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The Retired Teachers of Ontario Magazine

Winter 2019

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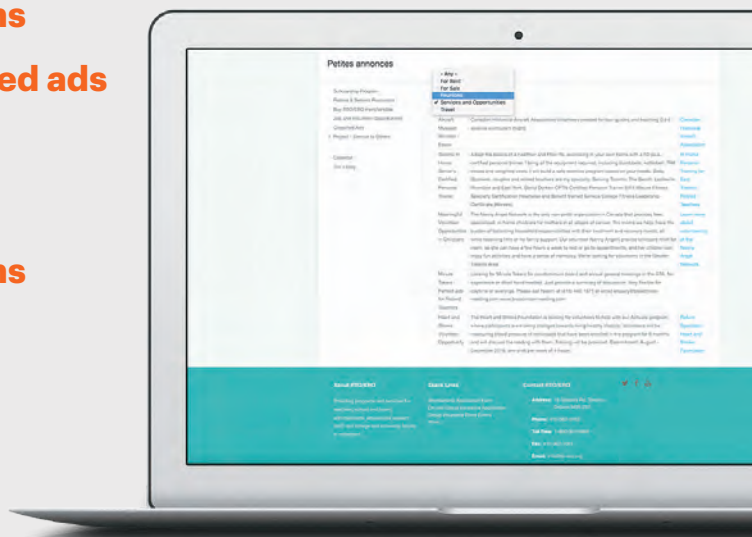
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- classified ads
- travel
- rentals
- reunions



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renaissance

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and has 78,000 members.

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...I have travelled to some places on my own but generally I like to sign up with travel companies that accept solo travellers at a single rate. I have been on several trips like this and find them much more affordable. Also, I have met like-minded solo travellers on those trips and made plans to travel with them to other destinations..."

-RTO/ERO Member, Sheila MacMillan



...I love to travel but travelling solo can be a challenge. The two main negatives being the cost and not knowing anyone. This past June, I did an *Amadeus* river cruise on the Danube... It was amazing! I met some very nice people, some who were travelling alone as well. So, I met new friends and shared experiences with other solo travellers..."

-RTO/ERO Member, Anita Renders

When considering travelling solo, cruise lines such as *Voyages to Antiquity (VTA)* are now accommodating solo travellers. *VTA* offers 39 designated solo cabins 'at the lowest single supplement in small ship cruising'. For land-based tours, *Just You* specializes in tours for solo travellers, at no additional single supplement and Merit Travel's Hosted Tours program can also accommodate solo travellers. Whatever your budget or interests, it's possible to travel independently and the team at Merit Travel can provide guidance and assistance the whole way.



Contact Merit Travel to find out who we recommend travelling with as a solo traveller.



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Reader letters

I read the magazine cover to cover. Excellent layout and interesting and relevant articles!!!
—Selma Lis (District 16 Toronto)

Please allow me to congratulate you on the new format and content of our retired teachers' magazine, *Renaissance*. The changes were so obviously apparent when I began to read the fall 2018 issue.

Bravo! You have hit on a winning combination of articles and a sincere tone which avoids an unrealistic approach. You and your staff are now getting very real about retirement for teachers: pitfalls, reality stories, how to maintain what health we have, etc.
—Carol Leeming (District 28 Region of Durham)

Thank you for an informative magazine. I look forward to your next issue.

Sincerely,
—Elfriede Miehl (District 7 Windsor Essex)

This edition of *Renaissance* was an excellent one with some heartwarming stories. Bill Courtney's story is so true for anyone who knows him. He is a great guy and that comes across in the article.

You have done a super job with *Renaissance* and I wanted to say "thank you."
—Joanne Murphy (District 33 Chatham-Kent)

I appreciate the multiple [electronic] versions of *Renaissance*.
—Bill Menagh (District 16 Toronto)

Elder Abuse Ontario (EAO) wanted to thank you and your team for this great edition on Fighting Ageism. There are many thoughtful and provoking articles in here as well as very useful information. EAO thanks you for highlighting this relevant issue. Keep up the great work.

—Maureen Etkin, Executive Director, Elder Abuse Ontario



LETTERS WANTED

Letters to the editor are always welcome. We like to receive your feedback on the stories and other content featured in *Renaissance*. Tell us how you feel about *Renaissance* and how we can make it better. Send your letters to renaissance@rto-ero.org.

The Dwarfstone



John Jansen in de Wal

A well-crafted children's tale with fine prose. The adventurous story of the intriguing dwarfs will captivate your attention. The search for the Dwarfstone will keep you in suspense.

Maria Pia Marchelletta

I absolutely love the visual art work. The prose is deep and multi-layered. I wonder how much your adolescent experiences contributed to this work a long (life) time in germination?

Clement Giuliano

John's imagination continues to surprise me
Shane Joseph

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The legacy of RTO/ERO lives on

Here for you now;
here for your future.

by **Martha Foster**



Our amazing year of celebrating our 50 years as an organization is almost over — and what a year it has been. All your districts took part in the celebration with many varied events. So now, here come our next 50 years.

In our 2017 annual report, which was delivered with your last edition of *Renaissance*, we focused on where we were at the end of the year, with respect to our three strategic goals: being the

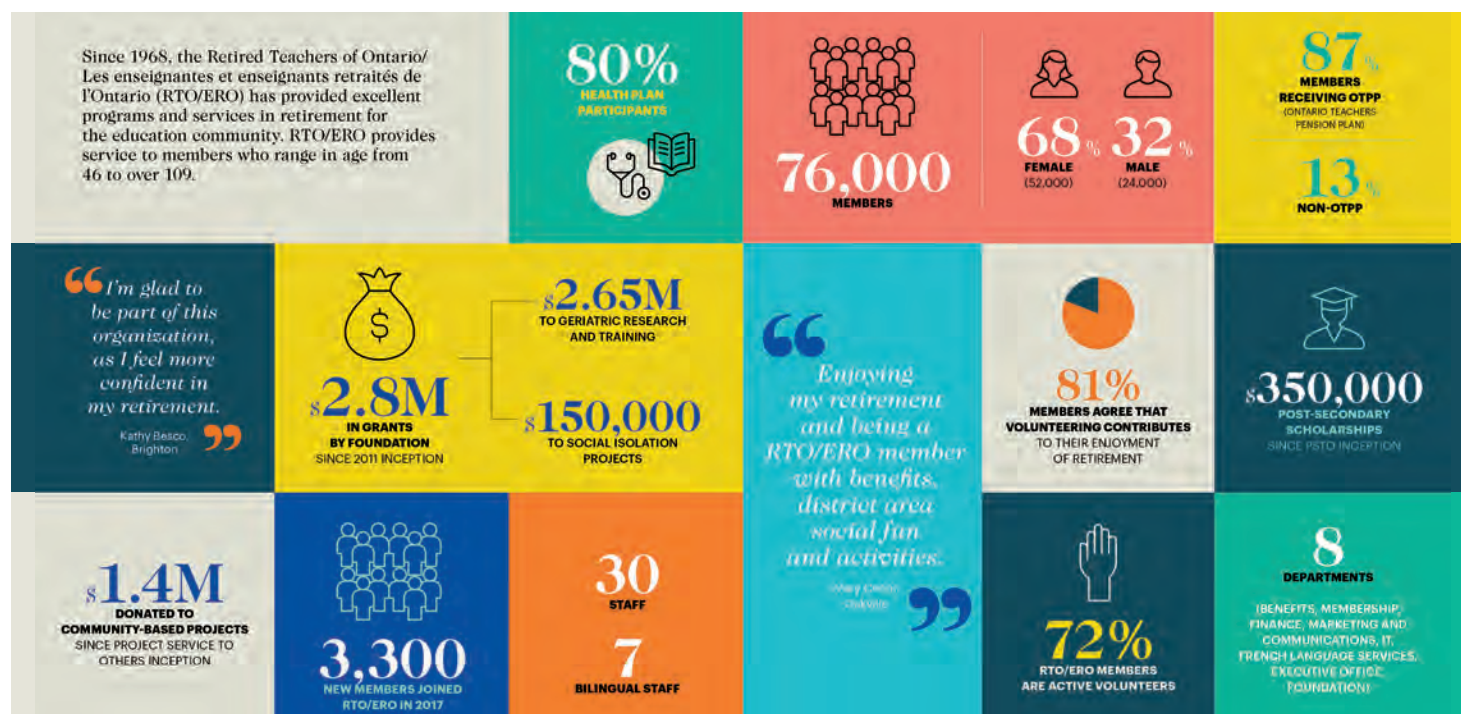
trusted voice for the broader education community, improving the lives of members and seniors, and broadening the membership base. With these goals in mind, we ensure that everything we do helps advance them — because achieving these goals allows us to move ahead.

If you have not yet had a moment to look at the report, it is worth doing so. On the cover is the title, “Vibrant Voices,” and a picture of one of our members gazing longingly at what I like to think is one of our presentations. Vibrant Voices is a term we have coined to reflect us, the RTO/ERO, speaking out on issues. The issues we are currently focusing on are: age-friendly communities, geriatric training and Pharmacare. We felt it was an excellent title for our annual report even before Prime Minister Trudeau sent a letter to the newly appointed Minister of Seniors in which he outlined the top priorities for her ministry. We were very excited to see our issues listed in those priorities. Check out vibrantvoices.ca.

The two-page spread on pages 2 and 3 has a lot of interesting information as

to where we were at the end of 2017. We continued to grow with 76,000 members at the end of the year, and our numbers are now considerably higher. Eighty-seven per cent of our membership are receiving OTPP, but our non-OTPP membership continues to grow. RTO/ERO continues to give back to the community — \$1.4 million to community-based projects and \$350,000 in scholarships since the inception of Project Service to Others, and \$2.8 million in grants from the foundation. Why is all of this important to our members? Not only is much of this funding used for projects and services that help improve the lives of our members and seniors, but 72 per cent of you are active volunteers and 81 per cent of you told us that you feel that volunteering contributes to the enjoyment of retirement.

So much more is in the annual report. If you have time, do take a look. It tells you so much of what we are doing to move RTO/ERO forward and to improve our service to you, our members. We are here for you now; here for your future. ■



Finding my happy place

Shifting perspective,
from sadness to holiday cheer.

by **Danielle Norris**

We can feel it in the air. For sure, it's in the malls — holiday music blaring, stores stocked with colourful decorations and gift ideas, as well as happy (and not-so-happy) shoppers. Oh yes, the holidays are just around the corner. This is a time for fun, festive food and lively family gatherings. "It's the most wonderful time of the year," according to the late American singer Andy Williams.

Though the holiday season is about joy, it can also mean quite the opposite for some people. Many of us experience grief, sadness and loneliness when December rolls around, specifically those of us who have dealt with loss and tragedy. I myself have lost loved ones at this time of year, and with each loss my joy dwindled during the holidays. It has been 10 years since my mother passed away from a terminal illness at the age of 56. It took some time, but with support from family, reliance on my faith and reflecting on the good times with my mother, I was able to find my own happy place and enjoy the holiday season again.

We all experience challenges in life, and sometimes it's helpful to know we're not alone, especially when others share with us how they overcame their personal hurdles. The focus for this winter issue of *Renaissance* is on happiness. While working with our talented writers and connecting with resilient, outgoing RTO/ERO members, I realized that there is a lot to be happy about. I urge you to read the stories in these pages in which our members share their experiences and help us recognize that happiness comes in numerous, diverse forms, ranging from making financial donations to volunteering to spending time with someone in need to finding love.

In this edition of the magazine, you will also find helpful tips on travel and keeping the flu at bay, as well as a recipe for a delightful winter soup to warm up your tummy and make it happy.

For me personally, working on this issue was therapeutic as well as enjoyable. For you, I hope that besides learning a thing or three, the magazine will put a smile on your face or give you a moment to shift your perspective

to reflect on and rediscover the many things that make you happy.

We at *Renaissance* wish you much happiness this holiday season and all the best for 2019. ■



Membership continues to grow

RTO/ERO members
are strong ambassadors.

by **Jim Grieve**

Do you recall how you first heard about the amazing benefits available as a member of RTO/ERO? Perhaps you heard it from a colleague down the hall in your school or post-secondary location. Or it might have been at one of the retirement planning workshops offered by RTO/ERO.

In my case, before I left the Peel District School Board in late 2009 to implement the full-day kindergarten program across Ontario with the Ministry of Education, I was fortunate to receive a visit from Linda Kenny (District 39 Peel), an RTO/ERO member and active executive member

Linda Kenny (District 39 Peel) introduced Jim Grieve to RTO/ERO in 2009.



in the district. At that meeting she handed me the RTO/ERO benefits booklet and application forms and told me about the remarkable services available through the organization when I was ready to retire.

I know that it is our member volunteers, like Linda, who are some of our very best brand ambassadors. In fact, in our recent survey on member recruitment, it was overwhelmingly evident that our rapidly increasing membership is mainly due to the personal and direct connections each of you make with former colleagues.

Many of our newest members come from what we call the broader education sector. In fact, 13 per cent of our total membership of almost 80,000 are retirees from the early years, business and operations school staff, and post-secondary institutions. Of course, our retired teacher population continues to grow rapidly, with over 3,300 new members joining in 2017.

You need to know about the hard work of our wonderful marketing, benefits and membership teams, along with the volunteers from the Member Services Committee. All are working tirelessly on evenings and weekends to attend conferences to spread the good news about RTO/ERO membership. Many of these audiences have not yet realized they can be members and enjoy the benefits of health, dental and travel insurance along with truly engaging activities through our 48 districts.

So who was your “Linda Kenny”? Who made you aware of RTO/ERO, Canada’s largest not-for-profit health insurer? I know that I will be forever grateful for the direct contact made by District 39 to include me as a member in this great organization.

I would love to hear your story about joining RTO/ERO. Send me a note and let’s celebrate those key individuals who invited you to join an organization that is far more than insurance. Please write me at jgrieve@rto-ero.org. ■

“Our rapidly increasing membership is mainly due to the personal and direct connections each of you make with former colleagues.”

—
Jim Grieve

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Are you considering a cruise vacation? Check with your RTO/ERO Cruise Specialist – RTO/ERO discounts and added value amenities apply to all of our featured cruise partners!



Getting connected

Moving from
isolation to inclusion.

by **Brian Jamieson**



As a wave of baby boomers surges into retirement, so too do opportunities for loneliness and social isolation.

Loneliness is a feeling; social isolation a fact. It's a correlation not a causation. "Both are bad for your physical and emotional health," says Dr. Nasreen Khatri, a registered clinical psychologist, gerontologist and researcher at Rotman Research Institute at Baycrest Health Sciences.

One-third of Canadians live alone, and living alone, statistically, is a health risk. One-quarter say they don't have a confidant they can tell their troubles to. "That's very high," Khatri says. "Double what it was 20 years ago."

People feel distressed when they don't have the emotional connection with others they want or need. Khatri says studies show that not having many social connections is tied to morbidity and mortality.

Structure, functionality and quality define relationships. Are others present or absent? Does the relationship — such as that with a sibling or romantic partner — meet the expectations of that function? Are they positive or negative? "If it's difficult for you, it's not necessarily providing what you need."

And it's not the number of social connections that matters, it's that they're ongoing, fulfilling and functional. Studies show that people who don't have

fulfilling relationships and few social connections are susceptible to problems such as hypertension, obesity, heart disease, depression and anxiety.

"We see that individuals who report high levels of loneliness do poorly on tests of cognitive function and show accelerated cognitive decline," says Dr. Alexandra Fiocco, associate professor, department of psychology, Ryerson University, and director of the Stress and Healthy Aging Research Lab. "And there's research that suggests they're at increased risk for developing dementia." Social isolation, she says, actually changes brain neurochemicals such as dopamine, which we require more as we age.

PHOTO BY MONKEY BUSINESS IMAGES

Generally, people with good social supports are healthier, Khatri says. Why? Others provide feedback (“You’ve lost weight!” or “You seem sad today.”) “When people are socially isolated and start to feel lonely, they may turn to coping methods that are unhealthy, such as smoking, drinking and overeating. When we have someone else in our life, we tend to be more physically active.”

“We’re meant to have social connections. When we don’t, that’s a form of stress.”

—
Dr. Alexandra Fiocco

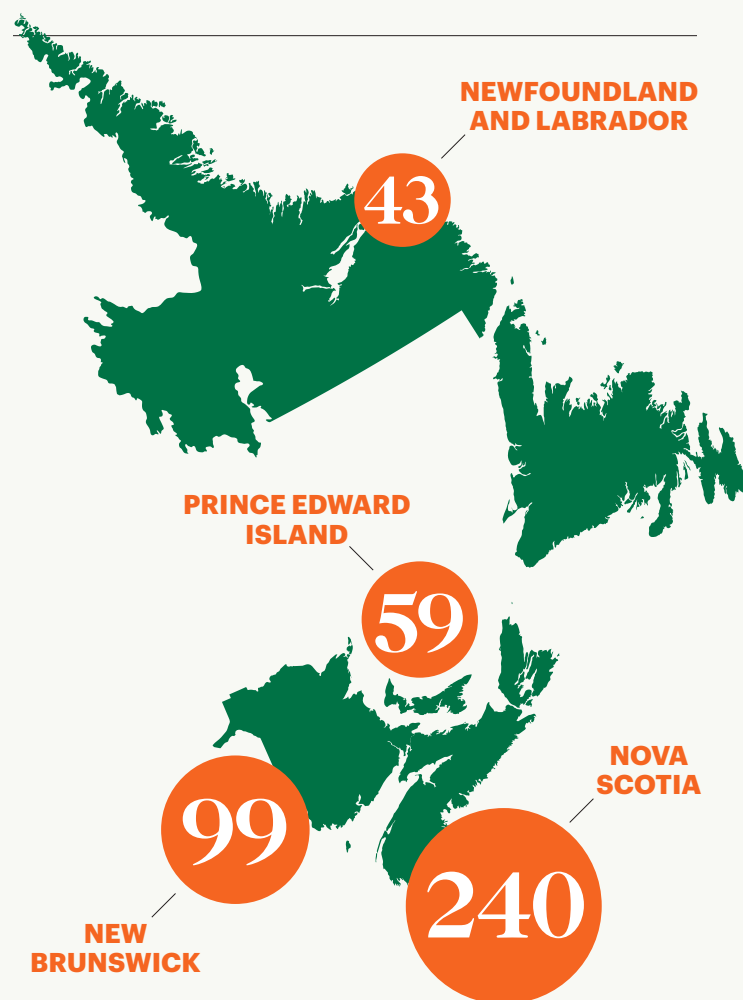
Relationships consist of connection, social comparison and competition. “Whenever someone’s in the room, we’re always aware that we’re being observed,” Khatri says. “When there’s nobody there, we tend to slacken in our health habits.”

Physical connection is another factor in well-being. Stress levels drop and hearts beat at a healthier rate when you’re with people you’re close to. Seeing people, touching and being touched are important. Pets can also serve those needs.

So, what can you do?

- Take stock. Are you satisfied on a social level?
- Be grateful for the connections you have.
- Make socializing routine — even if at first it feels forced.
- Volunteer or find ways to monetize your work experience or skills. You’ll benefit and so will the community.
- Use community centres. Join a gym or club.
- Start a hobby.
- Nudge others to connect socially, but don’t assume everyone’s mobile or has the same means.
- Think about what you can afford and what your health and situation allows you to do.
- Use social media to connect with someone you can meet later in person.
- Stay positive. A comprehensive Yale University study says a positive attitude can add up to seven years to your life.

Aging doesn’t mean automatic decline. Maintaining physical activity, diet, managing stress, engaging in cognitively stimulating activity, and maintaining social connectivity all matter. “We have a choice about how we age,” Fiocco says. “We’re meant to have social connections. When we don’t, that’s a form of stress.” ■



CALLING ALL MEMBERS IN ATLANTIC CANADA!

You want social contact but you’ve moved out of province and your peeps are scattered across Canada. What to do?

Missing the camaraderie and “intellectual back and forth” of colleagues, former Toronto teacher and Nova Scotia resident Pam Baker (District 24 Scarborough & East York), relates to feeling a bit left out.

“I’ve always been one of those people with their fingers in the pie, coaching volleyball and teaching high school senior English,” says Baker, who moved east and married four years ago. “But all of a sudden it stops.”

She joined the local hospital board and runs a trivia contest at a local pub as a fundraiser. Her spouse, she says, is happy with her company and his hobbies, “but I need friends to go out and have coffee with, maybe form a book club, it really doesn’t matter.”

Baker recognizes the benefits of continued social engagement and wants to meet like-minded members in Atlantic Canada who fancy a chance to develop new friendships. A meet ‘n’ greet in Halifax, perhaps? Wine tasting in the Annapolis Valley? “We could have a gathering and a wine tasting. Even if only 40 people show up, that’s 40 people I don’t know now,” says Baker.

There are 1,400 members who live in areas without an RTO/ERO district. If you are one of those members and would like to stay connected, please contact renaissance@rto-ero.org.

The joy of giving

Philanthropy for happy hearts and minds.

by **Stuart Foxman**



What's the secret of happiness?

It's an age-old question, with no single answer. By helping others, however, we also help ourselves.

Canadians give all year long, in routine everyday kindnesses and in more organized ways. This time of year, in particular, many people plan to give money or time to various not-for-profits. These are vital gifts that we extend to favourite causes, and to us as well in the form of physiological and psychological impacts.

Consider this — *Psychology Today* says if you want to live longer, don't just focus on diet and fitness; practice generosity too. It reported on a University of Michigan study that traced 2,700 people over 10 years. One group that volunteered regularly had death rates 2½ times lower than those who didn't volunteer. Generosity, according to the study in *Psychology Today*, supports your immune system.

Another team at the University of British Columbia (UBC) conducted a

study to see if spending on others could lower blood pressure (BP). They gave 128 older adults (ages 65 to 85) \$40 a week for three weeks, and told half the participants to spend it on themselves and half to spend it on others.

The researchers measured participants' BP before, during and after their spending. The focus was on people with high BP. Those assigned to spend money on themselves showed no change in BP during the study period. However, those who spent on loved ones or charities significantly lowered their BP. The impact was comparable to that of anti-hypertensive medication or exercise.

Giving to others can make your brain happy

If giving can have health benefits and increase your sense of purpose, does it actually make you happier?

Researchers at the University of Zurich tested that link. As with the UBC study, they told a group of participants that they'd be getting money soon. The researchers asked half the people to vow to spend it on themselves, and half to spend it on someone in their life.

The Zurich team was studying the impact of the pledge, not even the actual spending. They put subjects through a functional MRI scan, and asked them to contemplate what they'd do with the money. Those planning to spend on others showed increased activity in the area of the brain linked with happiness. Moreover, the amount of the hypothetical spending didn't matter; the anticipation of giving was enough to light up the brain.

RTO/ERO member Gary Fick (District 4 Sudbury & Manitoulin) understands that connection. He has given to the RTO/ERO Foundation since its inception. "My yearly donation in memory of my wife, Brenda, makes me happy to feel as if I am doing something proactive, not only for myself but for us all," he says.

The RTO/ERO Foundation envisions a Canada where seniors get the care and

“My yearly donation
in memory of my
wife, Brenda, makes
me happy to feel
as if I am doing
something proactive,
not only for myself
but for us all”

Gary Fick

support they need, where and when it's needed. Where we better understand the dimensions of aging, and more health professionals are trained to apply that knowledge. And where more seniors play an active role in what matters to them.

The Foundation has furthered that goal by endowing a Chair in Geriatric Medicine at the University of Toronto, providing grants related to research into aging, and backing a campaign around social isolation.

It adds up to the health and prosperity of seniors, who are part of daily life around their neighbourhoods, with their families, at work or as volunteers. The philanthropic choices of RTO/ERO members inspire this work. “The generosity of members enables the Foundation to fund the valuable research that's going to improve the quality of life for our members and Canadians generally,” says Jo-Anne Sobie, executive director, RTO/ERO Foundation.

Like other not-for-profits, the RTO/ERO Foundation aims to make life better and add to our collective well-being. That can happen not just in the work it does, but through the very act of supporting it. Research proves this.

So if you want to help make others happy, support a cause like the RTO/ERO Foundation. It just may end up making you happier too. ■

engage

End Isolation.

The first-ever Social Isolation Awareness Month was a huge success and the RTO/ERO Foundation is proud to say it will now be an annual event. Hundreds of Canadians signed up to help raise awareness on the issue of social isolation among seniors.

Thanks to our generous donors and sponsors, we raised over \$66,000 for the Foundation's annual granting program.

We will continue to raise awareness and take action throughout the year. If you'd like to stay connected and informed on the issue of social isolation, please visit rto-ero.org/endisolation.

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This is one food movement
worth joining.

by **Alison LaMantia**

You've heard of the farm to table movement, but what about table to tummy ... and toilet? The journey our food takes doesn't end when we've prepared the meal. That's because we absorb nutrients during digestion, and a well-functioning digestive system is critical to our health.

Andrea Falcone, a Toronto-area registered dietitian, explains that our digestive system starts in our mouth, ends in our colon, and includes many different processes. There are a number of functions where issues could occur, leading to discomfort and even malnutrition. “Food breaks down, nutrients are absorbed, fluids are balanced, stools are formed,” says Falcone. “If one of these processes isn’t working, our overall health could suffer as our body may not receive adequate nutrition to sustain our daily life.”

If you've ever experienced the uncomfortable sensation of indigestion, reflux, bloating, constipation, diarrhea or constant gas, you know digestive health can impact your quality of life. Falcone says it can lead to avoiding certain social situations. "Dining out may be an issue simply to put on pants, sit for long periods of time, or deciding what to choose from a menu. Some people may not feel comfortable going on vacation," says Falcone.

Make 2019 the year of digestive health

If digestion isn't already on your radar, 2019 may be your year to join the table-to-toilet movement and get a handle on your body's functioning. Falcone says age is a factor in digestive health. Symptoms of poor digestion could creep up on us as we age, or we may have nutrient deficiencies we are not aware of.

“Our bodies do lose the ability to absorb certain nutrients over time, such as B-12,” she explains. “Every person over the age of 40 to 45 will want to ask their doctor to check their B-12 levels.

ILLUSTRATION BY DIVIART

72%
**OF PEOPLE WHO SUFFER
DIGESTIVE DISCOMFORT
SAY THAT IT AFFECTS
THEM EMOTIONALLY**

Other common nutrients of concern are iron, calcium and vitamin D.”

Falcone says individuals who are concerned about digestive health should talk to a professional who has their best interest in mind. She suggests avoiding taking pills and supplements before dissecting your diet and considering other lifestyle factors. “A holistic approach needs to be used, including assessing your current lifestyle, daily nutrient intake, water intake, exercise, sleep and stress,” she explains. “It’s important to sit down with someone to discuss your unique situation.”

“Food breaks down,
nutrients are absorbed,
fluids are balanced,
stools are formed. If
one of these processes
isn’t working, our overall
health could suffer.”

—
Andrea Falcone

Dietitians have a complete understanding of the body’s physiology and provide individualized treatment, Falcone says. Digestive health can require more support early on as you try to figure out which foods to avoid, which to include more of, or how to prepare foods to meet your needs.

Falcone works one-on-one with patients and also offers group workshops. Find recipes and information about her practice on her website at andreaafalcone.ca.

Dietitians are included in RTO/ERO’s Paramedical Practitioners Benefit as part of the Extended Health Care Plan.

The Canadian Digestive Health Foundation (cdhf.ca) provides information about digestive health conditions and symptoms. The organization offers a free app for Android and Apple devices called GI BodyGuard to help track symptoms and more. Having a record of your experience can help with diagnosis and treatment. ■

Good for Your Gut Winter Soup

Dietitian Andrea Falcone says fennel is believed to support digestive health. Here’s one of her favourite fennel-based winter recipes. Find more recipes on her website at andreaafalcone.ca.

Roasted Root Vegetable Soup

INGREDIENTS (Serves 10–12)

- 2 celery roots (celeriac), washed, peeled and cubed
- 2 carrots, peeled and chopped
- 1 fennel bulb, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, peeled
- 2 Bartlett pears, washed and chopped
- 2 sprigs of rosemary
- 60 ml (4 tbsp) olive oil, divided
- 2 leeks, washed and thinly sliced
- 2 l (8 cups) vegetable or chicken stock
- 500 ml (2 cups) water
- 5 ml (1 tsp) each salt and pepper

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 425 F.
2. In a large bowl, combine the celery root (celeriac), carrots, fennel, garlic, pears, rosemary, 30 ml (2 tbsp) of oil, salt and pepper. Stir to incorporate all ingredients.
3. Place on parchment paper-lined baking sheet and roast for 30 minutes, turning at the halfway point.
4. Place a large pot on the stove over medium-high heat. Add the remaining 30 ml (2 tbsp) of oil and heat. Add the leeks and sauté for 8 to 10 minutes until fragrant and translucent.
5. Add the stock, water, salt and pepper, and bring to a boil.
6. Once at a boil, lower to a simmer until the roasted vegetables are cooked.
7. When cooked, add the roasted vegetables to the pot and bring back up to a boil for a few minutes.
8. Remove the pot from the heat and blend soup ingredients until fully incorporated. Leave some chunks if you prefer. If too thick, add a bit more water.
9. Once blended, return the soup to the stovetop and warm on low heat.
10. Top off each bowl of soup with minced rosemary, croutons, freshly cracked pepper and a drizzle of extra virgin olive oil.



Preparing for influenza

Learn how to stay flu-free this year.

by **Kimberly Brathwaite**

The flu season is upon us and we are bound to encounter someone who is experiencing a constant cough, sore throat, runny nose, fever, muscle aches and headaches. One of the most popular ways to prevent getting the flu is by getting the influenza vaccine, commonly known as the flu shot.

Canada's National Advisory Committee on Immunization reports that there are approximately 12,200 influenza-related hospitalizations and approximately 3,500 deaths annually in Canada. These numbers can vary depending on the severity of the influenza season.

High-dose vaccines

Some doctors recommend that those 65+ should get a high-dose flu vaccine, especially if they have other chronic conditions. As people age, the flu can cause serious complications, such as bronchitis, pneumonia, sinus and ear infections, dehydration, etc., and can be fatal.

Therefore, individuals should ask their doctor about this vaccine. It's important to note that certain high-dose and other flu vaccines may not be covered by the government.

If your physician-prescribed flu shot is not government funded, it is an eligible expense under the prescription drug benefit, reimbursed at 85 per cent of the drug ingredient cost based on provincial price tables. Any charges for administering the vaccine are not eligible for reimbursement under RTO/ERO's Extended Health Care plan.

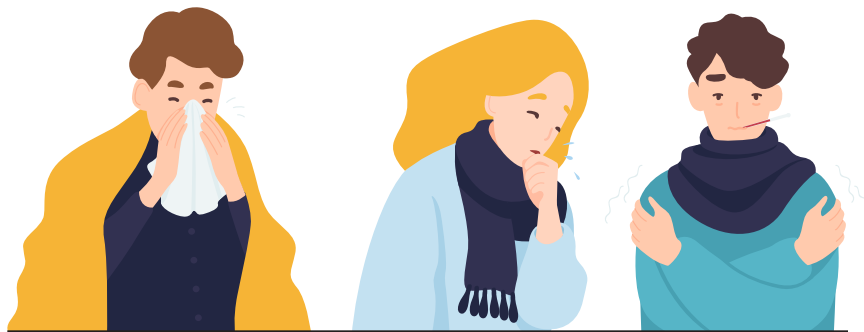
Due to high demand for the vaccine, some provinces may experience temporary shortages. It is important to note that should you choose to get vaccinated outside your province of residence and pay for the vaccine, your insurance coverage will not reimburse that cost.

Minimize your risk of getting or spreading the flu:

- Wash your hands often.
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue or your upper arm, not your hand.
- If you get the flu, stay home.
- Keep household surfaces clean and disinfected.

Flu season generally runs from late fall to early spring. If you are getting a flu shot, it is recommended that you do so as soon as it is available as it takes two weeks to take effect. ■

Due to high demand for the vaccine, some provinces may experience temporary shortages. It is important to note that should you choose to get vaccinated outside your province of residence and pay for the vaccine, your insurance coverage will not reimburse that cost.



VACCINES ACROSS CANADA

In Ontario, the Universal Influenza Immunization Program (UIIP) offers certain flu vaccines free of charge to everyone six months of age and older who lives, works or goes to school in Ontario. You may be required to provide proof of your status, such as a valid Ontario health card, to receive the free vaccine.

In British Columbia, influenza vaccines are free to residents who have a high risk of serious illness if they are infected with the virus and to those who might transmit the flu to people at high risk. People who provide essential community services also receive the shot for free. Examples of those at high risk are young children, pregnant women, the elderly and people with certain medical conditions.

Other provinces and territories are offering free flu shots as well. Check out Health Canada's website for the criteria for each region: canada.ca/en/services/health.



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In Flam, enjoy a ride on the scenic railway and cruise the Sognefjord, the largest and best-known fjord in the country. Stroll through one of Norway's biggest ports, Bergen, then explore the spectacular landscape surrounding the village of Geiranger and the port of Olden.

With shore excursions in the cities of Stavanger and Kristiansand offering more opportunities for discovery, you will also spend a day in the Scottish capital of Edinburgh, to experience all its main sights, before your cruise comes to an end with a two-night hotel stay in London.



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A vibrant, stylized illustration of three people walking through a field of flowers. In the foreground, a woman with dark skin and curly hair, wearing a red headscarf and a green jacket, walks towards the right. Behind her, a man with a tan hat and glasses, wearing a light blue shirt, also walks towards the right. In the background, an older woman with white hair, wearing a green and yellow striped shirt, walks towards the right. They are walking through a field of large, colorful flowers, including pink and orange ones. The background is a solid blue color.

the happiness factor

Pump up your positivity and
discover a happier, healthier you.

by **Charlotte Empey**
illustrations by **Jenn Liv**



When His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck, the fourth king of Bhutan, launched a program in the early 1970s to measure Gross National Happiness (GNH) as a benchmark of his people's health and well-being, the First World gasped. How could one of the world's smallest and least developed countries consider GNH rather than Gross National Product (GNP) as a sign of progressive development?

Fast forward to 2011: the UN General Assembly adopted resolution 65/309, Happiness: towards a holistic approach to development, and invited member countries to measure the happiness of their people and use the data to help guide public policy.

The Happiness Movement was born and the First World search for happiness was on.

Why has being happy become top of mind? Paul Krismer, founder of Happiness Experts, a positive psychology and happiness coaching organization (happinessexperts.ca) explains it this way: "We've become less and less happy as a society since the '50s primarily because we are disconnected from a sense of community. U.S. data says people are more depressed than ever — I don't think Canadian data would be much different — and depression is a measure of unhappiness."

We experience positive emotions differently

Krismer prefers talking about positive emotions rather than happiness, because we take a narrow view of what "happiness" means — think skipping through a wildflower meadow with a big smile on your face. And sure, he says, we all experience days of unbridled joy since positive emotion is a big basket holding hope, inspiration, serenity, awe and more. We experience these positive emotions at different times and in different ways.

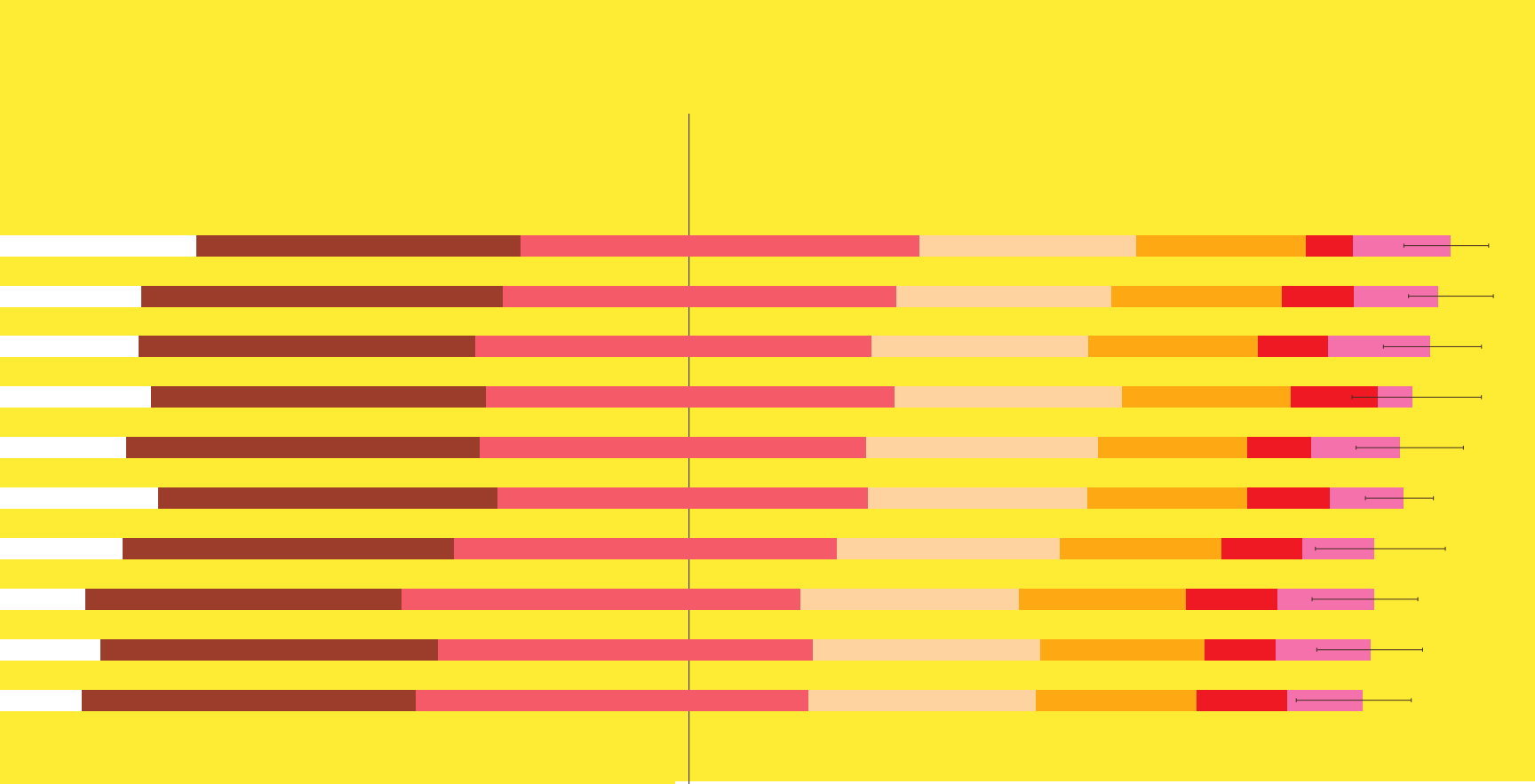


Finland	7.63
Norway	7.59
Denmark	7.55
Iceland	7.49
Switzerland	7.48
Netherlands	7.44
Canada	7.32
New Zealand	7.32
Sweden	7.31
Australia	7.27

TOP TEN HAPPIEST COUNTRIES IN THE WORLD 2015-2017¹

- Dystopia + Residual
- GDP per Capita
- Social Support
- Healthy Life Expectancy
- Freedom to Make Life Choices
- Generosity
- Perceptions of Corruption
- 95% confidence interval

1 Helliwell, John F., et al.
"Chapter 2 International Migration and World Happiness."
World Happiness Report 2018,
2018, worldhappiness.report.



Dr. Martin Seligman, considered the father of positive psychology, identified three elements of a happy life: pleasure, engagement and meaning. He later added relationships and accomplishment to the list, but Krismer believes these positive emotions are covered by Dr. Seligman's original three.

Pleasure, engagement and meaning

Pleasure, explains Krismer, involves the five senses and is quick and short-lived. Think about enjoying a piece of extra rich, double chocolate fudge cake, for example.

Engagement happens when you're completely absorbed in an activity, such as painting a portrait or playing pick-up hockey or teaching English to Syrian newcomers. You don't recognize how rewarding the activity is until you're finished. Krismer calls this being "in the flow"; you're focused, exploring your greatest strengths and lost in time.

Meaning comes from belonging to, and serving, something bigger than yourself. It's when you can say, "I am living my values; I know what's important to me."

So what makes Paul Krismer happy? "Doing the work I do — it's why I'm here on earth!"



positive emotion

meaning

Gerard Feltham (District 18 Haliburton Kawartha Lakes), or Gerry as he's known on the mainland, was born in Newfoundland in 1928. He did his degree in history and social studies, he says, but "taught whatever the other teachers didn't want to teach."

Feltham went on to study social work, earning his Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree and working as a counsellor for family and children services.

In 1981, during his summer holidays, Feltham travelled throughout India. He was shocked by the lack of fresh drinking water in the rural villages, a life essential we take for granted.

Let's do something

When Feltham returned home to Minden Ont., where he was living, he shared what he had experienced. His friends responded: "Let's do something" and H.A.V.E.: Help A Village Effort (helpavillageeffort.org) was born.

H.A.V.E. is a registered charity committed to working with trusted on-the-ground NGOs to provide wells and sanitation systems to those who need them most. Today, the volunteer-run organization has installed 1,300 wells in seven states in India, with funds raised at home by Walk for Water events held across the country.

Every two years, Feltham and H.A.V.E. committee members travel to the rural villages to monitor the activity and celebrate the difference fresh water makes in the health and well-being of villagers. "I get joy from seeing people — women — who can get clean water in their villages instead of having to walk great distances, barefoot, balancing water jugs on their heads," Feltham says. "Happiness comes from satisfaction, and I get great satisfaction knowing that I am helping people to be healthy."



Gerard Feltham is welcomed by villagers in celebration of the H.A.V.E. bore well that delivers safe drinking water.



How to Pump Up the Positivity

According to the University of California, Berkeley's Greater Good Science Center (greatergood.berkeley.edu) the research is clear: happiness, resilience, connection and kindness are skills you can learn and develop with practice. To help you do just that, they launched Greater Good in Action — research-based practices for happy living that you can easily add to your routines.

“Happiness comes from satisfaction, and I get great satisfaction knowing that I am helping people to be healthy.”

—
Gerard Feltham



Why Happiness Matters

Being happy can mean different things to different people — and what makes us happy when we’re 28 may not be what makes us happy when we’re 68. But what doesn’t change is the impact positive emotions have on our health and well-being. “Everything flows from the state of your emotions,” explains Paul Krismer, founder of the coaching and consulting organization Happiness Experts, “and research suggests that positive emotions contribute to an increase in physical, mental and emotional well-being.”

Both qualitative and quantitative research show that people who are happier achieve better life outcomes, including financial success, supportive relationships, mental health, effective coping, and even physical health and longevity.

Living a happy life contributes to:

1	Lower risk of coronary heart disease
2	A stronger immune system
3	Lower stress levels
4	Better sleep quality
5	Better short- and long-term memory
6	Reduced aches and pains

positive emotion

engagement

When Susan Gaby-Trotz

(District 34 York Region) retired

five years ago, she was ready to rest and reboot. She had been teaching elementary school — “It’s physical!” she says — and she and her husband both had health issues.

She was tired.

But while Gaby-Trotz was happy to retire at “the top of my game” she was faced with what for many can be a daunting challenge: how to build a fulfilment structure into later life when she had always been busy.

Gaby-Trotz knew she needed to feed her soul with simple pursuits, such as playing games on her iPad, keeping fresh flowers on her dining-room table, spending time visiting with friends and family. But she also knew that to be happy, she needed to fuel her mind.

Learning makes me happy

“Happiness is personal,” Gaby-Trotz explains. “What makes me happy is not necessarily what makes my friends happy. They take cruises, for example, and work out. My life isn’t perfect. It’s a work in progress. Through trial and error, I realized that I have always had a curious mind and that learning makes me happy.”

So she set out on Act II and discovered that, for her, learning meant engaging in the world in many different ways. She supports her Roma neighbours as they struggle to settle in Canada. She’s a community activist, mobilizing around little issues, such as garbage, and big ones, such as slum landlords.

She took up rug hooking, joining a group of visual artists who meet monthly to discuss art and their latest work. She recently completed a body of work called South Poles of the Planets in our Solar System; pieces celebrating the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada’s sesquicentennial were included this past summer in a juried group exhibition at Propeller Gallery in Toronto.

Gaby-Trotz says that she has fallen into opportunities most of her life, and so it was with the Summer Program at Knox College, University of Toronto, a two-week, five-lecture series on a wide range of subjects from science to art to history to culture to politics, presented by renowned subject experts.

A friend of the family had been co-ordinator of the Summer Program for years, but at 93 she was slowing down. Gaby-Trotz stepped in to help and when her friend passed away, assumed responsibility for the program. “I get a small stipend,” she says, “but it’s not the amount of money that is important. Being paid, regardless of the amount, makes me feel my work has intrinsic value. That makes me happy.”

And the program is billed as a lecture series for the curious mind. Seems like a happiness ticket, doesn’t it?



“Happiness is personal. What makes me happy is not necessarily what makes my friends happy. They take cruises, for example, and work out. My life isn’t perfect. It’s a work in progress. Through trial and error, I realized that I have always had a curious mind and that learning makes me happy.”

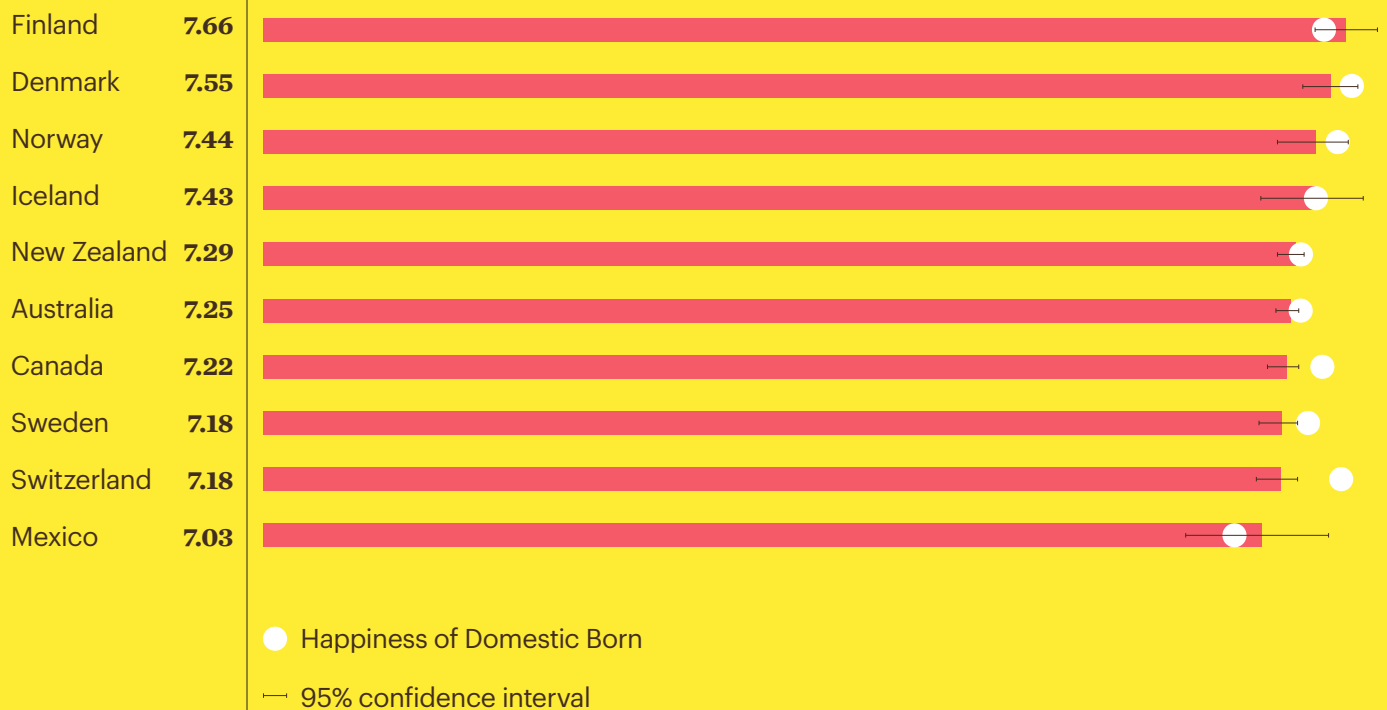
Susan Gaby-Trotz



Susan and husband, Frank Trotz, on Ward’s Island beach, Toronto.



HAPPINESS RANKING FOR THE FOREIGN-BORN 2015–2017¹



¹ Helliwell, John F., et al. “Chapter 2 International Migration and World Happiness.” *World Happiness Report 2018*, 2018, worldhappiness.report.

positive emotion

engagement

Steve Feldman (District 16 Toronto) didn't expect to find love in his mid-60s. "It was

2009, and I was in Puerto Vallarta for the winter," Feldman remembers. "I was supposed to meet someone in a bar in town but he stood me up. Instead I met Marco — we talked until the bar closed."

Marco Benitez, an IT professional, was living in Guadalajara at the time. He had escaped to the resort town for a mini-holiday and was going home the next morning.

Feldman and Benitez exchanged email addresses, and as soon as Feldman got back to his holiday home, he emailed Benitez to tell him how much he had enjoyed their conversation. A couple of weeks later, Feldman was on the bus to Guadalajara.

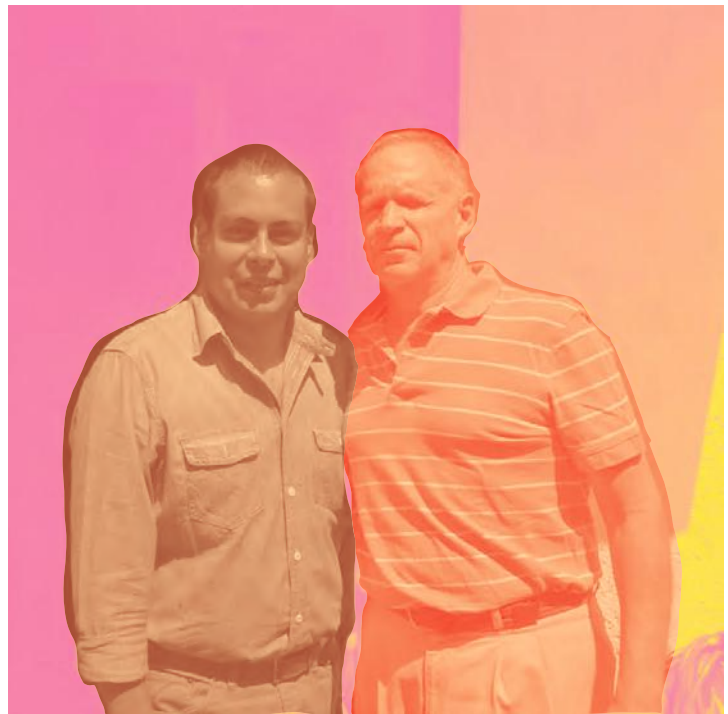
Love blossoms long distance

Love blossomed and in 2011 the couple exchanged wedding vows at City Hall in Toronto, celebrating with Feldman's family and a handful of good friends.

Excited about starting a new life together, Benitez became a Canadian resident, but the job hunt was disappointing and the couple decided he should return to Mexico where his training and experience were in demand.

Feldman joins Benitez from January to April and the couple work at a long-distance relationship the rest of the year. Feldman is currently exploring moving to Mexico permanently. "Marco makes me happy," he says. "He is affectionate. He cares for me. We enjoy spending time together because we have so much in common."

And what would 72-year-old Feldman tell his 22-year-old self about the road to happiness? "Be true to who you are." ■



Marco, left, and Steve at home in Mexico City.

"Marco makes me happy," he says. "He is affectionate. He cares for me. We enjoy spending time together because we have so much in common."

—
Steve Feldman

PHOTO, COURTESY OF STEVE FELDMAN

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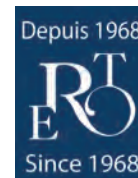


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beating the blues

O

n the day retired teacher Marion Slinger (District 31 Wellington) and her husband, Glenn, moved in late 2014 to picturesque Elora, Ont., for the next phase of their lives, he died unexpectedly of cardiac arrest.

Married 33 years, Slinger says her husband's sudden passing two days before his 65th birthday took a physical toll on her and left the self-described introvert wanting to retreat from the world. "It wasn't so much the blues as the shock that creates a downtime in one's life," she recalls.

Bereavement, retirement and other milestones in senior years can lead to emotional lows known as the "blues." Experts say regaining balance takes time and effort, with self-reflection, exercise, volunteerism and other giving-oriented activities helpful in finding meaning and happiness in life.

Low moments are a natural part of life, says Dr. Marnin Heisel, a clinical psychologist at Western University's Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry who studies depression and suicide risk among older adults. "Human beings are built with a whole constellation of emotional experiences, and part of our emotional life is feeling sad," he says.

Finding meaning and happiness in life after tragedy.

by Jennifer Lewington





Marion Slinger relaxes with her longtime family pet, Paddy the Labradoodle.

Health risks of the blues

Left to fester, the blues can lead to sleepless nights, loss of appetite, guilt and lethargy. “We know in retirement not being meaningfully engaged or purposefully engaged in something, or finding you don’t know what to do with your time, can lead to the blues,” says Heisel. “If that is not attended to, it can easily turn into a clinical depression.”

That was never so for Slinger, though she had to adjust to widowhood. “It has taken a long time to come to terms with the fact that I am never going to be the person I was before he died,” she says.

She credits several factors for restoring her equilibrium. “The biggest thing I do is to count my blessings on a regular basis,” she says. Among them are four grandchildren born after her husband’s death, and her two married children and their spouses who live a short drive from her home. She also values “a really solid group of friends who have gotten past feeling sorry for me.”

Then there is Paddy, a 12½-year-old Labradoodle who Slinger considered giving up after her husband died. “She gets me up in the morning, between 7 and 7:30, and I don’t know that I would without her,” she says, grateful for daily walks and moments of birdwatching.

“We know in retirement not being meaningfully engaged or purposefully engaged in something, or finding you don’t know what to do with your time, can lead to the blues.”

—
Marnin Heisel



Positive attitudes pay dividends

The benefits of Slinger’s positive outlook are borne out in research, says University of Waterloo researcher Kimberly Lopez, an assistant professor in the department of recreation and leisure studies. “If people were generally cynical [as reported in her research] they would be more susceptible to the blues,” says Lopez, who has studied how older adults support their wellness through life transitions. “Saying they ‘can’t do something’ really sets them up for failure whereas [the attitude of] ‘I haven’t tried this or let’s see what I can do’ makes them more open to doing something.”

For Carolyn Romanin (District 14 Niagara), the loss of her beloved husband, Giovanni, to lung cancer in 2004, came three years after she retired from a 34-year elementary school career in Niagara Region. The two grew up across the street from each other in Thorold, Ont. “We were best friends; he was my soulmate,” she says. “I told him everything from the time I was eight and he was 11, and he told me everything.”

The six months following his death, including the wedding of one of her twin daughters, were a blur until a longtime friend, a former co-worker, arrived for a visit. “She literally pulled me out of bed, threw me in the shower, dressed me and took me out to supper,” recalls Romanin. “That was the beginning of my healing.”

The power of volunteerism

Later, the friend told her some of her elementary students were struggling in reading and math and asked her to volunteer in the classroom. “It was a huge factor in getting me back on my feet,” says Romanin, who later assisted in the elementary classrooms of her daughters, both teachers.

Volunteerism runs deep for Romanin, a “candy striper” from age 12 at her local hospital. Through her church, she also taught young people at a local shelter how to cook. These days, much of her energy is invested in three grandchildren aged nine, two and 19 months, living nearby with their parents. Romanin sees them all several times a week and for Sunday family dinners.

“Volunteering is a strong way to meaningfully fill one’s time and fulfill one’s sense of caring for one’s community and others.”

—
Marnin Heisel

To beat the blues, she says “I would encourage people to find out what talent God has given them. My talent is nurturing. Look within yourself and do it in whatever way you can.”

Western’s Heisel says, “Volunteering is a strong way to meaningfully fill one’s time and fulfill one’s sense of caring for one’s community and others.” He suggests retirees explore various opportunities and “not necessarily think it has to be [only] one thing.”

As Slinger reflects on her new life, she says, “You are never going to go back to a comfort level that you had when you were together.” Instead, “You have to open up a totally new book, not just [write] a new chapter.”

It’s one she continues to write. ■



Beating the Blues

There are many ways to beat the blues, say experts.

Exercise is a powerful antidote, says Kimberly Lopez, assistant professor in the department of recreation and leisure studies at the University of Waterloo.

“There are three types of exercise that are good for people who are moving into retirement,” she says, citing cardiovascular activities (swimming, hiking, tennis); balance training (yoga, tai chi and stretching to prevent falls); and strength training (especially for osteoarthritis sufferers).

Exercise, she notes, “helps maintain our social and psychological health by pumping us full of endorphins and making sure we are protected against the blues.” She encourages retirees to make time for fun. “We need to have as much fun as we can ... and share the laughs.”

Emotional transitions like retirement can trigger the blues, warns Marnin Heisel, a clinical psychologist at Western University. If possible, he suggests teachers consider a phase-in to retirement with a three- or four-day week instead of going cold turkey, using freed-up time for “activities they hope to be doing in retirement.”

Reflection and positive action encourage a sunny disposition, so when hit with the blues, individuals should ask themselves, “What is going on?” and “Why am I feeling this way?” says Heisel.

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1. <https://www.hear-it.org/teachers-are-higher-risk-noise-induced-hearing-loss> | 2. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/school-noise-levels-causing-teachers-hearing-loss-1.1184350>

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Flying solo

Singles- and LGBTQ-friendly winter destinations.

by Doug Wallace

When you've made the decision to go it alone and head south for a little R&R by yourself, you want just the right environment. At these now-trending destinations, you'll feel comfortable in your own skin, safe travelling on your own and given the opportunity to meet others when you feel like it. If groups are not your thing and your BFF can't come, spend some quality time with the best travel companion in the world — you.



Willemstad, Curaçao

The southern Caribbean island of Curaçao has Dutch roots and keeps close ties with the European Union, so it's comfortable with the LGBTQ crowd. Capital city Willemstad is continually transforming its once-derelect neighbourhoods into little enclaves of arts and culture. The town's walkable Pietermaai District, once run-down and impoverished, is now an exciting blend of old and new, a hotbed of cocktail bars, high-end fusion dining, music and art. It's still a little shabby chic, but the architecture is stunning, with art deco buildings and colonial mansions enjoying a new lease on life as brasseries, boutique hotels, museums, shops and galleries. Use Pietermaai as a home base for your other Curaçao adventures.

—curacao.com, pietermaaidistrict.com

Punta Cana, Dominican Republic

The annual Caribbean Pride Week at the adults-only CHIC Punta Cana each September is rife with pool parties, celebrity DJs and nightly performances. The resort's social atmosphere keeps the party moving from day to night, with a mix of Las Vegas vibes and Miami style rolled into one. Facilities include a casino, a black jack station, an oxygen bar, a small nightclub and a mermaid pool, with glass windows on two sides so you can see what's going on underwater. Upgrade to Diamond Club status for perks like an exclusive beach area and a private lounge stocked with premium spirits. Off-resort excursions, many of them involving beer and bourbon, are worth the effort.

—caribbeanpride.com, chicresorts.com



CURAÇAO PHOTO, COURTESY DOUG WALLACE; PUNTA CANA PHOTOS, COURTESY CHIC



Riviera Maya, Mexico

The five-star, adults-only UNICO 20° 87° Hotel Riviera Maya, a half an hour south of Playa del Carmen, bills itself as an “all-exclusive,” all-inclusive resort, with a laundry list of perks such as butler service, select spa services, 24-hour room service and free phone calls home all built into the cost. The resort promotes a social atmosphere, and guests are encouraged to mix but not for anything as mundane as beach volleyball or aqua fitness classes — think live music events, mixology classes and cool off-property excursions that take you into the real Mexico. The food is stellar. At Cueva Siete restaurant, one of four on the property, traditional Mexican dishes are given a modern twist by a rotating lineup of award-winning Mexican chefs.

—unicohotelrivieramaya.com



Adventure Cruise, Panama

For a little unscripted, out-of-the-box fun, a weeklong, small-ship cruise through the Panama Canal could be just the ticket for your solo venture south. With adventure cruise experts Uncruise, you visit an Indigenous Darién Jungle community, hike through forest reserves, kayak through mangrove-filled coastal inlets and traverse the Panama Canal, seeing the country from both the Pacific and Caribbean coastlines. With a smaller crowd, itineraries are looser, and you connect easily with fellow travellers, sharing a relaxed cultural adventure. An afternoon playing volleyball on a totally deserted island can do wonders for body and soul.

—uncruise.com, visitpanama.com



MYRTLE BEACH

Anchoring South Carolina's Grand Strand, a 100-kilometre string of sandy coastline, Myrtle Beach is renowned for its golf courses, beachfront boardwalk arcades and great restaurants. You can fly, drive or take the train, and enjoy two vacations in one: a cosmopolitan city escape with plenty to see and do, and a relaxing beach retreat if you'd rather step back and read a good book.

—visitmyrtlebeach.com/plan/visitors-guide

BONUS TIP

Enjoy a quality Instagram moment on the Skywheel, one of the tallest Ferris wheels in the United States.

Road Trip, Ecuador

Adventure travel isn't just for the young; middle-aged young-at-hearts are flocking to eco-travel in droves. And small-group adventure in Ecuador is especially intriguing: embrace the Andes and the Amazon, enjoy hot springs and haciendas. Mineral-rich geothermal waters can be found in the town of Baños, which is as big on adventure sports as it is on spas. Head out on the hiking trails or venture to the Swing at the End of the World — a well-photographed wooden swing that looks out to active volcano Tungurahua. At one of the ecolodges in Yasuni National Park in the Amazon rainforest, visitors can interact with local communities, learn about their way of life, sample the food and just simply be at one with the jungle, which teems with wildlife. ■

—gadventures.com



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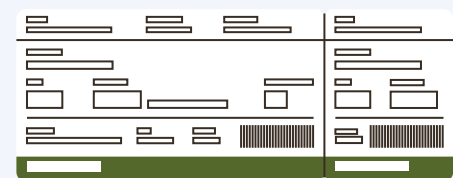
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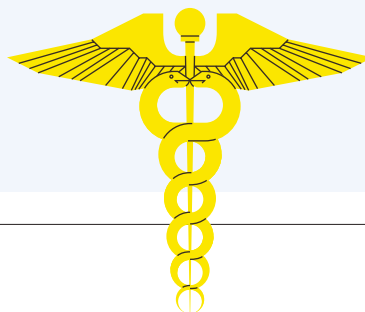
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For full details, check your insurance handbook or call **1-800-361-9888**.





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Historian and Best-Selling Author

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Departs Toronto:
May 31, 2019

Group size: 55 maximum



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As part of our culinary series, our Porto to Lisbon tour is not to be missed. This tour is a week full of Portuguese treats and traditional cuisine to learn about, taste and enjoy. In addition to feasting on local specialties, we will also travel through the peaceful and quaint countryside passing olive groves and vineyards famous for wine and of course, port.

The Douro Valley, home to Port wine production, will be a key feature of the tour.

Visits to:

Lisbon - Porto - Douro Valley - Pinhao - Lamego -
Viseu - Coimbra - Obidos - Sintra - Cascais - Estoril

 **\$4,895**** p.p.

9-night tour

Departs Toronto:
Oct. 17, 2019

Group size: 24 maximum

Wearable technology trends

Wear something fun that is also good for your health.

by **Kimberly Brathwaite**

Years ago, it would've been strange to see someone wearing devices other than headphones. Things are quickly changing as wearable accessories that transmit data to mobile devices are becoming popular.

According to digital marketing company Smart Insights, "The boom in wearable technology has been mainly fueled by fitness, such as wearable gadgets that monitor your heart rate or track your exercise. These gadgets have been successful because they are helpful to the user and easy to integrate into everyday life."

Here are a few wearables and apps that we came across that promote well-being and a healthy lifestyle.

Lumo Lift

The focus of this device is to analyze posture. It will gently vibrate when a person slouches. The technology monitors posture and activities throughout the day. Users can see their progress by logging on to the Lumo Lift app.

UV Sense

L'Oréal may be on to something with its ultraviolet (UV) sensor. A sensor is adhered to a person's thumbnail and using NFC technology (on most smartphones), users can scan it to see if they have had too much sun exposure.

Jefit

This free app provides users with tons of workouts and the ability to track their progress. Perfect for members with

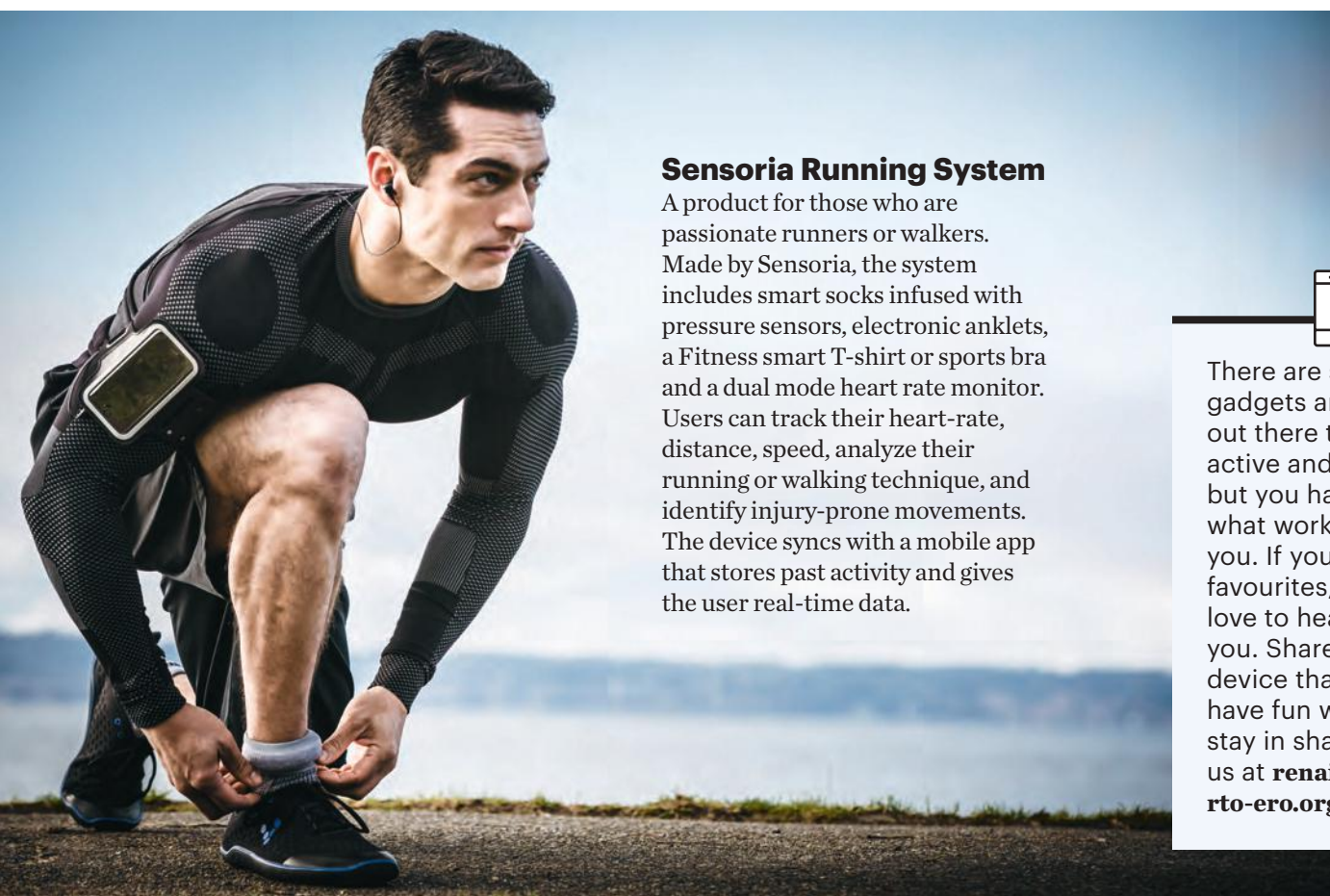
GoodLife memberships through Venngo or who have a home gym. Good for various fitness levels.

Happify

Users can overcome stress and sadness with Happify. This app uses research-based technology to provide inspiring blogs and tips from scientist, doctors and life coaches. It encourages positive well-being and emotional health.

Pinto

This app is great for people who are diabetic, following gluten-free, keto diets or just eating healthily. Simply by scanning the food barcode, Pinto will tell you if the item contains gluten or has too much added sodium, sugar, etc. It is basically a personal nutrition guide. ■



Sensoria Running System

A product for those who are passionate runners or walkers. Made by Sensoria, the system includes smart socks infused with pressure sensors, electronic anklets, a Fitness smart T-shirt or sports bra and a dual mode heart rate monitor. Users can track their heart-rate, distance, speed, analyze their running or walking technique, and identify injury-prone movements. The device syncs with a mobile app that stores past activity and gives the user real-time data.



There are so many gadgets and apps out there to keep you active and motivated, but you have to do what works best for you. If you have any favourites, we would love to hear from you. Share an app or device that helps you have fun while you stay in shape. Email us at renaissance@rto-ero.org.

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Trikes trigger triumph

Ron McCurdy sees trikes as the future for those with mobility challenges, and a step toward greener transportation.

by **Stefanie Martin**



Ron McCurdy's creation, the Freedex Trike, is a symbol of freedom and mobility.

Ron McCurdy is with District 22 Etobicoke and York

Ron McCurdy constructed his first Freedex Trike 26 years ago.

The name Freedex comes from the company's slogan, *FREEDom in mobility and healthful EXercise*. He started the company on his own and continues to touch people's lives through tricycles.

His father, having been disabled by polio, inspired Ron to use his time to help other people with special needs after he retired. He started off volunteering with Etobicoke recreational services in its pool program. There Ron worked with people with disabilities who were learning to

walk. He would help them get changed and exercise in the pool. With his support, and the support and safety of the water, Ron assisted many people in improving their mobility. Wanting to help as many people as he could, Ron realized he could only work with one person at a time in the pool program. His experience there showed him that most people he saw through the program could, with assistance, ride a tricycle; and so began his endeavour with Freedex Trikes, building tricycles to reach more people and help them improve mobility and gain freedom.

PHOTO, COURTESY OF RON MCCURDY

Whether he's heading out for groceries or meeting up with friends, Ron knows he can get there on his own with whatever he needs to bring along — rain, snow or shine!

The tricycles are pedal powered; however, depending on each person's mobility, users can add an electric assist to make long rides and inclines easier on the rider. Counting tricycle conversions along with his new designs, Ron has provided mobility, physiotherapy and fun exercise to over 500 people. A selection of school boards are even using the tricycles in their schools to aid some of their students. Ron wants to change people's mindsets to ride bikes and trikes more often — whatever their mobility may be. The trikes are accessible, environmentally friendly, contribute to leading a healthy lifestyle, and allow people with

otherwise limited mobility to gain some freedom. Ron often receives letters of thanks from those who use the trikes and their family members, sharing the positive impact it has made on their lives.

At 88 years old, Ron rides his own trike five days a week. He loads his walker onto the back of his trike so it's ready to go once he arrives at his destination. Whether he's heading out for groceries or meeting up with friends, Ron knows he can get there on his own with whatever he needs to bring along. Once he arrives home again, he parks the trike in his garage until his next outing — rain, snow or shine! ■

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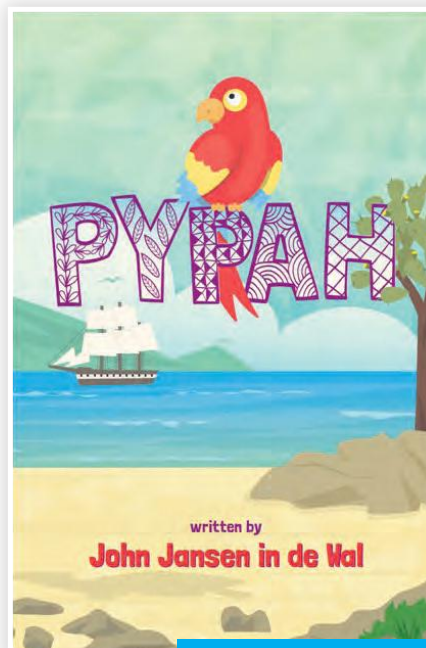
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Pypah is the story of a bird's adventures from forest to ship, from sailor to circus. When Pypah has his wings clipped, is swung around, ignored by a drunkard master, and weathers a storm, we see the parallels with a human being who feels anxious, lonely and depressed. But, Pypah has helpers on the way. He finally meets a circus gymnast who celebrates him and teaches him new skills. Pypah is a heroic personification from which readers can gain hope and learn to overcome adversity, and cry out, like Pypah, "mee too! mee too!"

John Jansen in de Wal was born, raised and educated in The Netherlands, where he earned certificates in Elementary and Religious Education. Being adventurous he travelled to Canada where he worked as a labourer in several trades, while gaining Ontario Teaching and later, Principal Certification, a B.A. and B.Ed. After a full and satisfying career in education he retired to write. John is a member of the Writers Union of Canada and The Ontario Poetry Society. He took courses, workshops and seminars; learned copy editing, cover design and lay-out. His works have appeared in books, anthologies and magazines. He has self-published chapbooks of his stories and poetry. John enjoys travel, photography and performing his poems and stories. He is the father of four, grandfather to ten, and grandpa to one.

AVAILABLE @ johnsbooknook.com

Books, movies & songs

What's your go-to, feel-good book, movie or song?

Happiness can be brought into our lives in so many ways. Whether it's an unexpected phone call from a great friend, your dog cuddling up with you on the couch, a card from your grandson arriving in the mail, or expecting to pay for parking only to find out it's free — happiness can surprise you! But there are also times when we look for something to make us happy, and we each have our own unique happy go-tos. ■

We asked our members on Facebook to share their happy go-to movies, TV shows, songs or books with us.

Here are some of their responses!

Movies

- *Mamma Mia!*
- *Up the Down Staircase*
- *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* (Netflix movie)

TV shows

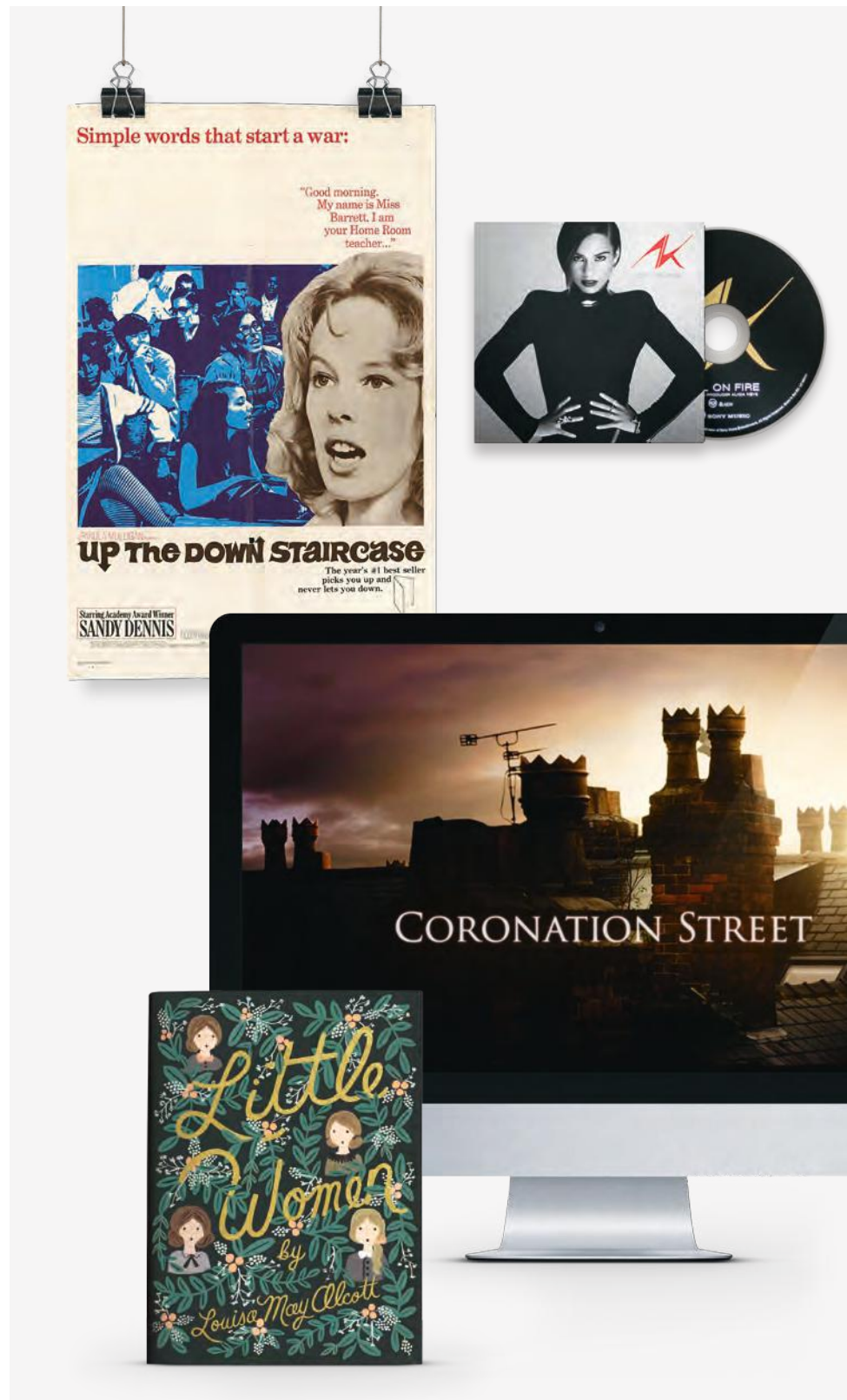
- *Coronation Street*
- *Rosemary and Thyme*

Songs

- "This Girl Is On Fire" by Alicia Keys
- "Happy Together" by The Turtles
- "Can't Stop the Feeling" by Justin Timberlake

Books

- *Little Women*, by Louisa May Alcott
- *Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood*, by Rebecca Wells



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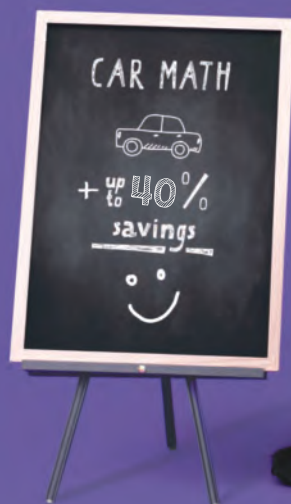


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