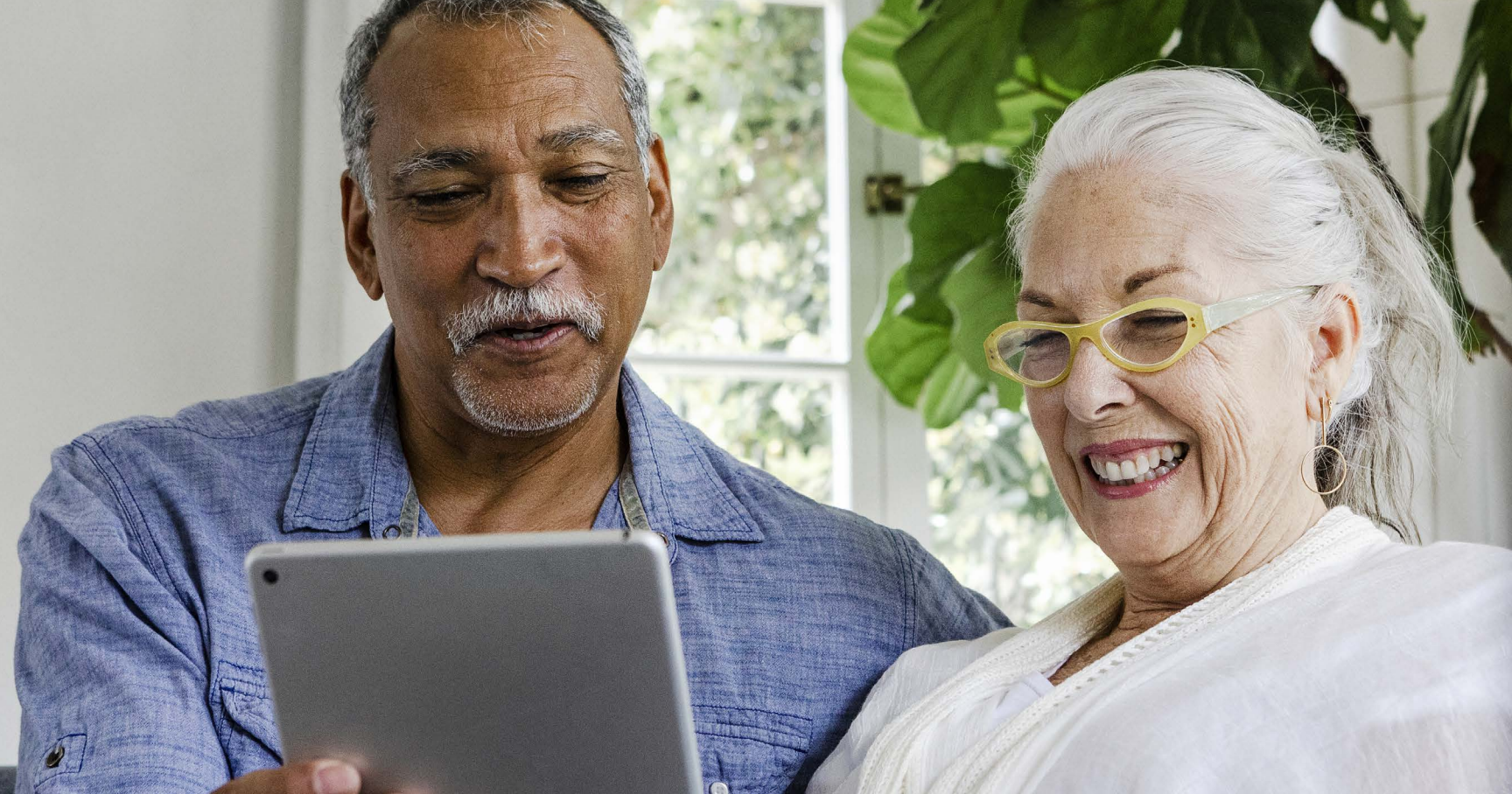
During a move from the United States to Canada, my address book was left behind and never located by the new occupants of our former residence. I was unable to reconnect with some people in that book. Today, with the aid of the internet, locating lost

names and locations is much simpler than it was during the sixties and seventies.

Because of email and school reunions, I have reconnected with some old friends. Those addresses have been added to the pages of my new address book. I have also included group members of book clubs, quilting, scrapbooking, and memoir groups.

Luckily, I have kept three of my last address books so I can sift through more memories. I now wish I had kept them all and had been able to retrieve the lost address book. For me, going through my address books is a good memory device. Since I am always searching for topics to aid my memoir groups, address books can be useful. Aldous Huxley stated that "Every man's memory is his private literature." That is certainly true for me. ●

Due to the pandemic, Sharon Goerg's retirement volunteer activities came to a halt in High River. She now, however, has reconnected with her memoir groups in various retirement homes. Their first topic, of course, was their reactions to and effects of the virus on their lives during these past months.



Staying Connected: The Free Stayhome-Living App

Barry Jones & Carolyn Glazier | Founders, Stayhome-Living

During the early days of the pandemic, it became apparent that many older adults were struggling with loneliness. After years in communities, in careers, and with family establishing lifelong relationships, we were suddenly told we needed to isolate and stick within our own household bubble. The larger the household, the less the risk of loneliness. But for many Canadian seniors living as a couple or alone, this imposed isolation was debilitating.

It was from this backdrop in spring of 2020 that we developed a platform to help older adults remain connected, entertained, and engaged. After surveying some 150 seniors within their community and asking about their experience with technology, frustrations with technology, and their wish list, we enlisted retired tech executive and restless senior, Tom Waters, to help develop a free app to help with seniors' digital literacy. Reaching out to content providers, we secured permission to add entertainment in the form of documentaries, cooking and travel shows, movies, and online TV offerings. They added options for physical and mental engagement through online exercise videos

(seated yoga, tai chi, light cardio), games, and hobbies (gardening videos, instructional knitting, book clubs). Connection was made possible via social media channels and video calling options, all with instructional videos and step-by-step notes. Follow-up to the survey also led to a discussion about how technology might enable the respondents to stay in their homes longer (the headlines of the day were not flattering to the Canadian long-term care system). In response, we incorporated links (and instructions) for ordering and organizing groceries, meals, transport, some home repairs, and telehealth options.

The app is laid out as a house, safe and

welcoming, with each window and door clearly marked with distinct categories such as Activities, Entertainment, Services, Connection, Learning, Healthcare, and Support. Behind the windows are sub-menus introducing various options for each category. The easy-to-navigate house has a back arrow to enable the user to go back one screen and a little house icon to bring the user right back to the opening page.

The app was tested locally, and over the course of the last year, its reach has expanded from coast to coast with the content having a pan-Canadian flavour. While many apps are simply downloaded from the various app stores, this app is accessed via its own website, stayhome-living.com, in the form of a progressive web app. This new generation of apps enables the developers to make modifications, such as adding and updating content, in real time.



stay connected



stay active

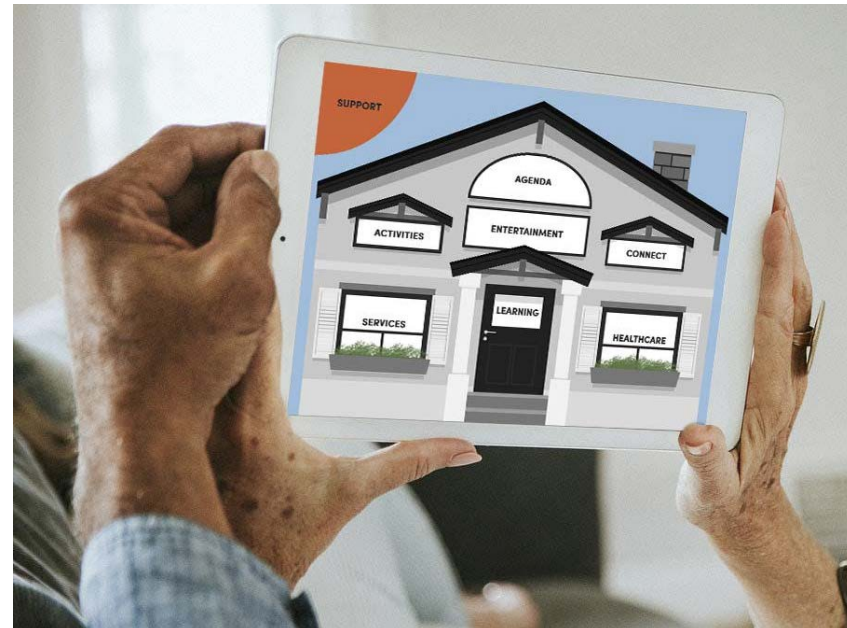


stay entertained

Feedback has been positive, with users leaving reviews such as the following:

"This looks like a wonderful resource for seniors. I appreciate your ingenuity in developing this app."
T.H., Red Deer, AB

"I think you are doing an incredible thing for our seniors ... Congratulations." M.T., Surrey, BC



A short explanatory video is posted on YouTube
youtu.be/XotQZwuOOS8

The app began as a passion project as we wanted to do all we could to help seniors during this troubling time, but it has become increasingly apparent that the way seniors want to use and enjoy technology is here to stay. We think this is a great resource for seniors who are very new to technology, giving these tech novices an opportunity to explore and gain confidence. But there are enough links and content to satisfy the experienced user as well, as it helps to keep so many of the most useful resources in one easy-to-navigate place.

The Stayhome-Living app helps to bring some of the comfort of being "home" to seniors while helping users stay entertained and engaged. It guides them on a digital literacy journey that will help us all stay connected and hopefully happier. ●

Barry Jones' career has been in the financial industry while Carolyn Glazier has enjoyed a career spanning technology and real estate. For both, the move into developing a technology to support seniors and to help them maintain their independence was sparked by thinking of their own parents' needs.

From Our Partners

Erika Healy, RPN | Nurse Care Specialist, HumanaCare



When it's Time to Start Thinking About Assisted Living, Where Do I Begin?

When it comes time to discuss assisted living options for you or a loved one, navigating the health-care system can feel like an overwhelming task. Recognizing it is time to transition to a higher level of care is essential for the quality of life and health for all involved. It is a good idea to have a plan in place well in advance, in order to avoid panicking at the last minute to find a home after an illness or a hospital visit. Being prepared will aid in this new life transition.

So where do you start? The first step is to get a case manager through Alberta Health Services. When you are ready to begin your journey, call Health Link at 811 to arrange for an assessment by an Alberta Health Services health professional. You can refer yourself, or you can be referred if you meet the eligibility requirements. The requirements include residing

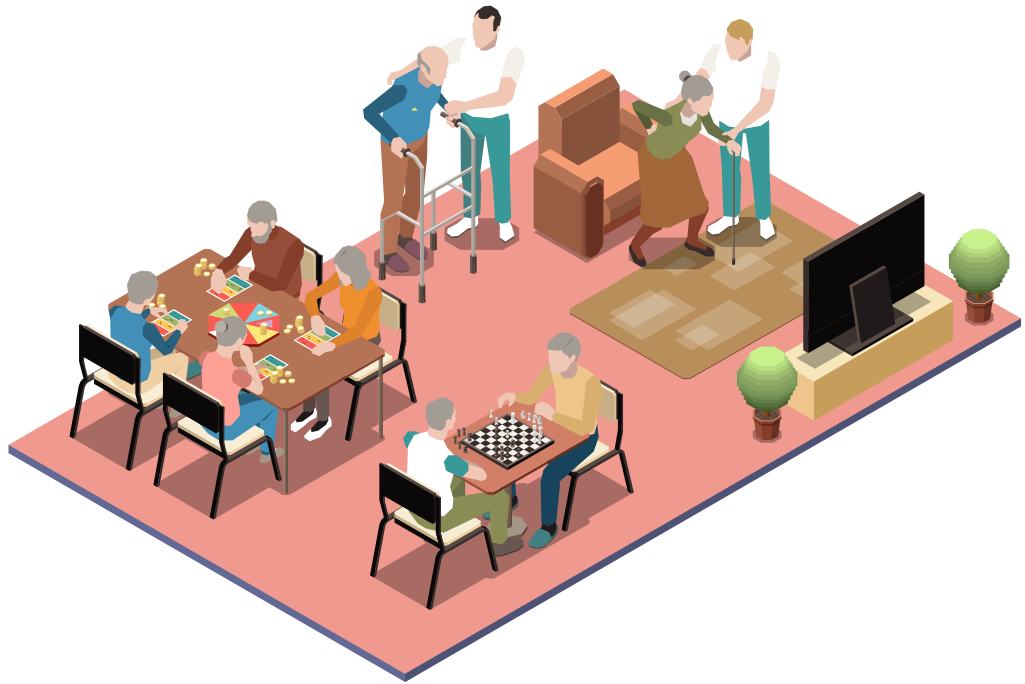
in Alberta, having an Alberta Personal Health Card number or having applied for one, and being eligible to receive Alberta health insurance coverage.

The province of Alberta is divided into five geographical zones: North, Edmonton, Central, Calgary, and South. The zone you are in is based on where you live. If you are unsure of which zone applies to you, the case manager

will help determine this. The assigned case manager will go through a standard assessment. This assessment collects information on a wide range of mental, physical, and social abilities. Once the assessment is complete, the case manager will discuss the results with you or your loved one to determine the level of care that will best suit the individual's needs.

When choosing a home that best suits an individual's needs, there are a number of things to take into account. Some considerations may include location, religious preferences, available social supports, wait times, and costs. Before making a final decision, it is beneficial to visit several facilities that provide the type of care needed. By taking a tour, you can get a better feel for the environment, the services that are offered, the surroundings and the people who work and live there. It will also give the opportunity for you to ask any questions you may have.

Once you have determined a couple of home options that suit your needs and preferences, the case manager will put you on the waitlist for these homes. If the site has availability, you will be offered a position based on the waitlist prioritization criteria. If your preferred locations do not have space available, you may be offered a temporary option to meet your current needs. Accepting a temporary option does not affect your spot on the waitlist. When your preferred



location becomes available, the case manager will help make a smooth transition into the new home.

The two main levels of care facilities are nursing homes and assisted living. Assisted living is best suited for those who are semi-independent. These homes offer twenty-four-hour emergency response, and a wide range of recreational and social activities. They are designed for seniors who could benefit from a more socially engaging environment and need limited supervision and care. Nursing homes are best suited for those who cannot live independently, requiring a more extensive level of care and supervision. Nursing care is available twenty-four hours a day. Residents can receive help

with activities such as bathing, dressing, grooming, using the bathroom, taking medication, eating, and mobility.

What does an alternative level of care cost? The Alberta government sets the maximum accommodation charge for supportive living and long-term care. As of June 1, 2021, these charges range from \$1,754 for a standard room to \$2,132 for a private room.

Thinking about care options for yourself or for your loved one can be stressful. The more prepared you are when the time comes, the more confident you will be that you made the right choice in this next chapter of life. It is important to recognize that you are making the best decision for the health and safety of all involved. ●

From Our Partners

Dan Keon | Vice President, Market Management,
Allianz Global Assistance Canada



Global Assistance

Allianz 

Making Connections To Assist and Protect You While You Travel

As the world begins to open up again, you might be longing for the kinds of connections that only the experience of travelling makes possible. That desire could mean escaping to places you've dreamed of visiting or embracing far-away loved ones after a long time apart. As your travel insurance provider, Allianz Global Assistance is there to help you get back in touch with the joys of travel when the time is right.

Connecting You to a Great Start

- Robust protection from a variety of unexpected travel emergencies
- Knowledgeable pre-trip assistance to help you prepare for a great trip
- Helpful information and resources to keep you up to date on changing travel requirements
- Easy-to-access, country-specific information available online that prepares you to navigate a medical emergency at your destination

Connecting You to the Highest Level of Care in an Emergency

- 24/7/365 multilingual emergency assistance
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- Virtual care from a physician via video or teleconference when appropriate
- Worldwide network of over 900,000 trusted physicians and hospitals

- Efficient navigation of the health-care system on your behalf in the region you're visiting
- Close monitoring of your treatment plans
- Arranging direct billing for your treatment whenever possible, so you can avoid out-of-pocket expenses
- Keeping you and your loved ones in touch and up to date
- Coordinating arrangements for your safe return home if necessary

Connecting You to a Secure, Smooth, Efficient Ending to Your Experience

Allianz Global Assistance makes it easy for travellers to submit claims from a mobile device or any browser via their online claims portal, available at allianzassistanceclaims.ca.

- Eligible claims for online submission include trip cancellation, interruption, and delay, as well as out-of-pocket emergency medical expenses.

Connecting You to Resources so You Can Stay Informed

The world of travel continues to change, and your health and safety remains our priority. As with every trip, travellers are encouraged to review and follow Government of Canada travel advice and advisories (travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories) and stay informed of advisory levels and COVID-19 activity at their destination.

Community transmission of COVID-19 continues in many countries and we are still in a pandemic. It's critical for all ARTA members to plan ahead, do their research, and regularly review COVID-19

requirements for their departure, arrival at their destination, and return to Canada, including using the ArriveCAN app. Learn more here: canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19/arrivecan.html

Allianz Global Assistance remains committed to protecting ARTA members and their travel experiences in the moments that matter most before, during, and after your trip.

If you have any questions about your ARTA Emergency Travel member plan, please call 1-844-996-9003.

ARTA Emergency Travel Insurance includes:

- Up to \$5 million for sudden and unexpected medical emergencies
- Up to \$10,000 in trip cancellation and interruption benefits
- Up to \$5,000 for private duty nursing
- Medical transportation
- Return of vehicle (up to \$5,000), excess baggage (up to \$500), and animal companion (up to \$500)

Expenses related to COVID-19 may now be eligible under your ARTA Emergency Travel member plan as long as you're travelling after October 21, 2021, and there is no travel advisory related to COVID-19 in effect at your destination. Contact the ARTA Member Support team for more details. ●

Travel insurance does not cover everything. For complete terms, conditions, limitations, and exclusions, please refer to your policy. ARTA's travel insurance is underwritten by CUMIS General Insurance Company, a member of the Co-operators group of companies and administered by Allianz Global Assistance, which is a registered business name of AZGA Service Canada Inc.

Allianz Global Assistance does not tolerate any attempt of fraud and considers it a serious offence.

From Our Partners

Laurie Bauer | CAIB Business Development Manager, TW Insurance Brokers



Insuring a Hybrid Vehicle in Alberta: What You'll Want to Know Before Purchasing

Looking for a safe, reliable, and fuel-efficient vehicle? Hybrid vehicles are becoming a popular option. As we push toward a future that focuses on sustainability and environmental conscientiousness, many Albertans are choosing hybrid vehicles as their mode of transportation due to fuel efficiency, increasing availability of vehicles, and growing electric vehicle infrastructure around Canada. With over 45 battery-electric vehicles (BEVs) and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (PHEs) available on the market in Canada, many Albertans are opting to go “green.”

Although you can reduce your carbon footprint — and the amount you’re spending on fuel and maintenance — by purchasing your hybrid vehicle, there are other things to keep in mind that could make or break your decision to purchase your dream car.

Why Go Hybrid?

Many Albertans are choosing hybrid vehicles because they have lower carbon emissions and can be more economical in the long run. Keep in mind that your driving habits and commuting route are important to take into consideration. Electric vehicles, in comparison to their counterparts, are typically more efficient in cities where a lot of stop-and-go traffic is present. Hybrids also tend to



be lighter than emission-based vehicles and have regenerative braking, which produces a charge for the battery when decelerating, adding additional savings when travelling. Although you may require less maintenance with a zero-emission vehicle, costs may be higher due to a different service standard required compared to emission-based vehicles.

If you're looking to compare the difference in fuel cost between your current vehicle and a hybrid vehicle you're interested in, make sure to use an electric vehicle calculator to see how much you can save based on your annual mileage.



Your Insurance May Increase

If you're worried that your insurance premiums may increase, make sure to provide a VIN number to your broker or quoter. This information will ensure that any discounts available through providers will be applied to your quote. Providers like Aviva offer a five per cent green vehicle discount just for insuring an electric or hybrid vehicle. The VIN number will also identify whether your zero-emission vehicle is classified as high-value, which can increase your insurance premium due to expensive parts or complicated service standard requirements.

Unable to locate or provide a VIN number to your broker? If that's the case, make sure to provide the year, make, model, and mileage for an accurate quote on your vehicle insurance.

You Can Save on Your Initial Purchase

Many people don't know that you can also receive additional tax rebates on your vehicle. In order to encourage Canadians to use zero-emission vehicles, the government provides a list of eligible zero-emission vehicles for purchase or lease. Rebates are based on the type of hybrid vehicle you're choosing. Under the federal iZEV Program, there are incentives of up to \$5,000 for purchasing. •

Information for this article was found in the Government of Canada websites, [Travelling with an electric vehicle](#) and [Zero-emission vehicles](#), the [Electric Vehicle Association of Alberta](#) website for the electric vehicle calculator, and Aviva's [electric vehicle insurance](#) website page.



Friendships Old and New

Deb Gerow | Wellness Committee

While looking through an old autograph book, I found this wise saying: “Make new friends, but keep the old; one is silver, the other is gold.” I began thinking about the importance of friends — friends past and present — and how we go about connecting with new friends.

Studies show that social connection is important to good health. It can lead to lower anxiety and depression while helping to regulate our emotions. Perhaps this is because a friend is someone to whom we can express our deeply felt feelings. Relationships with friends often increase self-esteem and empathy because we are invested in the well-being of another. Friendships are essential in this time when the number of lonely people is growing. Technology has the ability to connect us more than

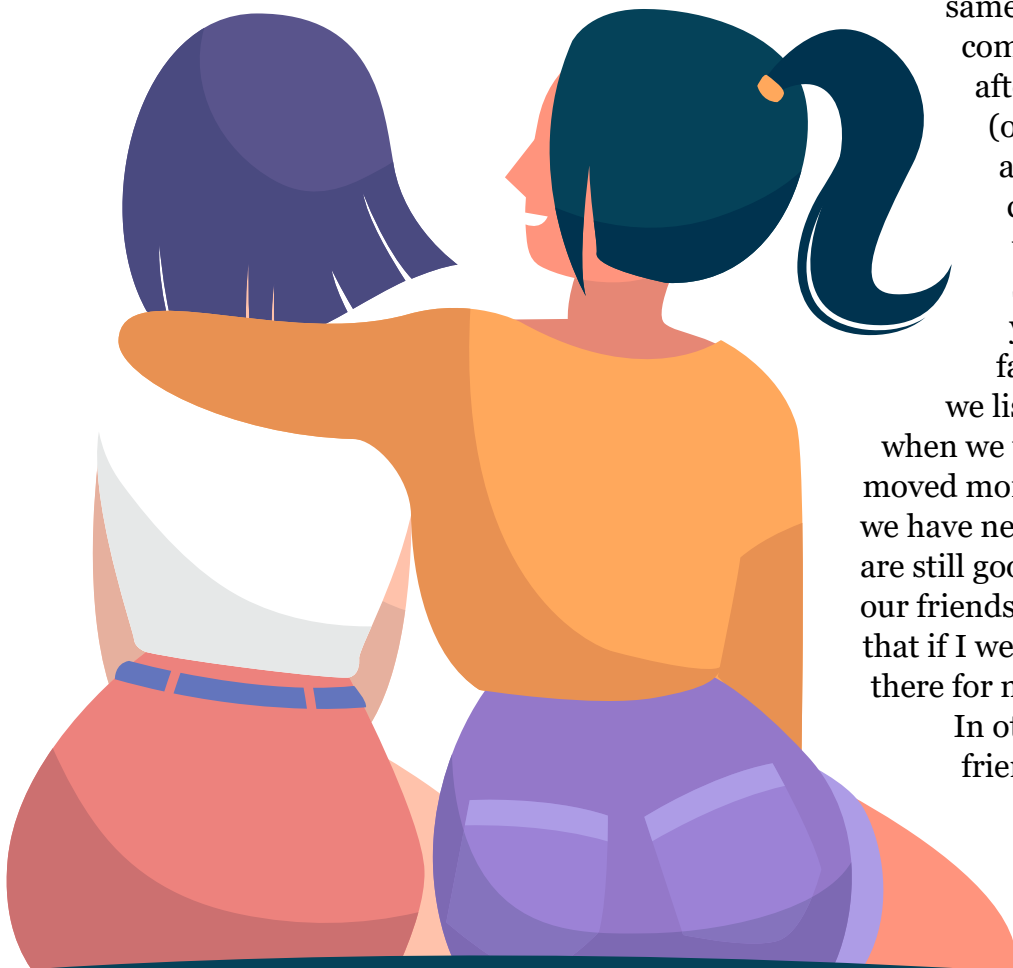
ever, but individual screen time often disconnects us from others. The past two years have made it evident that while technology can enhance connections, it cannot replace the face-to-face interactions that we need in order to thrive. Human beings require connections with other living beings.

As a child, I had many good friends, many of whom are still friends today. I was especially fortunate to have a best friend who was also a kindred spirit; that is, we knew almost immediately upon meeting that we saw life through the

same lens. We spent hours in each other’s company. We played Monopoly on weekend afternoons, got up to mischief together (once we drank tiny glasses of grape juice and ate the leftover cubes of bread in the church kitchen — scandalous because she was the minister’s daughter), attended summer camp together, tormented our younger siblings, and volunteered for our favourite causes. We read the same books; we listened to the same music. Unfortunately,

when we were entering high school, her family moved more than a thousand miles away. Although we have never lived any closer than that since, we are still good friends who are capable of resuming our friendship whenever we are in contact. I know that if I were ever in need of support, she would be there for me.

In other stages of my life, I have found new friends in different ways. Some of those friendships developed in the ice arena as parents sat shivering in the bleachers, discussing life, sharing perspectives, and watching our children



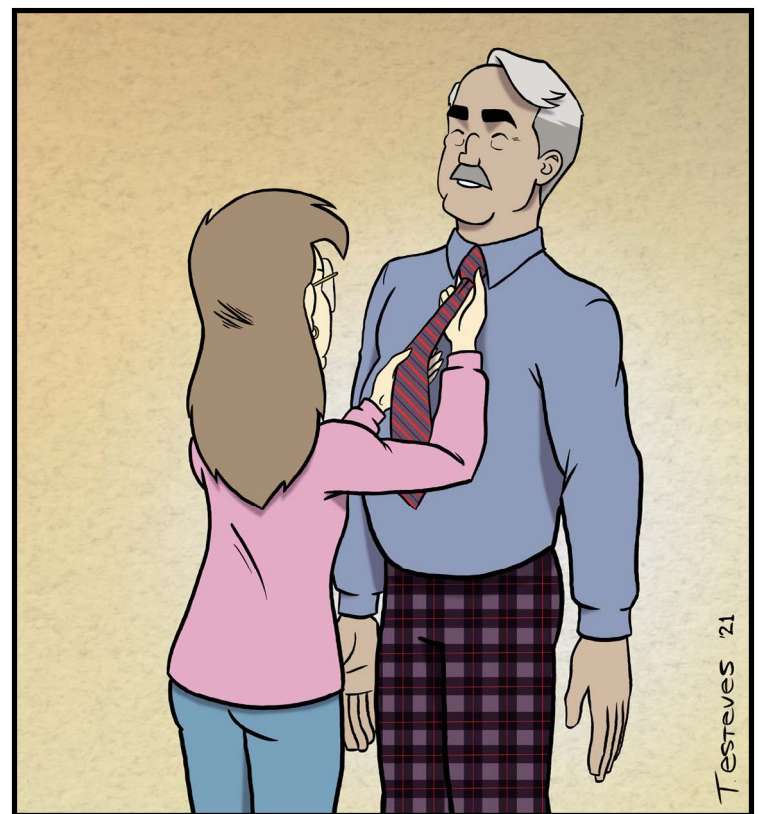
participate in sports. It was a great way to get to know about the new community we had moved into and to make connections with other people. Other friendships came from being part of the local volunteer fire department. Standing in a freezing cold creek while working together to extricate an injured person trapped in a vehicle, watching a huge brush fire advancing toward us while wondering how we would be able to stop it, seeing each other at our best and at our worst, created a strong bond which endures even though our firefighting days are over. Many friendships came through working in schools with people who shared the same passion to make a difference for our students against all odds. Working so closely with other people who also cared so much about the well-being of children made forging friendships inevitable. Now, I am happy to count as friends many people whom I have met through being part of ARTA. Sharing a history, a purpose, a vision of the world, and being willing to work together to make a difference for others is the connection between us. I should add that we also enjoy the time we spend together.

So, what can I say to those who are searching for friends? How does one go about finding them and making a connection? My best advice would be to examine those things that are most important to you. When you have identified these priorities, then engage yourself in activities that support those passions. Maybe it means joining a new club or activity, volunteering to sustain a cause that you are passionate about, or getting out and trying something just because it looks like fun. Perhaps that means reaching out to an old friend with whom you have lost contact. They probably would be delighted to hear from you. If you are not already

a member of an ARTA branch, perhaps consider joining one. You will meet some great people there. I recently read the annual reports of all of the ARTA branches. It was amazing to learn how creative they have been, offering so many different activities and opportunities to socialize, despite the restrictions imposed by the pandemic. Just imagine how much more they will be able to do when meeting in person once again!

Connections with other people are necessary to keep us healthy. Friendships, whether old friends, new friends, or kindred spirits, silver or gold, enrich our lives. ●

ARTAficial Flavours



**I tried to find a tie to match my
pyjama bottoms, but it was harder
than you'd think.**



IN MEMORIAM

*A great soul serves everyone all the time. A great soul never dies.
It brings us together again and again.*

—Maya Angelou

Kevin Angel
Edmonton

Stuart Byron Bailie
Edmonton

Douglas Barbour
Edmonton

Armand Damase Beaudoin
Edmonton

Marge (née Hawka) Bowen
Edmonton

**Susan “Lynne” (née Hurley)
Burns**
St. Albert

**Edeltraut “Trudy” Maria
(née Strehl) Butcher**
Medicine Hat

**Brenda Joyce (née Martinell)
Carter**
Bruce

Dennis William Cebuliak
Leduc

Thomas Cottrell
Camrose

**Ruth Annebelle (née
Bornowsky) Dell**
Edmonton

Brian Donaldson
Lethbridge

Jean Alice Driver
Grande Prairie

Michael Falk
Edmonton

**Margaret “Marg” Heather
(née Campbell) Frankish**
Abbotsford, BC

Peter Gill
Beaver Lodge

Mark Steven Hanna
Medicine Hat

**Wilfred Paul “Wilf”
Hanneman**
Leduc

Marcus Edward Heck
Claresholm

Gerty Heinen
Picture Butte

**Olga Rose (née Lukawesky)
Hrycun**
Edmonton

**Josephine Elizabeth (née
Liber) Ilnicki**
Round Hill

**Frederick “Fred” Henry
Kramer**
Medicine Hat

**Esther Hilda (née Kruger)
Krause**
Medicine Hat

**Desiree Karen (née
Wedhorn, formerly Essex)
Lamb**
Hillspring

If you know of an ARTA member or a retired teacher who has passed away and whom we should honour on this page, please email the editor at memoriam@arta.net.





Anne Theodora (née Balascak) Laskosky
Camrose

Caroline Nadya Aneta (née Yacyshyn) Lesniak
Sherwood Park

Irmgard “Irm” Gertrud (née Freitag, formerly Hooks) Lindquist
Sherwood Park

Evangeline “Vange” MacDonald
Edmonton

Sharon Leigh (née Snow) Malec
Lethbridge

May Gertrude (née Knowler) Mardon
Lethbridge

Patricia Ann (née Carter) Molyneaux
Lake Cowichan, BC

Isla Marguerite (née Adair) Nicholson
Saltair, BC

Ralph Austin Omoe
Edmonton

Patrick Leslie Page
Red Deer

Doris (née Eshpeter) Parker
Edmonton

Harold Charles Parr
Calgary

Christine Rudland
St. Albert

Christiane Saint-Pierre
Lethbridge

Sadie Gertrude (née Gaboury) Sarmaga
Grande Prairie

Kathryn Saul
Red Deer

William “Bill” Sawka
St. Albert

Marienne Gwyneth Sisko
Medicine Hat

Ralph Gerard Christian Smulders
Lethbridge

Colin Michael Spencer
Hinton

Ooi-Tee Tan
Edmonton

Harold F. Ulmer
Edmonton

Douglas “Doug” Robert Wilson
Edmonton

Katherine Wipf
Lethbridge





Connecting with Music

Glenn Dixon

Just after I retired, I joined a rock and roll band. I hadn't planned on that. Not exactly. It was just a connection I made, something that took me back to my long-ago youth. When I was in my twenties, I wanted to be a rock star. I moved to Toronto, played in bands, even cut a record or two, but it all came to naught. And when all that failed miserably, I picked myself up, went back to school, and became a teacher. I wound up teaching high-school English and my life continued on for a couple of decades until, fast forward, I met someone who would change the course of everything.

It was my last year of teaching, and I was assigned a classroom next door to a guy named John McAllister. Somehow, between classes, we got talking, and he asked if I played guitar (I did) and if I wanted to come over after school on Fridays and jam (yes, yes, I did).

John and I finished up that year of teaching and we both retired at the same time. We kept up the Friday jams, but here's where the story gets sad: About a year after our concurrent retirements, John was diagnosed with cancer. It came out of the blue and it was stage four. He battled on for another year or so before finally passing. All along, he'd told me he played in a band on Tuesday nights, but I'd never met these other guys. And then, when we started to plan a memorial for him, there was talk of music, and the band (his old band) invited me to come up on stage and play one of John's favourite songs along with them.

Well, almost immediately, we knew something special was happening. None of us were young anymore, but this new incarnation of the band — now called Downtown Exit — was filled with some really outstanding musicians, any of whom could have been rock stars had life gone a little differently.

Now, I have to say that after I retired, I also pursued a career in writing. After all, I'd been an English teacher — and things had gone pretty well in that department. My fourth book, *Bootleg Stardust*, recently published, is the story of a rock band in 1974, and it didn't take very long before we decided — the band, that is — that we could and should write and record the songs of this fictitious band.

Well, the connections just kept on happening. Just when we were ready to record, we learned that the National Music Centre in Calgary had purchased



John McAllister

the legendary Rolling Stones Mobile Studio — just an old truck really — built by the Stones but also used by Led Zeppelin, Bob Marley, and just about every big name from the early '70s. Turns out, we were allowed to use it to record our songs. I wish John could have seen that.

We even ended up taking five of the songs to Abbey Road studios in London — just before the pandemic — and they turned out great. Imagine that, me walking up the steps of Abbey Road, the same studios the Beatles had used. Really, it's amazing where life can take you.

And to end all this, I want to say that at each and every practice, to this day, we begin with a little toast to John McAllister, the guy who taught English in the classroom beside me, all those years ago. •



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