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RTOERO Magazine

Winter 2025



the future of aging



What does age have
to do with it?

Back in the game

Second acts

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Executive Editor Charlotte Empey
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Copy Editor Lesley Fraser
Contributing Writers Pauline Anderson, Elizabeth Baird, Fran Berkoff, Andrew Dobson, Stuart Foxman, Sue Horner, Alison LaMantia, Patricia Ogura, Erin Pehlivan, Charlene Rooke, Lesley-Anne Scorgie, Brooke Smith, Ylva Van Buuren, Doug Wallace, Martin Zibauer
Board of Directors
Chair John Cappelletti
Vice-Chair Claudia Mang
Directors Jackie Aird, Pamela Baker, Stephen Harvey, David Kendall, Lorraine Knowles, Gayle Manley, Helen Reid
Chief Executive Officer Jim Grieve

18 Spadina Road, Toronto, Ontario M5R 2S7
 Telephone **416-962-9463** | Fax **416-962-1061**
 Toll-free **1-800-361-9888** | Email info@rtoero.ca
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 eRenaissance renaissance.rtoero.ca

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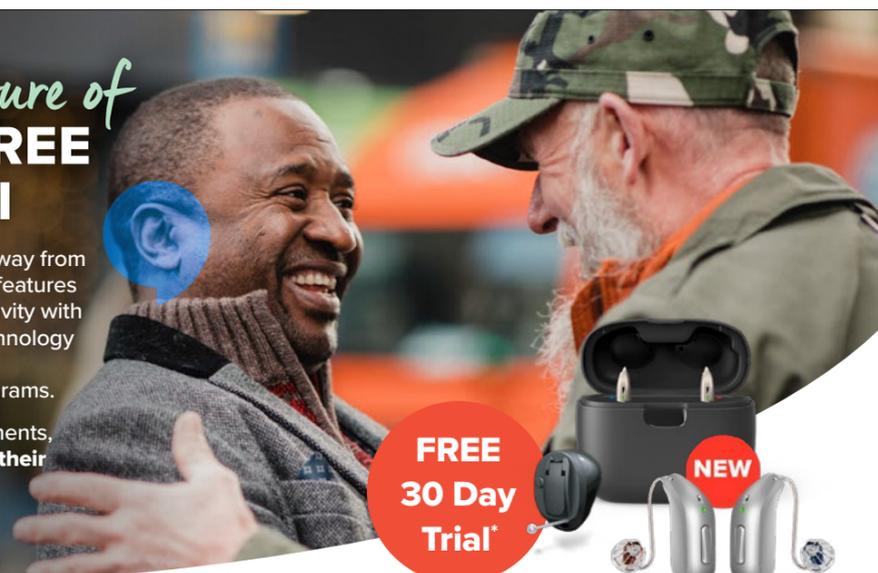


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\$5 from your annual membership dues is allocated to your one-year paid subscription to Renaissance magazine and is non-refundable.

Reader letters

After reading the article on exercises for a healthy brain in *Renaissance* magazine, I started training specifically with the balance-training exercises. The specialist who treats me for my balance problem approved this training. At 88 years old, I've come to realize the importance of good health.

Thank you. I really enjoy reading the magazine.
—Émile Guy
District 4 Sudbury,
Manitoulin

I was delighted to read “The Power of Creativity” in the fall issue of *Renaissance* magazine. I'm a retired teacher who taught for 50 years. I found myself talked into coming out of retirement to teach art this year in a new private school in Ottawa.

Many companies are enticing parents to buy “educational” materials marked “STEM.” This, of course, stands for “science, technology, engineering and math.” I contend it should be STEAM, which would include art as an essential

tool as well! If we just take a moment to look around at our furniture, our cars, our houses and décor, as well as the International Space Station with its robotic arm – all at some point had their start as an artistic drawing. It certainly has been my experience to see students in a state of “flow.”

I was also delighted to read that the World Economic Forum has reported that 73 per cent of organizations call creative thinking the most important skill, ahead of things like technological literacy, agility and motivation.

Let's not stand for art and music to be the first things cut from school budgets. Not all students are left-brain learners.

—Beth Mackay
District 27 Ottawa-Carleton

The digital copy of *Renaissance* is wonderful! Exactly the right topics, well researched, articulate and concise. My compliments!
—DD, RTOERO member since 2019



I am so pleased to be a part of RTOERO. I look forward to receiving *Renaissance* magazine – it's so positive and informative.

I found living through COVID very hard as I missed my friends and contacts. So, I started making HUGS (above). I give HUGS to every person I meet. It gives people a glimmer of joy and I'm amazed at their reactions. I tell people to put the HUGS in their pockets and take them out when they need to stop and acknowledge themselves. When you've used up the glimmer for yourself, you can pass your HUGS on to another person needing support. I often don't know the person, so it's pure delight for me.

As you wrote in *Renaissance*, a simple act of kindness.
—Sandra Allen
District 11 Waterloo Region

The last two issues of *Renaissance* were awe-inspiring for me, a 92-year-old long-time retiree. The subtitles alone spoke volumes.

“Simple Pleasures.” “Power of Creativity.” I have lived my life by these words. I continue to believe in the simple pleasure and endless benefits of gardening on a sunny summer's day. My urge to be creative is fed by my endless lines of passionate poetry, passionate only in my desire to have my audience hear my message.

So thank you, *Renaissance*, for bringing two of my favourite topics to our attention. I am certain many retired teachers can identify with one or both articles.
—Shirley Lazareth
District 14 Niagara

RENAISSANCE ALWAYS KEEPS THE ENVIRONMENT IN MIND



Environmental stewardship is one of RTOERO's main advocacy issues. Responsible use of resources, conservation, and protecting our air, land and water are critical to a sustainable future.

We honour our commitment by printing *Renaissance* on ethically sourced paper and using plant-based ink to

ensure the magazine is produced using materials that are environmentally sound; in addition, more than 10,000 RTOERO members choose to go paperless, receiving only *eRenaissance*.

Occasionally, we bundle other important information with your copy of *Renaissance*. We use a clear wrap made of a

compostable, 100 per cent biodegradable plant-based substance you can simply toss in your compost bin.

If you'd like to change your *Renaissance* subscription preferences to receive only the digital edition, please email membership@rtoero.ca and the RTOERO membership team will update your subscription preferences for you.

We asked RTOERO members Carol Broer, John Rager and Robin Todd to share their words of wisdom on aging.



CAROL BROER

Since retiring, I've found new applications for many of the skills I learned in teaching: I became a funeral celebrant, which requires compassion, creativity, curiosity and continuous learning. I foster special relationships with people I love, and I also try to leave room for some chaos, because – like teaching – life seldom goes exactly as planned. Embracing a measure of uncertainty and spontaneity helps me to remain humble and flexible, building empathy and resilience for times when I need to adjust. I don't spend much time thinking about aging as I live my one “wild and precious life” (from Mary Oliver's poem “The Summer Day”).
(District 13 Hamilton-Wentworth, Haldimand)



JOHN RAGER

Words of wisdom are best served warm. I have acquired a few worth passing on. The first would be: It is never too late to have a happy childhood. When we achieve some satisfaction and happiness in our later years, the lines of our lives extend into the past because the past has arrived here – which is happy. My second words of wisdom: The Secret Law of Sacrifice. Sacrifice is a gift for you. I think most parents have at least glimpses of this law from time to time. Indeed, it truly is more blessed to give than to receive.
(District 51 Québec)



ROBIN TODD

At 56 years of age, I cycled across Canada by myself. At 58, I rode across the northern United States. Having toured alone since the 1980s, I am used to people expressing disbelief at my solo efforts, but now I am met with double disbelief. A woman riding by herself, in her 50s – how is that possible? I have learned not to allow others to impose their expectations regarding age. George Bernard Shaw remarked, “We don't stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing.” I really believe that sustaining a sense of playfulness and passion in life is the key to staying young(ish).
(District 31 Wellington)

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The future is now

Safeguarding the well-being of older Canadians



by **John Cappelletti**
RTOERO Chair

The future of aging

Together, we can protect the needs of older Canadians



by **Jim Grieve**
RTOERO CEO

Getting older is enormously popular. Everyone is doing it. I'm paraphrasing a comment made by Carole Osero-Ageng'o, a guest speaker from Kenya at the inaugural RTOERO Future of Aging Summit we hosted last May.

It's no secret that Canada's population is aging. By the end of this decade, 25 per cent of Canadians will be over the age of 65. Through the work of the Board of Directors and local districts, we have been raising our voices ever higher to bring attention to the needs of older people.

Internationally, we joined the Canadian delegation making the case to the United Nations General Assembly for a convention on the rights of older people. Such a convention would provide a framework to promote and safeguard the rights of older adults to healthcare, social protection and employment.

Here at home, we have been active in calling for a national seniors strategy to address the challenges of income insecurity, healthy aging and geriatric healthcare.

Many seniors face financial challenges. Nearly a third of single seniors, many of whom are women, meet the definition of low income. Ensuring that more Canadians have access to good pensions and affordable housing is crucial.

For older adults, promoting active lifestyles, social inclusion, mental well-being, age-friendly communities and coping with change will help to ensure healthy aging.

Meeting the healthcare needs of an aging population requires a rethink. With only 300 geriatricians working in Canada, we need to graduate more specialists. As well, a wide range of healthcare professionals, such as general practitioners, need more training on serving the seniors' population.

You'll find a comprehensive discussion on these and other issues on our website, under the tab "Advocacy." If you haven't already, I encourage you to visit the page and to become a champion for a resilient and compassionate future for our aging population. 🌱

Together we can make a difference.
John

Canada remains one of the few countries in the world with a universal healthcare system but, shamefully, without national or provincial strategies for older adults.

In addition to this planning failure, this country currently has 50 times more pediatricians than geriatricians working to serve an aging population. If these gaps are not addressed, Canada risks failing a significant and rapidly growing segment of its population.

In 2024, Canadians are living longer due to great advancements in medicine. Yet, according to Dr. Paula Rochon, RTOERO's Chair in Geriatric Medicine, "we are seeing a diminished quality of life for many older adults, especially women, due to the social and health inequities within our healthcare system."

Over the last five years, through our Vibrant Voices advocacy consultations with federal and provincial ministers of health and seniors, RTOERO has been pressing the urgency of these issues. Increasingly, we are receiving follow-up calls, from these same ministers, seeking more data and advice on issues related to older adults. We are proud to let them know that our key advocacy issues originate from our 85,000-plus members.

Clearly, RTOERO is moving positively forward on our goal to be the trusted voice on healthy, active living for older adults in Canada.

So, what are we doing to support the health of our members? In addition to offering our terrific Entente Group Health Plan, we are committed to the reduction of loneliness and social isolation and to promoting healthy nutrition and exercise targeted for our members and older adults across Canada.

Our wonderfully successful 2024 international Future of Aging Summit laid the blueprint for solving the super-aging society that is evolving in Canada.

The RTOERO Board of Directors, districts and staff are aligned in urging government leaders to create comprehensive plans and commit the funding necessary to address the needs of older adults in Canada. 🌱

To a healthy future.
Jim

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So you don't want to retire

What older workers want from organizational anti-ageism policies and practices

By **Alison LaMantia**



PHOTO: THOMAS BARWICK

Each summer, RTOERO funds early-career practitioners to participate in research-based summer placements at the National Institute on Ageing, part of a five-year, \$100,000 commitment to the RTOERO-NIA Summer Internship Program.

You might remember Amanda Bull, a PhD student in social gerontology at McMaster University, who we featured in the spring 2024 issue. She had just completed her first RTOERO-NIA summer internship, and the article, “Home Safe Home,” highlighted her research for a policy brief on supporting 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals in long-term care homes.

This past summer, Bull returned to the NIA as an RTOERO Summer Scholar for a project in partnership with HelpAge Canada, focused on understanding the community-based

“What I got from the work that I’ve done on ageism in the workplace is that there isn’t a lot of input from older adults.”

Amanda Bull

senior service sector nationwide. Building on insights from her first summer scholarship, Bull viewed this placement as another opportunity to delve into the interconnected social, cultural and political dimensions of aging beyond her own developing research into workplace ageism.

Bull’s master’s research revealed a critical gap: Older adults’ voices are often missing from discussions on workplace ageism. “What I got from the work that I’ve done on ageism in the workplace is that there isn’t a lot of input from older adults,” she says. “So, I want to privilege their lived experience and generate an idea of what older workers want out of their organizational anti-ageism policies and practices.”

The *2023 NIA Ageing in Canada Survey* found that about one-third of Canadians 50 and older have experienced discrimination or unfair treatment because of their age at some point in their lives. However, when asked about everyday ageist experiences, the number jumps to more than 70 per cent.

Ageism in the workplace can be tricky to navigate, especially when it’s the less overt, everyday sort of put-downs, also called microaggressions, such as ageist jokes, comments and assumptions of ability or value. “Ageism in the workplace, and ageism in general, is often implicit,” Bull explains. “So when you ask someone, ‘Did you approach a manager about it or tell someone about it?’ people often respond with, ‘Well, no, because it’s hard to prove’ or ‘I felt it, but I couldn’t really demonstrate it with hard facts and evidence.’”

How many times have you heard

“You’re so old” said in a way to suggest that being “old” is somehow sad or unfortunate? Perhaps someone has implied that you can’t learn a new technology or skill because of your age. Ageist perspectives are normalized in our society and culture, which means bias can go unchecked without intentional efforts to prevent it. Take hiring: Not everyone buys into the idea of traditional “retirement,” but many struggle to get hired beyond a certain age, losing out to younger candidates. “They’re in this grey area where they’re unemployed; they want to work but can’t find a job. They’re being called retired, but they don’t want to be,” Bull says.

Undervaluing older workers is shortsighted for many reasons. Because of the aging population, there’s an anticipated skill shortage on the horizon. Organizations that don’t embrace an older workforce risk the loss of knowledge, skills and experience; lower efficiency; and higher training costs. But while it’s easy to make the business case to support older workers, there are also human rights to consider.

“Not only do we have more adults than ever who are healthier and want to work, but to be frank, we’re also living in an economy where many can’t afford to retire,” Bull points out. With poverty and shelter use among seniors rising nationally, we know that social safety nets are failing the current generation of older adults. Access to work, for some, is about survival.

No older adult should be trapped in an employment situation that is detrimental to their health. And older adults should be able to continue to work if they

choose, free from discrimination. That future is possible, but it won’t happen without organizations like RTOERO and the NIA, researchers like Bull, and people like you pushing for progress.

If you’re part of a workplace, find out what is happening to address ageism in all its forms, and speak up if needed. Share this article. And keep an eye on Bull’s work – she’s determined to create change. 🦋



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Design for tomorrow and beyond

Building age-friendly communities

by **Patricia Ogura**



Imagine communities designed to accommodate people’s needs throughout a 100-year lifespan. Communities that would ensure that elders can age in place with access to services necessary to live meaningful, vibrant lives. They would address physical, mental and emotional challenges.

Dr. Hiroko Akiyama designs such communities. Today.

For 35 years, Akiyama has followed the aging patterns of 6,000 people in two “living labs” in Japan – one rural and one urban. These are not retirement communities, she explains, but “ordinary communities for people of all ages.” Akiyama’s teams work with a variety of stakeholders: citizens, governing bodies,

industry, social and medical services. Cooperatively, they test and forge soft and hard infrastructures dedicated to three priorities:

- extending years of independent living
- designing blueprints for elders to age in place
- promoting social engagement

The need to “strengthen human bonds” is essential to all projects. Akiyama believes that older people need social engagement to lead meaningful lives and is determined to help seniors reinforce existing bonds and forge new ones.

When asked why the private sector is enthusiastic about her projects, Akiyama points out that the senior

market is an “innovation gold mine.” Industry has opportunities to test and create technological advances that help older people extend independence, aid everyday functions and enhance life’s quality. Akiyama’s labs have developed furniture for the office and home, monitoring devices, robots capable of addressing physical or social needs. They recently proposed how to re-engineer city parks to accommodate people of all ages.

One social experiment tested work models tapping into the skills and experience of retirees that would benefit citizens, industry and the general economy. Many seniors want to work, industry needs the talent, and the government needs the tax revenue. Successful models were predicated on:

- the private sector establishing work opportunities
- guaranteed minimum wages
- flexible work-sharing schedules (for example, two or three seniors may account for one position)
- seniors deciding when and how long they work

Experiments were also successful when senior employees worked together virtually, adding a valuable dimension to the work models.

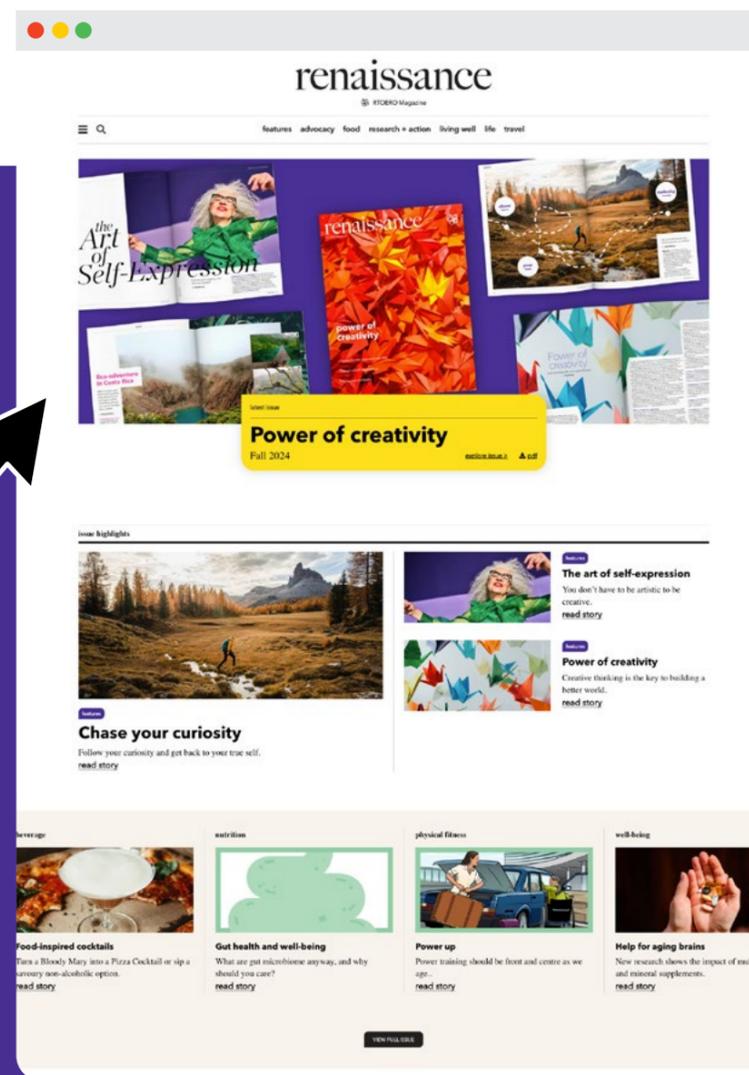
We asked Akiyama how we could learn from her efforts. She advises to start with small projects and realistic goals, then build on experience. And, she adds, “Have fun!”

And tell political leaders at all levels that elder-age-friendly communities are a priority – one on which you vote. 🗳️



Dr. Hiroko Akiyama is globally recognized for spearheading ways to redesign communities to meet the needs of aging societies. A professor of gerontological research at the University of Tokyo and research professor at the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan, Akiyama was a keynote speaker at RTOERO’s Future of Aging Summit this past May. Recently, she spoke to Renaissance about principles and innovations underpinning communities supporting mental, physical and social well-being for older citizens.

eRenaissance has arrived!



eRenaissance is **RTOERO’s** fresh, new, user-friendly digital version of the magazine you count on to live a healthy, active life in retirement.

eRenaissance will be updated as each new issue of *Renaissance* magazine goes to press. You can still read the PDF versions of past issues on the **RTOERO** website, and printed copies will continue to be mailed to members who prefer a hard copy.

Explore eRenaissance at renaissance.rtoero.ca



Healthy over the holidays

Smart ways to enjoy the celebrations

by **Fran Berkoff**, registered dietitian

It's holiday season, and you know what that means: family, friends and more food-centred get-togethers than at any other time of the year. Whatever holiday you celebrate, you will be enjoying special foods wrapped in delicious memories.

But let's face it: With so much food lovingly prepared, it's easy to overindulge and end the year with a few extra unwanted pounds. The good news: With a little thought and preplanning, you can make smart choices and still enjoy the celebrations.

Here are some tips to help navigate your way through the festive season:

- **Make a plan:** Every day isn't a party or a big dinner. On non-party days, eat healthy meals with lots of fruits and vegetables, lean proteins and whole grains. Sneak in a workout that can help burn off some extra calories and relieve holiday stress. If you don't have time for a workout, try a 15-minute power walk. Make your holiday goal to maintain your weight by balancing party eating with your everyday meals.

- **Practise mindful eating:** Be aware of all that's around you and the triggers that encourage you to eat. If stress is a trigger to overindulge, try some non-food ways to cope. Steal a few minutes every day from your busy schedule to do something nice for yourself.
- **Eat what you love:** Give in to temptation – in moderation. Don't deny yourself all the traditional foods you enjoy. Give yourself permission to eat foods you love that are special this time of year. Pick something delicious, have smaller servings, savour every mouthful, eat slowly and really enjoy it. But, pass on everyday high-calorie party foods like store-bought cookies, chips and wings that you can eat anytime.
- **Don't go hungry:** Have a little something before you head out to an event – a low-fat latte, yogurt, a bowl of soup, a piece of cheese with a cracker or a piece of fruit. When you get there, you won't be ravenous, so you'll be able to be more discriminating in your choices.
- **Choose wisely:** At a party, begin with the lower-calorie, lower-fat items. If it's a buffet, decide on three or four things that look great. Take small portions of each, then walk away from the table and enjoy them. Stay away from the bowls of nibbles, where it's easy to absent-mindedly munch. If possible, choose a smaller plate and you will likely eat less. At a cocktail party, hold your drink in your right hand, if you are right-handed. It will make taking food a little bit difficult and maybe you'll eat a little less. Always start with less than what you think you'll eat, and you may be surprised how little it takes to satisfy you. And remember that conversation is calorie-free!
- **Cook healthy:** Have a bowl of mandarin oranges or cut-up raw vegetables on the counter for snacking while you're cooking. Add fibre to your holiday favourites by making stuffing with whole-grain bread and/or brown rice, and add extra vegetables and fruit such as diced red pepper, apples and pears. Take the skin off the turkey before you serve it and defat the gravy. Replace part of the butter used for creamy mashed potatoes with low-fat sour cream at a fraction of the fat content. Cut your holiday baking into smaller pieces. When your party is over, send leftovers home with friends or package them into dinner meals and freeze for later.
- **Give guilt a holiday:** Don't feel badly if you overeat or feel that you've made poor choices. Realize that a day of indulging doesn't have to sabotage your best-laid plans. It's just one day or one event, and it will be much easier to get back on track if you don't do a big guilt trip on yourself. Remember to enjoy the holidays and take advantage of some leisure time to get out and be active. 🌿

PHOTO: IMPACT PHOTOGRAPHY

The future of healthy aging

It calls for more than simply meeting basic needs

by **Pauline Anderson**



Compared to other countries, Canada is sitting pretty comfortably when it comes to seniors' basic needs for food, shelter, clothing and access to healthcare being met. The country has a universal healthcare system, the federal government recently announced an investment of \$198.6 billion over 10 years to help seniors access home care and safe long-term care, and Ontario, the largest province, has a Ministry of Long-Term Care.

But healthy aging means more than just meeting basic needs. It includes continuing to grow and learn, being mobile, maintaining relationships, and contributing to society, says economist and epidemiologist Ritu Sadana. "Whether older people can do this depends on their capacities, and on how their environment supports them to function."

Healthy aging is a process and doesn't look exactly the same for all older people. "It's not as if you tick these five boxes and you're a successful ager," Sadana says. For example, some older people need to be surrounded by people

PHOTO: TOM WERNER

what you value, in your community."

That's why the healthy aging process also involves getting rid of stereotypes about older people – for example, the stooped, cane-wielding, grey-haired grandmother. While an older person may indeed be a grandparent, they are likely much more than that – perhaps an avid hiker, painter, bridge player or cherished part-time worker. There needs to be a concerted action to "tackle ageism," including how we provide care and value caregivers, Sadana says.

Older people can continue to contribute to society. Those who want to keep working in a job should be encouraged to do so, Sadana says. On the other hand, those with health problems or who are carrying out caregiver duties shouldn't be expected to keep working. "They're contributing to society in another way," she says. 🌿

to feel happy, while others are perfectly content "walking in the woods and playing the guitar and don't need a lot of friends," she says. What we don't want is older people who are excluded.

Sadana stresses that older people should not be treated like children and told "This is what you need to do" to be healthy. "Rather, we need to listen to individuals and understand what they value and what they want." We need a holistic approach to shoring up and keeping as long as possible our physical and mental capacities – everything that keeps our minds and bodies working.

Sadana calls this a "person-centred, integrated" approach to aging and care. And this enables older people to "continue to learn and grow" and make decisions about their health and wellness rather than leaving that to health providers who may be solely focused on disease management. "Even if older people have declining cognitive capacities, they should still be able to make choices with support that are meaningful for them," she says. "Healthy aging isn't about being disease-free; it's about being able to do



As we near the midpoint of the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021 to 2030), Renaissance talked to Ritu Sadana – an economist and epidemiologist who heads the World Health Organization's work on aging and health and its Secretariat for the Council on the Economics of Health for All, and who was a keynote speaker at RTOERO's Future of Aging Summit held this past May – to get her take on how Canadian older adults can optimize their health as they age.



Take a seat . . .

Pilates healthy-spine chair program

by **Ylva Van Buuren**

illustrations by **Jori Bolton**

Pilates, created by Joseph Pilates more than 100 years ago, is a low-impact exercise system that uses precise movement, controlled breathing and muscle engagement to strengthen the core and other muscles – and help you move in a better, healthier way.

“Healthy movement is the key to longevity and to our quality of life as we age,” says Mairin Wilde, owner of the Vancouver Pilates Centre and program director of its teacher education program. “We look at where people’s movement habits and patterns are not working for them, and we find better and more efficient ways for them to move.”

Wilde says that “one of the first things beginners will notice is how much concentration it takes to do exercises. Even if you’re doing a leg exercise, for instance, you still have to pay attention to how you’re stabilizing your spine, what you’re doing with your shoulder girdle and where your focus is. This concentration provides a meditative aspect because you literally have to unplug all of your other concerns to focus.”

Joseph Pilates believed that you are only as young as your spine is flexible. So here is a simple series of spine exercises based on the Pilates method that Wilde has created for *Renaissance* readers.

Do the program sitting in a chair (ideally an upright chair with back support and without arms).

If you have not been active recently or if you have mobility issues, start gently and pay attention to how your body responds. If you feel any strain or discomfort, aim for gentle sensations of effort or stretching. If you have osteoporosis, aim for a moderate range of motion in all spinal movements to avoid compressing joints. Also, when bending forward, place your hands on your legs for additional support.

1. Sitting Tall (to improve posture)

- Sit with feet firmly on the floor, hip-width apart with toes facing forward. Sit forward away from the back support. Keep spine upright and look straight ahead (*illustration 1-1*).
- Place hands on hips and roll pelvis forward and back (*illustration 1-2*) 2 to 3 times to loosen the lower back while remaining erect. These should be small motions that gently round and arch your lower back.
- Now, find your upright posture by balancing directly on top of your sit bones (the small, pointed bones at the bottom of the pelvis) and hold for 5 deep breaths. Imagine your tailbone hanging like a paperweight from the bottom of the spine and your head floating upward like a helium balloon. This erect posture reduces compression along the entire spine and prepares the spine for healthy movement. Try to keep sitting tall this way through all the remaining exercises.



1-1



1-2

2. Deep Breathing (to activate core - deep abdominal, spine and pelvic floor muscles)

- Place your hands over your abdomen at the waistline and notice how the abdominal wall gently stretches forward as you inhale and recedes as you exhale. Breathe through your nose as much as possible, keeping your jaw relaxed.
- Keep one hand on your abdominals and move the other hand onto the back of your waist, palm facing out (*illustration 2*).
- Without moving your spine, move the front (abdominals) toward the back (spine). Take 5 slow, deep breaths, allowing your abdominals to slide a little deeper back toward your spine each time you exhale. Imagine them being pulled back from the inside, rather than pressed in from the outside. Remain upright on your sit bones so that the spine remains erect.
- Take 5 more breaths, and this time practise keeping the abdominal wall as flat as possible as you inhale and feel how the deeper muscles can support your spine. The movement of your ribs will increase as your lungs expand more fully on each inhale. Your torso should remain erect without any uncomfortable gripping or “bracing.”



2

3. Spine Stretches (to increase spine flexibility)

- **Roll Down and Up:** Sit tall with arms relaxed by sides. Roll spine forward, from top to bottom, moving one vertebra at a time. Begin by looking down, then rolling neck, then upper back forward until you feel your lower back lengthen and your hips hinging forward, with arms hanging beside your legs (*illustration 3-1*). Imagine you are lengthening your spine over a beach ball to avoid collapsing the front of the torso. Roll as far forward as you comfortably can, then pause and take 5 to 7 deep breaths, relaxing the torso over the legs. (For more support, use a pillow on your lap.) To roll up, reach down toward the seat of the chair with your tailbone, rolling pelvis backward until you are balanced on your sit bones, then uncurl the rest of the spine from the bottom to the top, bringing your neck and head up last.
- **Roll Down and Up with Breath Pattern:** Repeat the Roll Down and Up, but this time move continuously as you exhale and inhale to roll down, then exhale and inhale to roll up. Repeat 5 times.



3-1



3-2



3-3



3-4

- **Chest Lift:** Sit with your hips close to the back of the chair seat. (Depending on the height of the back of the chair, you may prefer to place a small pillow or rolled towel behind your upper back.) Place your hands behind your head with fingers interlaced to support head and open elbows to the sides as far as you comfortably can. Lean back against chair (or pillow) and lift chest upward (*illustration 3-2*). Look up at the ceiling, letting hands support the head and keeping your neck long. (If you have shoulder mobility issues, this series can also be done with arms by your sides, or resting hands on thighs). Take 5 to 7 deep breaths, feeling your chest rise as the ribs expand on each inhale. Slowly return to sitting tall, using your hands to help lift the head upright.
- **Sitting Twist:** Sit tall with hands on chest, one hand crossed over the other below your collarbones. Twist spine to the right, starting from the top of the pelvis, then sequentially rotating each vertebra through the waist, chest and neck to look as far around to the right as possible (*illustration 3-3*). While twisting, imagine that you are “loosening the lid of a jar.” Untwist sequentially from the bottom to the top, starting at the pelvis and continuing to bring the ribs and then the head back to centre. Repeat, twisting to the left. Alternate sides 5 times. Practise taking a full breath (in and out) to twist and another full breath (in and out) to untwist.
- **Side Bend:** Reach left arm overhead (if you have shoulder limitations, place left hand on the centre of your chest). If you like, you can use the other arm to support you on the seat of the chair. Inhale to lift head and chest into a side bend to the right (*illustration 3-4*). Imagine you are lifting your spine sideways over a beach ball, keeping both sides of the torso long. Exhale to keep lifting spine into the bend as far as you comfortably can. Take a full breath (inhale and exhale) to lift the spine upright, moving sequentially from the bottom to the top to bring the head up last. Change arms and repeat on the other side. Alternate sides 5 times. 🌱



Dance your way to wellness

Hitting the dance floor offers more than just fun

by **Brooke Smith**

Imagine a joyous, mood-lifting fitness activity that increases muscle strength, circulation and endurance, raises your heart rate and puts a smile on your face.

Dancing, whether structured or unstructured, stimulates your mind, body and soul. So put on your red shoes and get moving.

Dance that is structured (or choreographed, where you learn tap dancing routines or the tango or the waltz, for example) can have benefits for memory. In one study, participants in their 60s and 70s with no signs of cognitive decline learned country dancing routines for one hour, three times per week. At the end of six months, participants showed denser white matter in the area of the brain that processes memory.

PHOTO: BEAR FOTOS

“We’ve always danced. It’s part of basic human expression.”

Karen Bradley

Free-flow movement (referred to as “conscious dance” – unchoreographed, spontaneous movement as dancers explore their inner experience, held in a safe, inclusive and non-judgmental space) also has benefits. In a study of more than 1,000 “conscious” dancers, those with more than five years of practice had high “life satisfaction” compared with newer dancers. And, a majority of participants “endorsed experiences consistent with mindfulness.”

Karen Bradley, a registered dance movement therapist, runs a one-hour class for seniors on Fridays in Musquodoboit Harbour, NS. Dance movement therapy, Bradley explains, uses dance and movement vocabulary (how one shifts weight; groundedness; use of and access to space, rhythm and phrasing) and somatic practices (focusing on body awareness and the body’s sensations) to improve cognitive and physical health.

Bradley begins the class with breath work, perhaps a shoulder massage, and vocalization (participants add a sigh or a note of singing when they exhale to open up the mouth, tongue and throat areas) for about the first 15 to 20 minutes.

The second part is movement, which includes partner (dancing/moving with another person) and group work. “In partner work, it’s about opening yourself up to share space with somebody else,” Bradley says. “Eye contact matters, being responsive and observing and responding to the other person.”

Group movement could include using an Octaband (a colourful circle in which participants take hold of one of the extending strands) or participating in the Stroll (participants line up on two sides, across from a partner, and sashay down the centre).

And while bopping around your living room to a Beatles or Beach Boys tune will have you moving, Bradley says that in her experience, a dance class adds an important social connection. “What people have said to me is they can’t do it at home. They need the group,” she says. “We’re wired for social connection.”

“Dance and movement is a way for us to connect that doesn’t require words,” says Meghan Thom, a dance and movement therapist in Victoria, BC. “Moving around releases endorphins. There’s something particularly helpful about moving in groups, and with a particular rhythm, that really supports connection. It’s good for our nervous systems to feel connected and the joyfulness that comes with that.”

Think of the last few years of isolation due to COVID-19 as well as the present economic issues. “We’re no longer living

in multigenerational households,” Thom says. “We’re quite isolated, which is not good for us.” As social creatures, she continues, our nervous systems are meant to connect. “We’re meant to know one another and recognize one another’s humanity. Dance is a powerful way to do that.”

Montreal-based Lynne Adams, a 5Rhythms-certified teacher, agrees. 5Rhythms is a movement meditation practice that recognizes the sequence of five energetic qualities – flowing, staccato, chaos, lyrical and stillness – inherent in everyone. “Basically, 5Rhythms is the practice of recognizing those waves of energy in yourself and around you through movement,” she says.

And although 5Rhythms teachers use the term “dance,” “it’s not really about dancing,” Adams says. “It’s about finding your way of moving – and that can change from one moment to the next.” There’s no choreography in 5Rhythms, no right or wrong way to move. “It’s a constant exploration of how you feel and move your body in space, how you feel and move in relationship to another person and to a group of people,” she says. “You go at your own speed, at your own rhythm. You don’t have to prove anything. And, it’s accessible to everyone. You can dance if you’re in a wheelchair; you can dance if you’re on crutches.”

“If we use the Octaband,” Bradley says, “and somebody’s in a wheelchair, they still have a strand. They’re still participating and going to get the sense of movement from everybody else.”

So, what is it about dance that is so compelling? Adams looks to history. “We’ve always danced. It’s part of basic human expression. We all understand rhythm. We all understand the beat. And we all love to move. If you have a body, you can dance,” she says. “Your inner dancer is just waiting for an invitation and an opportunity.”

Find a 5Rhythms class in your area:

5rhythms.com/teachersearch.php

Find a registered dance movement therapist:

dmtac.org/copy-of-student-members

Interested in a conscious dance party?

consciousdance.ca



PHOTOS, KRAKEN IMAGES

What does age have to do with it?

Living your healthiest, happiest life ever

by **Stuart Foxman**

Old: advanced in years or age; showing the characteristics of age.

—Merriam-Webster

“Stereotypes are changing,” says Nancy Worth, an economic geographer at the University of Waterloo.

Baby boomers have initiated significant social change in North America for most of their lives. Now, they’re challenging the cultural perceptions of old and what it means. Take Robin Todd. The retired English and creative writing teacher, and a member of District 31 Wellington, cherished her bike when growing up in Guelph. “I loved the freedom to be able to get anywhere, to roam,” Todd says.

She still does. In 2021, Todd rode her Santa Cruz Stigmata gravel bike from Vancouver to Cape Breton, cycling 6,777 kilometres in 41 days. And in 2023, she rode 5,000 kilometres across the northern United

States, from Washington to Michigan.

“I want to do this as long as I can,” Todd says. She cites a favourite quote from George Bernard Shaw: “We don’t stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing.”

“Have playfulness, and remain joyful and optimistic,” Todd says. “I want to continue to be that 12-year-old kid.”

To Todd, aging is a state of mind, and science backs her up. We have several ages at once. There’s the age that keeps score of how long we’ve lived. We also have biological, physiological and functional ages, which refer to our health status and what’s going on with our cells and tissues. We have a social age, too, which is how we meet the norms and expectations associated with a certain maturity.

And perhaps the most important age of all: our subjective age. Chronological age is what we are; our subjective age is how we feel. In one study of almost 1,500 adults published in the *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review*, those over 40, on average, perceive themselves to be 20 per cent younger than their actual age. “There’s a dissonance between your self-perception and the number you see on your birth certificate. It seems like we age slower in our heads,” says Marfy Abousifein, president of the Canadian Association on Gerontology’s student club at McMaster University and a health sciences student there.

Feeling younger has benefits. An article in *Psychological Science* says subjective age is a

biopsychosocial marker of aging. Having a lower subjective age predicts other major outcomes, like better physical and cognitive health, higher well-being, greater stress resilience and lower mortality hazards. Feeling older than you are predicts the opposite.

As people get older, they often focus on lowering weight, blood pressure and cholesterol. They’re all important for your health, of course, but so is lowering your subjective age. This isn’t about denying your true age. It’s about feeling young in spirit. There’s no magic pill for that, but research tells us there are ways to get there: Have a sense of purpose, maintain broad social networks, keep connected with your community, challenge yourself and stay inquisitive.

So what’s “old”? In one sense, it’s typically older than you are now.

In 2024, the journal *Psychology and Aging* published the results of a longitudinal study. Over 25 years, when they were between ages 40 and 100, participants were asked, “At what age would you describe someone as old?” As people aged, the answer was always older. So a 65-year-old might say 74, while a 74-year-old would say 78. Overall, the perceived onset of old age rose by a year for every four to five years of actual aging.

In other surveys, turning 65, 75 and 85 have all been cited as indicators of old age. But so have other signs that don’t hinge on years. For some it’s grey hair. For others, it’s when you can’t drive. Some say it’s when you can’t live independently. And for still others, it’s milestones like having grandchildren or retiring. Would that make a 46-year-old grandmother or a 53-year-old retiree old?

Looking your age – or trying not to – is big business. The anti-aging market, including everything from skin-care products and hair colouring to supplements and cosmetic surgery, is valued at about US\$63 billion globally and projected to reach almost \$107 billion by the end of the decade.

True, part of this is about boosting confidence, the connection between looking good and feeling good. Still, “we’re taught that you can’t be happy if you have two wrinkles,” Abousifein says.

Maybe perceptions of aging are shifting, but that hasn’t stopped the messages that young is better than old. It can be tempting to run away from your age. But recognize, too, that



it’s not the only thing that defines you. You can be young at heart or old before your time at any age.

In 1965, The Rolling Stones released “(I Can’t Get No) Satisfaction.” Mick Jagger and Keith Richards were 21 at the time. A few months later, The Who released “My Generation,” with a famously defiant line from 20-year-old songwriter Pete Townshend: “Hope I die before I get old.”

In June 1975, on the cusp of turning 32, Jagger told a magazine that “I’d rather be dead than sing ‘Satisfaction’ when I’m 45.” Fast forward to 2024, and he was still singing it on tour at age 81. That same year, The Who, with 79-year-old Townshend and 80-year-old Roger Daltrey, was also onstage performing “My Generation.”

Todd wonders if “Hope I die before I get old” is more about a mindset than an age. You’re not old when you hit a certain birthday, she suggests, but when you’re afraid to try new things anymore. “I don’t want to get to that place,” she says.

The saying that “age is just a number” usually refers to the idea that people have no boundaries. That’s true. But age literally is just a number, a data point like height or weight. These don’t say anything about a person’s values, likes, dislikes or hopes. They’re quantitative measures. We get qualitative by calling someone “tall” or “short,” “heavy” or “thin,” “young” or “old.” But compared to what?

“Don’t buy into expectations and stereotypes,” Todd says.

She finds a sense of contentment and achievement on her bike. Anyone, at any age, can too by going after whatever interests them. Just stay engaged and curious. Like Todd, who every week tries to find a new route or a new place to explore. “I love finding roads I haven’t been on.” 🚲



Back in the game

Yes, you can still find love online

by **Sue Horner**
illustrations by **Sam Island**

Online dating has been the go-to way to meet people for two decades, but lately the drawbacks are turning younger people off the experience. Scammers. “Free trials” that blossom into expensive subscriptions. Hours of sifting through profiles only to come up empty. Rejection and “ghosting.”

Not so for older adults. According to a survey by OurTime, a dating site for singles older than 50, 52 per cent of Canadian seniors have tried online dating. And a rise in dating sites designed for those 50-plus, as well as specialized sites, means there are lots of new ways to connect with a potential companion.

We asked RTOERO members if they have tried online dating sites. Some had great experiences, others did not, and yes, some were leery of the possible problems.

And some found love the second time around.



Daughter-approved

Cindy Ranieri (District 34 York Region), 66, embraces the view that “in the end, it’s only the relationships that matter.” She had been widowed for more than 20 years when she went online with a relationship in mind.

Ranieri had tried online dating before, and she found it takes work. She believes in chatting first, then meeting in person. If there’s no chemistry, she wishes them well and moves on. For a time, she was on Plenty of Fish. Then she left, because she was meeting people on vacation, in church and with groups she was interested in. She was with someone for four years, but they broke up just before the pandemic.

Ranieri had been thinking about going back online when her daughter’s friend nudged her into action. The friend helped choose photos and Ranieri wrote the profile, then promptly did nothing else. A week later, the friend came over, logged in and said, “Oh, look, 11 men want to chat with you.”

The first person Ranieri responded to was Allan Griner, 70 and divorced. “I showed my daughter, and she thought he was perfect,” Ranieri says. “We were so compatible, it didn’t seem possible he was real.”

The two chatted three times, then met at a Tim Hortons. Ranieri had said she could stay only an hour, but they yakked for two and a half. It was only after their third date, when she went to his house for a barbecue, that she discovered he lived just minutes from her. “He lives south of Highway 7 and I live north, and we have a completely different circle of friends,” Ranieri says. “We would never have crossed paths.”

She next met his two sons and his large extended family. “I’m the only non-Jewish person, but everyone is just wonderful to me,” she says. The two now live together in their two homes, dividing the time depending on what’s happening.

“Being in love is no different whether you’re 20 or 60,” Ranieri says. “After being together for two years, it’s as good as it was in the first couple of days. We’re so compatible, it’s like he can see right into my heart.”

PHOTOS, COURTESY OF CINDY RANIERI, JOHN RAGER



ONLINE DATING? RTOERO MEMBERS HAVE ADVICE

Keep your profile real. “Be truthful with who you are and what you want.”

—Lety Dudgeon
(District 17
Simcoe County)

Be selective and listen to your instincts. “You quickly learn to weed out the inappropriate contacts.”

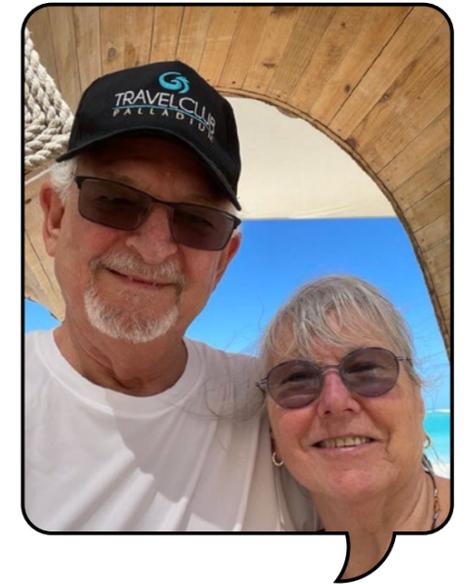
—Trixy Benner
(District 15
Halton)

Be careful. “It’s so easy to be catfished [where a user pretends to be someone else] unless you are vigilant.”

—Lenore Ralph
(District 31
Wellington)

Do not walk blindly into online dating. “Most people are not what they seem. Everyone has an agenda.”

—Helene Daleman
(District 28 Region of
Durham)



Finding new love

John Rager (District 51 Québec), 75, went through a period of isolation and mourning after his wife, Barbara, died in 2018. “Then I realized I still have lots of years left on this planet, so there’s no reason not to find love again.”

Rager had never dated much. He met Barbara by chance on the train to Toronto from Ottawa; they married a few months later and were together 47 years.

After Barbara’s death, Rager made a conscious decision to start a new chapter in his life. He got rid of all his furniture, sold his house and moved from Ottawa to Laval to live near his older son and two grandsons. He joined a local English-speaking seniors’ group and attended social gatherings. He did meet someone, who turned out not to share the same life goals. After some soul-searching, Rager decided to try again.

“In April 2023, I posted a message on Facebook Dating that I wanted to meet a Québécoise to help me improve my French,” he says. Céline Durand responded almost immediately that she wanted to learn English. She was 73 and a widow. When the two met for coffee, they managed to communicate – and laugh – despite the language difference. “Right away, I felt this is a person with a really open heart, and I wanted to get to know her better,” Rager says.

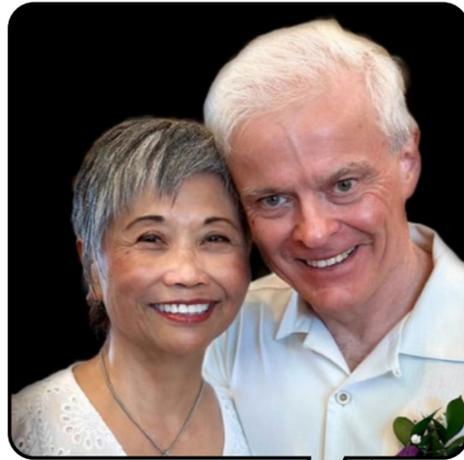
At first, their four adult children – his two sons, her son and daughter – were worried about a money scam, but they soon realized the relationship was solid. “They could see that we’re committed to each other, and it didn’t take long to get their blessing,” Rager says. “Not that you need it, but you want it.”

Now Rager spends a few days in Laval and the rest of the week at Céline’s house in Saint-Eustache, about 20 minutes away. They’re thinking ahead to a retirement residence together when they can’t keep up the property.

“I was looking for a true love and found it,” Rager says. And his French improved.

Rekindling the joy

It was difficult being widowed twice, says Adelaine Purdy (District 14 Niagara), 77, “but you need to move on and find joy in living.”



Purdy didn't date at all in high school and met her first husband in church. They had been married 28 years when he died. After about a year, she reconnected with a former colleague who had also lost a spouse. They married and spent 22 years together, checking destinations off their travel bucket list after she retired as principal of an elementary school in London, Ont. Their final trip was in 2020, and his death during the pandemic threw her into a dark hole.

Toward the end of 2021, Purdy was lonely and wanted companionship. She resumed ballroom dancing as a hobby; a couple of men asked her out and she enjoyed having someone to talk to, but there were no sparks. In early 2022, a friend encouraged Purdy to try online dating. “I was 75 at the time and only had a six-month contract with EliteSingles,” she says. “I went on three or four dates and was about to give up when I was contacted by someone from a sister site, SilverSingles.” The two emailed back and forth for about a week before meeting in person, going on a picnic.

Sparks flew. Despite the strikes against Tom Grand (he lived in Welland, a good two-and-a-half hours' drive away, and was five years younger), the two immediately clicked. She met his sons and his brothers and visited his house. One year later, he proposed. With the approval of their sons (one for her and three for him), the two married in July 2023, and the new Adelaine Grand is happily living with Tom in Welland. “We consider ourselves very fortunate to have found each other in this vast universe,” she says.



Still looking

Chris Dunn (District 13 Hamilton-Wentworth, Haldimand), 88, has a motto since his wife of 53 years, Geraldine (Gerri), died unexpectedly in 2015: “Today is the first day of the rest of my life.”

Dunn and Gerri had retired in their late 50s and enjoyed more than 20 years of retirement together (“It wasn't enough!”). He has no intention of remarrying, which suits his three grown children. Still, he'd like to find an athletic woman willing and able to join in the hiking, biking, travelling and other things he enjoys.

Dunn's been on several dating sites, meeting a mix of obvious scammers and legitimate prospects. “I've met two or three wonderful ladies and still consider them friends,” he says. “One was an excellent travel partner, and we went hiking in Portugal and on a Mediterranean cruise. But distance was an issue, and we drifted apart.”

For now, Dunn is still single, still lives alone and is still looking for a partner . . . but he hasn't given up hope. ☺

OPTING OUT OF ONLINE DATING? TRY THESE OLD-SCHOOL ALTERNATIVES

Let friends and family know you'd be open to an introduction.

Reconnect with people from your past (best friend, high school sweetheart, sports-team members).

Try speed dating.

Go to local community events like free museum days.

Put on your dancing shoes and attend singles nights.

Visit your local library for genealogy research classes, book clubs or author readings.

Join a wine club and attend its regular events.

Go to your local RTOERO events to connect with others; someone may know someone.

Sign up for painting classes or live music nights at local restaurants or bars.

Check your church, local legion and seniors' centres for activities, classes and events.

On vacation or out with friends, be open to starting conversations with new people.

SECOND ACTS

Reinventing yourself post-retirement

by Erin Pehlivan



Carol Broer at a funeral celebration.

For many older Canadians, retirement doesn't mean the end of work. Instead, a growing number of retired people, especially teachers, are choosing to re-enter the workforce in new and different roles.

According to RTOERO's 2023 Future Retirees Survey, more than half of classroom teachers and school administrators plan to work, either part-time or full-time, within five years of retiring. It's not only about needing extra income, either. “People don't want to stop working,” says Jim Grieve, CEO of RTOERO. “They want more control over their work – flexibility, freedom, change – and that's something retirement can offer.”

Carol Broer (District 13 Hamilton Wentworth, Haldimand) notes that teachers tend to retire earlier in life. “I found myself early on knowing that I wanted to do something engaging,” she says. “I wanted to stay in touch with people and use my skills and abilities to connect with people in a meaningful way. That's why I decided to do something more than just golf.”

For Broer, flexibility is a priority. As a retired teacher with a deeply varied career, including 17 years as a music specialist, she's now a self-employed funeral celebrant. “I'm not on anyone else's timetable or schedule,” she says. “That's the beauty: When you leave class, you get to make your own structure.”

Through her services, Broer is determined to tell the unique personal stories of those who have passed away. “I've been to so many bad funerals,” she says. “A good funeral tells a story and reflects the people who are there to say goodbye and honours the life that's been lived.”

Even before retirement, Broer wanted to connect with people in a meaningful way. When she learned about funeral celebrants through a friend, she researched the career and pursued training. “I have a background in public speaking, so I could take that and see how my skills fit with the role,” she says.



Two arrangements Broer has used for services: one for a person who loved golf and the other for a person who loved Christmas.

PHOTOS, COURTESY OF ADELAINE PURDY, CHRIS DUNN

PHOTOS, COURTESY OF CAROL BROER

“I LEARNED HOW TO TRUST MYSELF. HAD I BEEN LESS OF A RISK-TAKER AS A TEACHER, IT WOULD’VE BEEN MORE DIFFICULT TO TRANSITION INTO THIS NEW ROLE.” – Carol Broer

Starting her own business was a “great learning curve,” she says, but considering how flexible teaching had made her, she adapted quickly. “I learned how to trust myself. Had I been less of a risk-taker as a teacher, it would’ve been more difficult to transition into this new role.” She uses her teacher skills in empathy, organization and communication to help families through vulnerable times by creating a personal memorial – more like a celebration of life rather than a traditional funeral – that she leads, similar to the role of a clergyperson, except non-denominational and without the ordained part.

Broer has one big goal for the future: to widen the understanding of funeral celebrants in Canada and deliver her own training program one day. “It’s a fairly new thing. It’s not for everyone, but [people] don’t know that this is an option.” She adds, “Most people are wondering, what exactly do you do? When I describe it, they say, ‘Wow, that’s so neat and important.’” Her advice to newly retired teachers is to consider your skill set. “What’s your joy, what brings you satisfaction and meaning and is impactful? Whatever it is, that’s what you need to pursue.”

Jason Abbott, a financial consultant in Toronto and president of wealthdesigns.ca, explains two reasons why people are re-entering the workforce later in life. The first is financial: There may be a shortfall in savings, he says, and working lets people buy time as their savings build up.

The second reason is personal. “People need something to do,” Abbott says. While some enjoy their workplace environment, their colleagues and their routines, others are seeking something different after retirement. In the field of education, his clients have pursued private tutoring or writing, an innate choice for teachers.



Ron Finch in front of a storyboard of some of the characters in his novels.

Take **Ron Finch** (District 9 Huron-Perth). “I believe you’re never too old to start a new enterprise, provided you’re physically and/or mentally able. Age is not an excuse,” Finch says. After spending the bulk of his career as a high school teacher and principal from the 1960s to the 1990s in Listowel, Ont., he spent 27 years selling real estate and retired at age 75 in 2017.

He sat on his porch, ruminating on what to do next. “I may have ‘retired,’ but I was far from finished working,” Finch says. “That’s when my secret ambition surfaced. I wondered if I could write a novel. August 6, 2017, is the day I decided to write a book.”

In his first week, he wrote for a total of 75 minutes. The next week, 490 minutes. He kept track of his daily writing until he wrote his first book, *Lightning at 200 Durham Street*. The plot? It’s 1928, Prohibition has ended, the Great Depression is just around the corner, and *The Jazz Singer* – the first talking movie – has just been released. But there’s trouble in the small Ontario town of Chaseford.

At a remote cabin in the woods, 17-year-old amateur sleuth Joel Franklin and his friends have stumbled across a crime too big for Chief Petrovic and his constables to handle. As the criminal investigation expands to neighbouring cities, a wild electrical storm rips through the peaceful little community, unearthing fresh mysteries and leaving destruction in its wake.

In the six years since retiring and writing full-time, Finch has written and self-published just over 50 novels in the Joel Franklin series, with 13 currently available on Amazon and in a local bookstore. His fourth book, *The Deadly Secret*, just landed on Amazon. “There are another 36 manuscripts sitting on my shelves ready to go. But I enjoy writing a lot more than editing, [and] I’m not good at self-promotion.” Two upcoming novels, *The Journey* and *Dr. Shitz and the Wayward Ghost*, are a departure from the Joel Franklin series.

Most of Finch’s books take place in Southwestern Ontario: London, Stratford (“Chaseford” in his series) and beyond. But it really is all fiction, despite some parallels to real life. “You write about what’s familiar to you,” he says. “Writers reveal themselves whether they intend to or not, and it doesn’t matter if they’re writing fiction or not.”

For Finch, writing is similar to teaching. Whether they’re marking



Ron Finch with Walter the Ghost, who appears in several earlier novels.

papers, creating lesson plans or researching, teachers present a narrative. “The big difference is the self-confidence and faith that comes in,” says Finch, when asked about his motivations. It helps that he was an avid reader growing up. “My mother started taking me to the library when I was three,” he says.

How does he produce such a high volume of work? “I’m willing to sit down, and I can concentrate and focus. I’m lucky that I’m able to do that.” Currently, one of his sons reads and edits all his stories. His main goal is to find a publisher and agent to spread his stories to a wider audience.

“You can, and I do [make money], but not much,” Finch says. He has harnessed a following in the meantime. “I have people who want to know – when is your next book coming out? I had one woman who was upset with me because she thinks I should publish a book every month.” ☺

Is a new career possible post-retirement?

According to *Career Toolbelt* writer Kyle Elliott, post-retirement career changes are possible. “On one hand, there is a stigma that older workers are less adaptable and stuck in their ways,” he says. “On the other, older workers have additional experience and accomplishments that can set them apart from those who are earlier in their career, which you can use to your advantage in the competitive job market.”

Elliott lists several ways of transitioning to a different career.

- Be realistic about your career goals.
- Ask yourself what your requirements and preferences are.
- Be clear and cognizant about what you will and won’t settle for.
- Write out a list of your career accomplishments – you have the skills, and they’re transferable to any field.

Finally, don’t stop learning. There are many ways to hone your skills through courses and workshops. In-person classes let you connect socially, while online classes can be taken synchronously or asynchronously to fit your schedule best. Keeping in touch with your network through websites like LinkedIn can empower you on your journey. When you put in the effort and believe in yourself, you’ll be surprised where you’ll end up.

Maximum Mont-Tremblant

The heart and soul of the Laurentian Mountains serves up incredible skiing and unbeatable charm

by **Doug Wallace**

When it comes right down to it, a ski resort can be a wonderful escape – even if you're just in it for the après-ski. Two hours northwest of Montreal, Mont-Tremblant is an outdoor enthusiast's dream, delivering 305 hectares of great skiing, a quality event calendar, more than 75 restaurants and a casino – all at nature's doorstep.



Hit the slopes

The first ski lift began ferrying people up Mont-Tremblant in 1939. The resort reached star status in the 1960s, with a spike in the 1980s, before a European-style pedestrian village was added in the 1990s. Now, the region lures two million visitors each year, the ski resort rated one of the best in eastern North America.

One central gondola runs like clockwork, with the support of several high-speed chair lifts leading to 102 ski trails on four different slopes. Most of the single black-diamond and blue runs are groomed, but there is plenty of terrain left over for the off-trail glade skiers, even the amateur ones. The green runs are not overly cluttered with kids taking lessons, and you can ski down both the south and north sides of the mountain. This is great because you can follow the sun: It rises over the north side, moving to the south side after lunch. Beware – the crowd follows suit.

LEFT PHOTO, COURTESY OF TOURISM MONT-TREMBLANT; RIGHT PHOTO, COURTESY OF DOUG WALLACE





Indulge in après-ski

One of the perks of skiing is celebrating the fact that you've taken a little exercise. Mont-Tremblant is well-versed in the après-ski culture, having had years of practice. Most of the restaurants and bars have outdoor patios with overhead heaters if you want to keep the outdoor momentum going.

The Fairmont Tremblant sits at the end of one of the longer green runs, making it an easy final pitstop come early cocktail hour. The après-ski crowd here hunkers down around outdoor firepits with fuzzy blankets and glasses of Champagne. La Diable is a cheap and cheerful microbrewery with excellent beers and delicious homemade sausages. And the P'tit Caribou is a real scene, not just in the afternoon but after dinner, too. Bring your best toque.

Fuel the furnace

This being Quebec, the food is wonderful – and you may very well need your three squares to keep you going. Start the day with a giant crêpe at La Maison de la Crêpe, sweet or savoury, or both – the sausage, cheddar and poached-apple crêpe buried in béchamel covers both bases. Lunch can be a cafeteria affair on the mountain or a village-strip experience. Opt for a bowl of fresh pasta or a handmade pizza at A Mano Trattoria.

Dinner also brings loads of variety, but you're having raclette at the chalet-styled La Savoie. If you don't think you can handle half a wheel of cheese, you can order a smaller portion plated as a side dish. Fondue is also on the menu, and you can boil your own meal in a pot of broth. Fine dining awaits at the Choux Gras Brasserie, where you can polish off a dozen oysters before tucking into bison ribs or house-made orecchiette, or perhaps a glazed lamb shoulder to share.

The area's newest dining experience is Léo Boire + Manger at Le Westin Tremblant, a brasserie created in partnership with the Oliver & Bonacini hospitality group.



TOP PHOTO: COURTESY OF TOURISM MONT-TREMBLANT
BOTTOM PHOTO: COURTESY OF KL MOTION MEDIA

TOP PHOTO: COURTESY OF SCANDINAVE SPA MONT-TREMBLANT
BOTTOM PHOTO: COURTESY OF MYSTIKOPOULOS PHOTOGRAPHY



Discover the diversion

What to do when you're not skiing or eating? Mont-Tremblant is big on cross-country skiing, of course, but also fat biking and its lazy cousin e-fat biking. The truly adventurous can go ice climbing, while the more contemplative can ice fish.

If you just want to sit in the sauna, head about five kilometres down the road to Scandinave, an outdoor spa that has doubled in size over the past little while. This strictly no-talking sanctuary follows the traditional Nordic thermal cycle: 15 minutes of hot water, a few seconds of cold and 15 minutes of rest. Cold waterfalls and hot pools are supported by little rest areas, indoor and out.

The breathtaking lookout tower of Le Sentier des Cimes Laurentides is a 40-metre treetop observatory overlooking the Laurentian Mountains. About a 20-minute drive south, it yields a true nature bath along a barrier-free wooden walkway – three kilometres round trip.

Where to stay

Happily, most of the almost 2,000 accommodation units across about a dozen lodges are very close to the gondola lift, so you never have very far to trek in your ski boots. The resort offers a variety of townhouses and condos to rent; log homes and mansions if you're travelling with a group.

Place St-Bernard and Lodge de la Montagne offer casual ski-lodge accommodation, much of it self-catered, all of it close to the action. The log-built Grand Lodge Mont-Tremblant on the edge of Lac Ouimet is about five kilometres from the ski hill. The Fairmont Tremblant is the grande dame, kitted out with a new lobby and bar. The outdoor pools also underwent a major renovation and expansion – making you the envy of everyone who skis past. 🧊

TREMBLANT.CA
MONT-TREMBLANT.CA



How to fit in with the locals

“We travel with another couple who only want to do touristy things, and who complain when things are different than they are at home.”



It's so tempting to favour the familiar sometimes, rather than explore and engage with the destination you've spent considerable money travelling to.

I encourage travellers to take a break from home in every sense and cop a more humble attitude: You are a guest in someone else's hometown and should act accordingly. It's best not to measure other cultures and countries by your own – not every person in the world has bacon and eggs for breakfast. As well, punctuality in many countries is, in fact, just a concept.

Instead of tourist-area restaurants, find places filled with locals, look at what they're eating, and order the same. Carry a phrase book, so you can order if there's no English menu.

Tell your friends that getting out of the confines of the holiday resort is a great way to learn something – engagement is enlightenment. Travel is supposed to broaden your perspectives, and part of that means going with the local flow.

FLIGHT ADVICE: HOW TO PACK LIGHTER THAN EVER BEFORE

I recently had to help my older siblings pack just a carry-on for an extended trip abroad. Here are some of our pack-smart work-arounds:

- No one is going to notice that you're wearing mostly the same outfit every night – except your travel companions, who are in the same boat.
- Rather than layers of sweaters and multiple pieces of outerwear, bring one extremely light puffy jacket instead. It takes up less space and you can just wear it over a T-shirt. I also use mine as a pillow for long flights, so I don't have to drag around one of those neck pillows.
- Leave all the heavy, bulky and ultimately smelly cotton at home. You will get more wear out of activewear with antibacterial properties – like golf wear – which will dry quickly if you have to rinse things in the sink.
- Tuck in scarves, a signature statement necklace and inexpensive jewellery – nothing flashy. Take one handbag and perhaps a clutch. Two pairs of shoes and a pair of sandals – period.
- All the hotels have such excellent, natural bathroom amenities now, you don't need to bring much with you. 🧴



Doug Wallace
Editor & publisher,
TravelRight.Today,
and your in-the-know
friend for travel tips
and trends.

TOP LEFT PHOTO, FLASHPOP

Supper in a bowl

Nothing beats a bowl of homemade soup when temperatures fall

by **Elizabeth Baird**

The dark days of winter are perhaps the best time to savour a comforting bowl of soup that sings loud enough to qualify as supper. Thick like the puréed sweet potato or creamy pea soups, chunky like the easy goulash soup, or a ramen-style mushroom soup based on broth with add-ins. What you put on top, or serve with, adds up to a bowl of soup satisfaction.

BEEF GOULASH SOUP

Adapted from a recipe by cookbook author and teacher Rose Murray, this hearty soup is thick with the delicious tastes of smoked paprika and caraway; chunky with mushrooms, peppers and potatoes; and speedy to make with ground beef.

- 1 lb (450 g) lean ground beef
- 2 tbsp (30 mL) extra virgin olive oil or canola oil
- 2 large onions, chopped
- 2 large cloves garlic, minced
- 2 cups (500 mL) sliced mushrooms
- 2 tbsp (30 mL) smoked mild paprika or plain mild paprika
- 2 tsp (10 mL) caraway seeds
- 1 tsp (5 mL) dried thyme leaves
- 1/2 tsp (2 mL) each salt and pepper
- 1 large sweet bell pepper, diced
- 1 large potato, peeled and cubed
- 4 cups (1 L) chicken or beef broth
- 1 cup (250 mL) passata (puréed tomatoes) or crushed canned tomatoes

In a large pot over medium-high heat, sauté the beef without any oil, stirring almost constantly, until it is evenly broken up, any liquid has evaporated and the beef is starting to brown. Scrape the beef into a bowl and set aside for the moment.

Add the oil, and when it is hot, stir in the onions, garlic, mushrooms, paprika, caraway seeds, thyme, salt and pepper. Reduce heat to cook



the spices, soften the vegetables and mushroom, and dissolve any tasty brown bits. Add the bell pepper and potatoes and return the beef and any juices to the pot, stirring well to spread the spice mixture over the additions, about 3 minutes.

Pour in the broth and passata; bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to low, cover and simmer gently until the sauce has thickened and the

vegetables are tender. Taste, adding salt and pepper as needed. Adjust the liquid, adding more if desired, or continue simmering, lid off, until the soup is a pleasing thickness.

Toppings: Enjoy topped with minced flat-leaf parsley or fresh dill, and let rye or pumpernickel side the thick, almost-stew, soup.

Makes 4 to 6 servings.

PHOTO, VLADLENA AZIMA



SMOOTH SWEET POTATO SOUP WITH SOUTHWESTERN FLAVOURS

A vibrantly orange winter warm-up, this soup is make-ahead and freezable and delicious for everyday and a special occasion.

- 2 tbsp (30 mL) butter or canola or olive oil
- 2 large onions, chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, sliced
- 1 tbsp (15 mL) chili powder
- 1 tsp (5 mL) ground cumin
- 1/2 tsp (2 mL) each salt and pepper
- 6 cups (1.5 L) peeled, cubed sweet potatoes (6 average-sized sweet potatoes, approximately 2 lb/900 g)
- 5 cups (1.25 L) ready-to-use chicken broth
- 1/4 cup (60 mL) fresh lemon juice
- 1 cup (250 mL) 5%, 10% or 18% cream, or milk, optional

In a large pot, melt the butter over medium heat; stir in the onions, garlic, chili powder, cumin, salt and pepper. Cook, stirring often, until vegetables have softened, about 8 minutes.

Add the sweet potatoes, stirring to coat them with the spiced onion mixture, about 2 minutes. Pour in the broth, and over medium-high heat, bring to a boil. Reduce the heat, cover and simmer gently until the sweet potatoes are soft, about 25 minutes.

With a hand-held blender, or in batches as needed in a stand blender or food processor, purée the soup

until it is smooth and velvety. (Make-ahead: Let cool and pour into containers to refrigerate for up to 4 days or freeze for a few weeks.)

Return the soup to a clean saucepan. Stir in the lemon juice and cream. Taste, adjusting the seasoning if needed and thinning the soup with more broth if it is too thick. Over low setting, heat until steaming. Ladle into warmed bowls.

Toppings: Dress up the soup with a spoonful of sour cream, topped with chopped cilantro or basil and sliced grape tomatoes. Or, try a design on top: drizzle cream in circles, hearts, stars or initials. Side the soup with corn tortilla chips - the blue ones are a colour and texture statement in a soup bowl. Or try warmed fresh wheat or corn tortillas.

Makes 6 servings.

Variation: Give the soup a gentle Indian touch by replacing the chili powder with mild curry paste. Top with the sour cream or yogurt and cilantro, and side with warmed naan.

For a vegan version: Replace butter with canola or extra virgin olive oil, chicken broth with vegetable broth, cream with additional vegetable broth or non-dairy cream. For a vegetarian version, replace chicken broth with vegetable broth.

JUST-LIKE-SUMMER PEA SOUP

Peas are a quality frozen vegetable you can rely on all winter long to offer a taste of summer.

- 2 tbsp (30 mL) butter
- 2 cups (500 mL) chopped onions (2 large)
- 2 cups (500 mL) chopped peeled potatoes (2 large)
- 2 tsp (10 mL) grated fresh ginger root, optional
- 1/2 tsp (2 mL) each salt and pepper
- 4 cups (1 L) ready-to-use chicken broth
- 4 cups (1 L) frozen peas, 500 g package
- 1 cup (250 mL) 10%, 18% or 35% cream
- 2 tbsp (30 mL) fresh lemon juice

In a large pot, over medium heat, melt the butter; stir in the onions, potatoes, ginger (if using), salt and pepper. Cook, stirring often, until vegetables look glossy and somewhat translucent, but not coloured, about 8 minutes. Pour in the broth, and over medium-high, bring to a boil. Reduce the heat, cover and simmer gently until the potatoes are soft, about 20 minutes. Add the peas, cover, bring to a boil; reduce the heat to simmer the peas for 3 minutes.

With a hand-held blender, or in batches as needed in a stand blender or food processor, purée the soup until it is smooth and velvety. (Make-ahead: Let cool and pour into containers to refrigerate for up to 4 days or freeze for a few weeks.)

Return the soup to a clean saucepan. Stir in the cream. Taste the soup, adjusting the seasoning if needed, and thinning the soup with more broth if too thick. Over low setting, heat until steaming. Stir in the lemon juice. Ladle into warmed bowls.

Toppings: Dress up each bowl with a dollop of yogurt or sour cream and a generous sprinkle of sliced green onions or chopped parsley, cilantro or dill. Or add crunch with garlicky croutons or crushed pretzels. Side with brioche or crusty buns.

Makes 6 servings.

PHOTO: CHZU

MUSHROOM BROTH SOUP

At-home broth soup for two in the style of ramen, with clean fresh flavours. I liken it to a rainbow bowl of bright colours and varied textures - with crisp greens to match the slippery noodles, slices of crunchy sweet red pepper and mellow mushrooms.

- 2 large eggs
- 2 tbsp (30 mL) canola or olive oil
- 2 1/2 cups (625 mL) sliced mushrooms, cremini recommended
- 1/2 large onion, thinly sliced crosswise
- 3 large cloves garlic, minced
- 6 cups (1.5 L) ready-to-use chicken broth
- 2 tbsp (30 mL) soy sauce
- 1/2 tsp (2 mL) hot sauce
- 1 tbsp (15 mL) grated fresh ginger root
- 1/2 tsp (2 mL) pepper
- 7 oz (200 g) instant noodles (half 14 oz/400 g package)
- 1 bok choy, quartered lengthwise
- Small sweet red pepper, thinly sliced lengthwise

Toppings:

- 4 green onions, thinly sliced
- 1/2 cup (125 mL) coarsely chopped cilantro
- 1/2 cup (125 mL) coarsely chopped roasted peanuts, salted or plain

Start with the eggs. Place them in a small deep saucepan with enough water to come 2 inches (5 cm) above the eggs. Bring to a boil over high heat. Remove the saucepan from the heat and cover. For soft-boiled eggs,



let rest for 6 minutes. Leave 4 minutes longer for firm yolks. Cool down in a bowl with water and ice cubes. Crack the shells and peel the eggs.

Meanwhile, in a heavy-bottomed large pot, heat the oil over medium-high heat. Add the mushrooms, onion and garlic; cook, stirring almost constantly, until mixture is softened and aromatic, about 6 minutes. Pour in the broth, soy sauce, hot sauce, ginger and pepper. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer for 5 minutes. (Make-ahead: Let cool and refrigerate for up to a day. Reheat to continue.)

Toppings: Arrange green onions, cilantro and peanuts in bowls. Cut egg in half lengthwise.

Warm your soup bowls. Bring broth to a boil; add the noodles. Boil until tender, about 4 to 6 minutes. Stir in the

bok choy and red pepper. Immediately divide the soup between large soup bowls, making sure the pepper and bok choy are visible. Dig into the bowls of peanuts, green onions and cilantro. Set eggs, cut side up, on top.

Makes 2 very generous bowls.

Tips: Up the protein with an extra egg or two. Another easy add-in is 3/4 cup/174mL shredded cooked chicken.

Substitute: No bok choy? Bunched spinach will stand in gracefully, as will thickly shredded kale leaves.

How to eat broth-based soups: Set the table with chopsticks and soup spoons. Pick up noodles et al. with chopsticks, using the spoon to cup the noodles. When all the solids are finished, spoon up the broth. Smack your lips. Wipe your chin.

DRESS UP YOUR BOWL-OF-SUPPER SOUP

Sprinkle-overs: Toasted seeds and nuts - coarsely chopped peanuts, cashews, green pepitas, sesame seeds or sunflower seeds. If you have time, toast a batch of nuts or seeds and keep them in the freezer to use whenever your soup or salad or vegetable can use some oomph.

Swirl-ins: A spoonful of plain Greek or regular yogurt, sour cream or a splash of cream.

Spoon-ins: A spoonful of cream cheese, ricotta cheese, herbed cream cheese, goat cheese/chèvre, crumbled feta or blue cheese.

Drizzle-ins: Hot sauce, lemon or lime juice, apple cider vinegar, white balsamic vinegar, toasted sesame oil, good olive oil.

Crunch-ins: Croutons, toasted pita or naan, melba toasts, crackers, bits of crisp bacon. Don't forget freshly popped corn.

Shred-overs: Shred Cheddar, Jarlsberg, Gouda or mozzarella. Parmigiano Reggiano, or its less-expensive stand-ins: Grana Padano, Asiago or Romano.

Pep-ups: Shredded spinach (or kale), sliced green onions, shredded radishes, minced parsley, basil or cilantro. 🌱

PHOTO: OLGA BOMBOLIGNA



Bakery in a box

A whole new way to bake from scratch

by **Andrew Dobson**

Fans of *Top Chef Canada* will recognize Joanna Notkin, a Montreal-based caterer who impressed judges with her mouth-watering culinary creations. During the pandemic, Notkin launched Maison Zoe Ford, an online shop selling gourmet dessert mixes.

The Maison Zoe Ford at-home collection features boxed mixes like Little Angels Powdered Doughnuts, Speedy Cinnamon Rolls, Crispy Cinnamon Doughnut Pancakes and Big Time Brownies. They're so easy to prepare, and your friends and family will be shocked that you didn't pick them up at a fancy bakery!

The online shop also sells must-have pantry items like high-quality baking chocolate, Canadian barrel-aged maple syrup, Dutch-process cocoa powder and Quebec maple sugar.

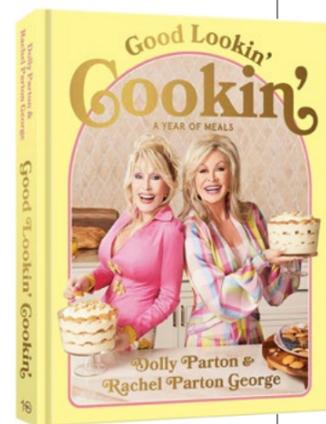
Available at zoeford.com.

Good Lookin' Cookin'

After the launch of Dolly Parton's Southern-inspired cake mixes with Duncan Hines, it's no surprise that the country music queen has launched a cookbook with her sister Rachel Parton George.

In *Good Lookin' Cookin': A Year of Meals*, Dolly and Rachel share cherished recipes for a year of meals for friends and family, including 12 multi-course menus for New Year's Day, Easter, Mother's Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas and more. You'll learn how much butter or whipped cream goes into a "Dolly Dollop," what condiment is always on the table at Parton family feasts and what special dish Rachel prepares for Dolly each year to celebrate her birthday.

Must-try recipes include Southern classics like Country Ham & Biscuits, Meatloaf, Watermelon Salad, Mac and Cheese, and Strawberry Shortcake. Available at Chapters Indigo.



The Spherificator

Looking for the perfect gift for the food lover in your life? The Spherificator is a modern kitchen tool that transforms virtually any liquid into caviar-shaped pearls that burst with flavour.

The machine, a little smaller than a wine bottle, comes with three nozzles to create various-sized pearls. You blend your ingredients to a liquid consistency, let it rest for a couple of hours, then pour the mixture into the Spherificator, turn it on, and out shoot your pearls. Surprise guests at your next dinner party with balsamic pearls on a Caesar salad or espresso caviar on top of creamy panna cotta.

Available at amazon.ca.



Club House Tamarind and Pasilla Chile Seasoning

Much like Pantone's annual colour-of-the-year reveal, Club House announces its flavour of the year based on research on global culinary trends.

The 24th edition of the Club House Flavour Forecast celebrates the sour flavour of tamarind, a tropical fruit that tastes both sweet and sour and is a staple in global cuisines. This tangy, Mexican-inspired seasoning blend pairs the fruit with the mild heat of pasilla chiles and savoury notes of paprika, coriander and onion, and adds a whole new layer of flavour to your favourite savoury dishes. To learn more about the 2024 flavour of the year and for easy recipes, visit clubhouseforchefs.ca.

Available at your local grocery store. 🍷

PHOTOS, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COURTESY OF ZOE FORD, THE SPHERIFICATOR, ATLA SSTUDIO, INDIGO

Celebrate a sparkling holiday

This year, non-alcoholic bubbly puts some twinkle in your glass

by **Charlene Rooke**



There will be a toast, or three, or 10, over the holiday season, and when you stock up for entertaining and for gifting this year, plan to include some bottles of non-alcoholic sparkling wine. They are better in quality than ever and available everywhere from grocery and liquor stores to specialty e-commerce sites like sansomium.com and upsidedrinks.ca.

Unlike some non-alcoholic beer and spirits, most non-alcoholic wines are made as traditional wines and then de-alcoholized, meaning they retain the aromas and flavours of real wine. They typically also retain a trace of alcohol by volume; by law less than 0.5 per cent qualifies as "no alcohol," but those with allergies should still beware.

Because bubbly has some effervescence for mouthfeel, and like many traditional sparkling wines carry a little natural sweetness, non-alcoholic bubbly tends to be the best-tasting, sparkling jewels in the crown of non-alcoholic drinks.

Ask a sommelier which brand they favour, and chances are they'll mention

Eins Zwei Zero, made by the respected Leitz winery in Germany. The Sparkling Rosé and Riesling (available in pretty bottles, as well as cute 250-millilitre cans) have authentic depth and fizz.

Also likely to be name-checked are Edendale wines from Australia, some of the most highly awarded alcohol-removed (and slightly more expensive) global bubbly. Try the very festive ruby-coloured Non-Alc Sparkling Shiraz, Down Under's signature grape variety.

From Denmark, ISH sparkling wines are part of an excellent non-alcoholic product line that also includes spirits and canned cocktails. ISH Sparkling Rosé, made from Merlot and Pinot Noir grapes, was the favourite non-alc sparkler named by *The New York Times*.

Mainstream bubbly brands are in on the action, too. Non-alcoholic bottlings of German sekt from Henkell, Prosecco from Bottega, French sparkling from JP Chenet and Cava from Freixenet are widely available at liquor stores, typically for less than \$15 a bottle. Cheers to that! 🍷



Booze-free bubbly ideas

- In a Champagne coupe, pour non-boozy bubbles over a scoop of sorbet garnished with fruit or berries and a sprig of fresh herb like mint or rosemary.
- Use peach or orange purée or juice bubbled with non-alc wine to make guilt-free Bellinis and Mimosas.
- Dose Martini Vibrante or Floreale non-alcoholic aperitifs (at grocery stores) with non-alc bubbles to make a spritz.
- A Sober 75 uses the French 75 combination of 1/2 ounce each of lemon juice and simple syrup in a flute, but with 1 ounce non-alc gin, topped with non-alc bubbly.

PHOTO, COURTESY OF EDENVALE. ILLUSTRATION, JOSIAH GORDON

Synchronized to win

In dragon boat, teamwork wins world championships

by **Dave Hunt** (District 34 York Region), **Kim Short** (District 13 Hamilton-Wentworth, Haldimand) and **Cheryl Shannon** (District 24 Scarborough and East York), as told to **Martin Zibauer**



For Kim Short, Cheryl Shannon and Dave Hunt, racing dragon boats is more than a recreational activity. The sport has become the focus of hard work, dedicated physical training and coordinated teamwork – earning these retired teachers a place on the Canadian national team and taking them to the most recent World Dragon Boat Racing Championships in Pattaya, Thailand, in August 2023. In their division, the Canadian Senior C team won 12 gold and two silver medals (out of 21 events), contributing to Canada’s complete domination of the total medal count. O Canada, indeed!

The trio are all on the Senior C national team, made up of athletes aged 60 and older. But within that larger team, they break out for different competitions: women, open and mixed, in four race lengths. Hunt paddles on the open and mixed teams; Short paddles on the women’s team. Shannon, a long-time competitive paddler, now steers for women’s, mixed and some open teams.

Hunt and Shannon are members of Evolution Paddling Club in Toronto; Short is a long-time member of the Knot A Breast team in Hamilton.

PHOTOS, COURTESY OF DAVE HUNT AND KIM SHORT



Dave Hunt

“In the boat, I’m typically in the ‘engine room.’ The front section is called ‘the strokes,’ and they set the pace. The middle section, the engine room, are the big guys, and the back section, called ‘the rockets,’ are dealing with the fast water.

“Dragon boat started in China about 2,000 years ago. Millions of people participate in China, but over the past 40 years, the sport has become extremely popular in Canada. I understand there are about 150 teams in the Toronto area alone. Based on our medal count at the last world championships in Thailand, we’re actually the top-performing country in the world now.

“I started dragon boat in my late 50s, after a teacher came into the weight room at school and started talking about his team trying to qualify for the Club Crew World Championships in Hungary. There aren’t a lot of team sports for people in our age group, where you can still compete at a high level.

“Our national team isn’t like an Olympic team, say, where you live and train together for weeks. I train with some team members three or four times a week, but I only see the full crew together a few times before a major competition. When we all understand the racing plan and our coaches’ expectations – where we put the paddle in, where we finish, how quickly we come out of the water, how we pause in front of strokes – then we can come together as a competitive crew and sync up quite quickly.

“When I was in Thailand, I really felt I was in the best physical shape I’ve ever been in, but the benefits are mental, too. Paddling out on dead calm water from the Toronto Sailing & Canoe Club at 5:30 in the morning, seeing the sunrise and the Toronto skyline – it’s quite breathtaking, actually. And you don’t have to be a competitive person to enjoy dragon boat. There are many more teams that are mostly recreational. At a regatta, you’ll see teams in silly costumes and serious teams in matching athletic uniforms.

“For me, transitioning into retirement was a challenge without the structure of five clearly defined periods each day. Dragon boat has given me a new focus.”



Left: Dave Hunt in action. Right: Kim Short, right – proud Canadians in Thailand!

Kim Short

“There’s a big world of breast-cancer teams in dragon boat. For me, starting on a breast-cancer team – which we called a floating support group – provided camaraderie and very special connections with people who had gone through a similar experience.

“My husband took a photo of me stepping into the boat at my first practice. I look so tentative then, but through the sport I’ve become stronger at this age than ever before, with more mental confidence and belief in myself.

“Competing on the national team, the connections I’ve made with the other paddlers are somehow different than with other friends, because we experience extreme highs and lows together. The day before our first race at the world championships in Thailand last year, I injured myself. It was a silly fall and I’d worked so hard to get on the team, so I was really, really upset with myself. Since I couldn’t paddle, I took over as the drummer. I’d never been a drummer before, but the team roster was already entered and we didn’t have a lot of latitude.

“The drummer sits at the front, facing the paddlers. For the first time, I could see all 20 women paddling. Seeing their grit and determination, and how hard they were working, I was very emotional – and grateful to be part of it. We won, and I was able to tough it out and paddle again a couple of days later.

“I never imagined that one day I’d be wearing a Team Canada jersey, on a podium, singing ‘O Canada.’ Now I can’t imagine my life without dragon boat.”

“Dragon boat started in China about 2,000 years ago. Millions of people participate in China, but over the past 40 years, the sport has become extremely popular in Canada.”

—Dave Hunt



Cheryl Shannon steering in Thailand at the World Championships.

PADDLING CREW PLACEMENT

The team coach decides where the 20 paddlers on a standard team sit, based on weight, strength and skill - the boat has to balance side to side and be coordinated front to back.

The paddlers in the front three rows are nicknamed “the strokes.” They’re the ones paddling into still, heavy water; on many teams, they set the paddling pace. All the paddlers have to move in a coordinated way, but it’s especially important that the front ones are very precise in timing. The drummer at the front helps communicate the pace to everyone else.

The “engine room” is the middle four rows. On a mixed team, it’s usually made up of heavier men with upper body strength, who provide a lot of power for the boat.

In the back three rows, “the rockets” need to be paddlers with strength, excellent technique and a longer stroke, so they can pull through more water when it’s already churned up and moving. “It shouldn’t feel like you’re cutting into soft butter,” Cheryl Shannon says. “The paddle should go into frozen butter, so you can pull the boat forward.”

The steersperson or “steer” is at the back, using an oar-like rudder to adjust the boat’s direction for the most efficient, strategic position at all times.

The strategy for seating paddlers and the role of each section can vary from team to team and coach to coach. Coaches have their own theories about how to get the most out of a crew - akin to hockey coaches placing different emphasis on offence and defence. And recreational teams with novice paddlers are often organized differently than experienced competitive teams.

Cheryl Shannon

“Dragon boat keeps me fit and keeps me working towards a goal, meeting new people who share similar goals. As I started competing internationally, dragon boat has taken me to places I wouldn’t have chosen myself.

“After paddling for many years on national teams, I was looking for a new challenge. I’m currently a steersperson on the team. It’s a skill I haven’t completely mastered yet, but it’s a way to push myself forward. Last year, I steered at the world championships on the national team.

“A steer keeps the boat on target around the course. The steer also uses strategy, especially on an oval course, where we can come inside like a runner in an 800-metre race. On many teams, steers also make calls, so if I feel the power getting soft, I might call for a ‘power five,’ or if we’re getting tired, I might call for the stroke to lengthen.

“When we’re in sync, we have more power. If we’re not all paddling the same, it’s not productive - it’s more like a tug of war. Teams come together when everyone has the same goal, and when communications and feedback are clear. Success as a team always helps too.

“Dragon boat is good for people who like to compete but don’t want to be the only person onstage, win or lose. You can compete, you can work hard, but you’re doing it as a group. When you do well, you share the win, and when you don’t, you support each other. That’s when we tell each other, ‘We’ll get them next time.’”

PHOTO, COURTESY OF CHERYL SHANNON

Retirement plans 2.0

Is it time to pivot your retirement plans?

by Lesley-Anne Scorgie



We’re living longer and costs are rising, so now might be the time to revisit your financial plan. Consider these areas to make sure you’re still on track.

EXTEND YOUR FINANCIAL PLAN TIMEFRAME

I guide most people to extend their financial plan timeframe until age 100. There are more centenarians than ever before (triple the number in Canada since 2000), and if that trend continues, you might hit that mark, too. Heck, my grandmother is 102 and is still living independently. My other grandmother recently passed only days away from her 103rd birthday.

AMPLIFY CARE COSTS

Say you do live an extra 10 years and require long-term care the majority of that additional time. Does your plan allow for those costs? My advice: Plan for at least a mid-level version of long-term care, and for at least twice as long as you may have originally accounted for. These costs show no signs of slowing, and despite financially supportive programs for aging in place, that option is costly. Only good things can come from doing early research on your future care requirements, and reflecting those estimates in your plans.

MAKE THE NECESSARY CHANGES TO YOUR BUDGET TODAY

Reliable indexed pension, RRIF (Registered Retirement Income Fund) withdrawals, Canada Pension Plan, Old Age Security or not, if you’re planning for a longer life, and greater care costs, you might need to shift aspects of your spending and savings habits, today.

For example, would it be wise to start saving again by socking away money

every month in a tax-free savings account (TFSA) or high-interest savings account (HISA)? Should you shift your travel plans to prioritize those experiences sooner in your plan, and perhaps scaled-down versions of those trips, to make the money last longer? Is downsizing an option in order to shore up your nest egg?

Following a budget template will be extremely helpful in staying on track with your spending. Pick any kind, but ensure you like it and can stick with it.

GET CLOSER TO YOUR FINANCIAL PLANNER OR MONEY COACH

They’ll help flag any gaps between your current sources of income in retirement, the pace you’re spending at, and what you’ll need to preserve for those later years. These professionals can also be quite creative with potential solutions to remedy gaps. I’ve gone so far as to recommend lucrative side hustles for some of my retired clients, who’ve filled their wallets and built beautiful social connections at the same time.

Your insurance, will and power of attorney should also be reviewed - should you shift insurance coverage, add back-up executors (what if you outlive the ones you’ve listed?) and more.

DON’T GET UPSET WHEN YOUR CHILDREN ASK YOU ABOUT YOUR FINANCES

The financial impact of aging is a family affair. Adult children often try to understand how ready you are for retirement, your wishes for when you pass away and, nowadays, whether there’s any flexibility to help them buy a home or support grandchildren with post-secondary costs, et cetera. They don’t view the latter as rude, by the way; with extremely high costs, and incomes that are not keeping up, asking for financial help is commonplace.

My advice? Shed some light on your situation, particularly if you might need their help down the road. That gives them an opportunity to plan.

ILLUSTRATION, OLGABUDRINA

The time of your life

What advice would you share with a new retiree?



Never look back! Begin right away to find activities to fill your time, volunteer, travel (if that suits you) and foster old friendships and find new ones, too!

Liz Visentin
(District 13 Hamilton-Wentworth, Haldimand)

Retire “to” something. I immediately joined the Canadian Ski Patrol for the winter and worked at a golf course.

David Caruana
(District 24 Scarborough and East York)

Do what you love and what you haven’t had time to do.

Marie-Paule Landriault
(District 45 EstariO)

Figure out what you like to do, and realize that there may be a NEW way to do it in retirement.

Kathy Mack
(District 50 Atlantic)

I found the feeling of being retired truly liberating. The freedom to eat, sleep and do whatever I want at whatever time I desire gives me such pleasure and gratitude that I can enjoy this chapter of my life with health and happiness. This is finally the time to put yourself first.

Daniela Tanel-Gonzalez
(District 34 York Region)

Join interest groups, seniors’ groups; get involved in the church, the Legion. Volunteer for a cause you support. Get involved in politics.

Bonita O’Neill
(District 18 Haliburton, Kawartha Lakes)

Follow your passions. Continue learning new things. Try those things you had no time to explore while working. As the saying goes, just do it!

Marlene Castura
(District 13 Hamilton-Wentworth, Haldimand)

Be of service. If your service is considered valuable, don’t hesitate to make a profit from it. Plan ahead, a little bit. Make sure you always have something to look forward to (tonight’s ball game, next month’s visit to your daughter in Newfoundland).

John Mackenzie
(District 6 Parry Sound)

I am a new retiree, and this first year was an eye-opener. My advice to others and myself is to do at least one small thing on my to-do list each day and then do something for me. I have started doing that and am beginning to feel good about it. I think my main struggle is that I have no schedule!

Donna Lafrance
(District 32 Prescott-Russell)

Discover what is out there beyond the four walls of the classroom.

Pamela McCowan
(District 10 Bruce, Grey, Dufferin)

Let go of the past and accept what comes your way for volunteering, etc. Assess your skills and apply them to helping others.

Douglas G. Maunder
(District 34 York Region)

Go to events held by your district. Volunteer somewhere – anywhere!

Carolynne Paton
(District 12 Norfolk)

Ask yourself: “What have I not done and still want to do?” Then plan how to do it.

Joanne Braaksma
(District 27 Ottawa-Carleton)

Retire TO something, not just FROM something. Think beyond yourself. Help others and your own life will be enriched.

Janice Wasik
(District 42 Mainland British Columbia)

Get involved in something you always wanted to do but were unable to while teaching. And remember to take care of yourself.

Rosemary Cammaert
(District 21 Renfrew)

Continue to do things you enjoy, and try something that you have never tried before. DO NOT let anyone hold you back.

Christine Pickering
(District 23 North York)

ILLUSTRATION, DREW SHANNON

Take the worry out of unexpected trip cancellations or interruptions

RTOERO Extended Health Care policyholders have a new option to top up existing trip cancellation and interruption coverage, up to \$6,000 per person, per trip for cancellation or interruption expenses.

For full details, including the premiums and application form, visit rtoero.ca/insurance/supplemental-travel.

Not a member of the RTOERO Extended Health Care plan?

That’s not a problem, because **RTOERO** has a new trip cancellation/interruption insurance option for you! This plan covers you for an unlimited number of trips throughout the policy year.

For full details, including the premiums and application form, visit rtoero.ca/insurance/trip-cancellation-interruption.

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