

EMBRACE AGING

News from the RTOERO Foundation: Helping you stay connected and engaged

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From the desk of
Joanne Murphy
- Board Chair -
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What is research and why is it so important?

Research is one of those nebulous things that we know are important but we are not always exactly sure why. Neil Armstrong put it most succinctly when he said, “**Research is creating new ideas.**” If we take that idea a step further, research is new knowledge. It is new knowledge that advances the way doctors, scientists, social workers and a myriad of other professionals work to improve the quality of our lives.

The long months of the seemingly endless pandemic have emphasized just how important research is. It has taken a year of research from top scientists around the globe to bring us two viable vaccines against COVID-19. This gives me hope that the unprecedented year of anxiety and social isolation is nearing an end.

Research is a significant component of the success of the RTOERO Foundation's granting program. Through our annual grant program, we fund three key areas related to aging: research to better understand and address the complex needs of older adults, post-secondary training in the field of geriatrics and gerontology, and innovative projects

that promote social engagement. We are currently in the process of considering the type of projects that we will fund in 2021.

Through our granting program, we have partnered with some of Canada's leading expert researchers. Most notable is Dr. Paula Rochon, who holds the RTOERO Chair in Geriatric Medicine at the University of Toronto. Dr. Rochon and her group conduct research related to aging and older adults and the societal health challenges they face. They also work to make sure health care practitioners and professionals in related fields understand the latest research and how it may apply to their work.

Research is critical to the work of the RTOERO Foundation. Our mandate is to invest in research, actions and ideas. We know, as Neil Armstrong indicated, that research empowers us with knowledge. It is the driving force in moving us towards better understanding the aging process and how to build a healthier future for all of us as we age.

Stay safe.

The 1879 teacher's desk that found its way home to an RTOERO Foundation donor – and beyond

by Tammy Gonsalves

I love connecting with our donors. Every so often, one has a truly remarkable story to share. This story of the 1879 teacher's desk, which was shared with me by Raymond Beskau, is no exception.

Raymond, an RTOERO member in District 11 and an RTOERO Foundation donor, was a teacher from 1962 until 1996. Between 1963 and 1965, he taught at SS#17 Wilmot – a small, rural Ontario town between Kitchener and Stratford. In 1965, the government closed one and two-room country schoolhouses, including SS#17, and began amalgamating schools and busing students to larger ones. As per tradition dating back to 1879, Raymond carved his name into the inside lid of the teacher's desk at the end of his tenure at SS#17.

Fast forward 53 years to 2018. Christine Rumble, an antique store owner and Raymond's friend, was browsing an online auction and stumbled across an 1879 teacher's desk. According to Christine, the desk wasn't something she'd normally be interested in, but for some reason she felt compelled to look at the pictures. To her surprise, the pictures included a closeup of one of the desk carvings, which clearly showed Raymond's signature. She immediately called Raymond to inquire about the signature and he confirmed that this was, in fact, the teacher's desk from SS#17 where he taught. She won the auction with the highest bid and a week later, she delivered the desk to Raymond.

With time to have a closer look at this piece of his history, Raymond noticed the name of one of his students carved right beside his. The name was that of Gerald Reibling.

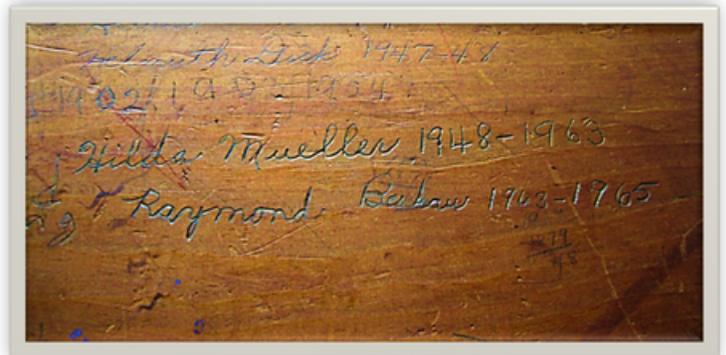
Through a bit of detective work and perseverance, Raymond tracked down Gerald through his brother. After a couple of lengthy telephone conversations between Raymond and Gerald, Raymond decided to pass along the desk to his student from his days of teaching at SS#17 back in 1965.

I had the privilege of chatting with Gerald Reibling who told me the story of the day he carved his name into the teacher's desk. He remembers that day clearly.



1879

D. Weismiller's signature carved into the desk.



1965

Raymond Beskau's signature carved into the desk.



2020

1879 teacher's desk at the home of Raymond Beskau.



1965

Gerald Reibling's name carved into the desk.

He had been sent to the teacher's room – a secondary room which served as the library and the "timeout" room for students in need of discipline. There, he found the teacher's desk beside a shelf full of library books. Twelve year-old Gerald thought he'd get back at Raymond by defacing the desk. Lucky for Gerald, the graffiti was never discovered. Raymond was the last teacher at SS#17 and parted ways with his students, including Gerald, in 1965. "I was lucky to have Mr. Beskau as a teacher," Gerald told me. "He was a great teacher!"

Now while we don't have any information about who owned the desk since 1965, or how it ended up in an auction, we do know that thanks to Christine's keen intuition, the desk won't end up in a museum or with someone who has no link to the desk. Instead, the desk will remain with someone who has a strong connection to it and fond memories of that time in his life.

The story doesn't stop there. When I spoke with Gerald, he told me that he will pass the desk along to his grandson, William. And he hopes William will carry on the legacy of the desk by carving his name into the 1879 teacher's desk, alongside his PaPa's.

2021

Gerald Reibling and his six-year-old grandson, William.



1964

Raymond Beskau, top row, far left. Teacher, SS#17 Wilmot School.



2019

Raymond Beskau.

A tribute to Valerie Mah

by Joanne Murphy

Sometimes in life there is a person whose very essence is kindness and goodness. That is an apt description of Valerie Mah. If the late poet and civil activist, Maya Angelou, had ever met Valerie Mah, it is certain that they would have been kindred spirits. Valerie was the very embodiment of what Maya meant in that famous quote about how “people never forget how you made them feel.” Meeting Valerie was akin to meeting an old and treasured friend. Her caring shone through her eyes and her words vocalized it.

The depth of concern and compassion that Valerie had for people was evident in the wide range of her involvement with all ages from young children to seniors. She helped to raise thousands of dollars for the Toronto Educational Opportunity Fund to provide young children with a hot breakfast before school. Valerie was the Inaugural Chair of the RTOERO Foundation. Here she raised funds for research into improving life for aging adults. She served on many Boards including the Yee Hong Centre for Geriatric Care and the West Park Health-care Centre.

Valerie believed that every person had the right to live with dignity and respect no matter the station in life. Her community outreach was indicative of this belief.



The East Chinatown community knew that she was there to support them. In her quiet but firm way she accomplished many things for the community. These include the traditional Chinese Arch with the welcome sign in Chinese and the beautiful murals on many of the buildings along Gerard Street East and Broadview. In addition, Valerie served on the Community/Police Liaison Committee for 55 Division.

Mother Teresa once said that “life is an opportunity, benefit from it.” That is what Valerie did and, in doing so, she helped to make life better for many people.

Johnson Insurance contributions hit \$1 million mark

We are very pleased to announce that Johnson Insurance, with its most recent contribution, has reached a cumulative giving total of \$1 million to the RTOERO Foundation. Johnson has been a consistently generous and reliable partner since the birth of the Foundation in 2011.

Johnson's commitment to philanthropy, and to the health and wellness of older adults in Canada, has

helped the Foundation launch its social isolation grant program. It has also provided the core operational support required for the Foundation to stay focused on its mission and have a greater impact year after year.

Thank you to everyone at Johnson Insurance for your exceptional dedication to research and innovative programs that are enhancing the lives of older adults.

Contact Us!

We'd love to hear from you.



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