

Report Thirty-One

President's Message – Anne Smith

It feels like spring is finally on its way! I'm loving the sunshine and warmer weather. It really helps when we can get outside for walks and barbecues. With the vaccine roll-out, it felt like we were making progress after over a year of isolation and lockdowns. But we are now in the midst of the third wave with variants that are more rapidly spread and have more severe symptoms. As this newsletter is going to print, we again have a Stay at Home order. We need to continue being vigilant and to follow the Covid protocols. Stay strong! We hope that you have been coping and feeling supported. It will be so wonderful when we can meet in person and get back to some semblance of normalcy.

Political Advocacy

RTOERO has been active on a number of fronts. Our organization advocates for critical policy improvements to address urgent needs now and create a more secure and compassionate future for everyone. We are focused on three important topics:

- A coordinated seniors' strategy at all levels of government, including income security, addressing social isolations, support for friend and family caregivers, options for aging at home and rights for seniors;
- Availability of geriatric health care, including geriatric training for medical students, coordinated strategies to address the complex health needs of older adults, and acting to prevent and address elder abuse;
- Ongoing environmental stewardship for the survival of current and future generations, including the responsible use of resources, conservation and protection of air, land and water.

There are position papers and valuable information on the RTOERO website at rtoero.ca/giving-back/advocacy/.

This year, each district was encouraged to focus on one of these issues. Although all of them are critical and deserving of our attention, District 31 has chosen to concentrate our efforts on what's happening in long term care facilities. You can find all about it in Brenda's political advocacy article.

Brenda also references the RTOERO Vibrant Voices webinar series:

- *Rights of Older Persons: Support, Ratify, Demand Now* was shown on February 10th – You can still watch this by going to rtoero.ca/vibrant-voices/ and clicking on the button, Watch the recording.
- *The Aging Continuum: Secure the Support Necessary for the Journey* was on March 17th. This is the one Brenda includes in her article in this newsletter. The recording is not yet available on the website.
- *Our Earth Our Responsibility: Take Action* will be shown on April 29th. You can register to get the link for this one by going to the website above and clicking on the button, Register.

This series has been excellent so far and is well worth watching.

Donations

Because we had a surplus this year, the Executive made the following \$500 donations on behalf of RTOERO District 31 to:

- The Alzheimer's Society;
- The Canadian Red Cross;
- The Children's Foundation Guelph-Wellington; and
- Hospice Wellington.

Personal Record Document

RTOERO has created a document, The Personal Record of Important Data and Documents, which you can find on the RTOERO website at rtoero.ca/how-to-create-an-inventory-of-important-documents-and-contacts. It is intended to be filled out, printed and kept in a safe place.

Something to Shout About

We are always interested in hearing from our members about what they are doing in the community. We print that in our Something to Shout About section. We would like to thank those members who responded to our latest eBlast and encourage others to do the same. We love hearing your stories.

Goodwill – Joyce Barnes

“Keep your face always toward the sunshine – and shadows will fall behind you.” *Walt Whitman*

RTOERO District 31 Goodwill Committee wishes to help spread sunshine in our members' lives by caring, celebrating and providing compassion during the times “shadows” appear in our lives.

Please help us to do this by contacting any of the members of the District 31 Goodwill Committee listed below. We may also be contacted through the District 31 website, www.rto31.org.

Arthur, Mount Forest, Harriston

Joyce Barnes 519-848-2351
joyce.barnes@sympatico.ca

Drayton, Moorefield, Palmerston

Jean Brodhaecker 519-638-2291

Elora, Fergus, Salem, Alma

Marg Hall 519-846-5235
margcarl.hall@gmail.com

Rockwood, Hillsburgh, Erin

Marina Howlett 519-836-8585
howlettmarina@gmail.com

Guelph

Brenda McGinnis 519-824-5263
dmcginc602@rogers.com

Nancy Baker 519-822-6653
nancyida@sympatico.ca

Mary Hermann 519-821-3892
maryhermann@rogers.com

Please contact the Membership Department at RTOERO National Office at 1-800-361-9888 if there are any changes in your personal information so our Goodwill records are up to date.

May the sun shine in your life.

RTOERO Benefits Report – Shirley Goodbrand

The Venngo Member Perk is now available to all RTOERO members. Up to now, this savings program was only available to members who had the extended health care plan.

You will need your RTOERO membership ID to activate your membership. Visit rtoero.ca/services/venngo-memberperks/ to create your account and start saving. You can also download the Venngo app from the App Store for your phone.

Political Advocacy – Brenda McGinnis

“It takes a village to raise a child and a community to care for an older adult.”

This was the quote that Anita Plunkett used to begin the outstanding Vibrant Voices Seminar on The Aging Continuum. Both she and Grace Welch offered us valuable information, excellent ideas for advocacy, and great motivation to be part of the community that is advocating for better living conditions for older adults.

For the past few months, our District has been focusing on **what is happening in Long Term Care Homes**. It is not that we don't care deeply about other issues like the environment and education and health care in general, it is just that

this issue has been critical - literally a matter of life or death.

There have been a few **encouraging signs** that the Provincial Government is hearing part of what we have been advocating on National, Provincial and Local levels.

- For example, money has been allocated to local LTC homes to increase testing and for PPE's and cleaning.
- Almost all of the residents in LTC homes have been vaccinated and the horrific death rate due to COVID-19 has been virtually halted.

All of the medical experts in the field of Long Term Care and our members who have experienced Long Term Care themselves and who have shared their stories with us have agreed that there are **certain basic elements** that must occur before there is an improvement in service in Long Term Care homes.

The bottom line is that:

- PSW's who work in these homes must receive a decent living wage and benefits which include paid sick days.
- They need better training which includes training in the area of gerontology.
- More PSW's and nurses need to be hired for each LTC Home so these medical professionals have enough time and support to give proper care to residents.
- A great deal of evidence indicates that non-profit homes do a much better job of caring for vulnerable adults than do for-profit homes.
- Finally, while we definitely need more spaces for LTC residents, we need to look at the buildings of these residences. These buildings should be organized more like homes than institutions and most definitely the room should ideally be for one person and never more than two.

Anita Plunkett and Grace Welch asked us to **pay attention to the Ontario budget** which was delivered on March 24th to see how serious the government is about improvements to Long Term Care.

Currently PSW's:

- earn about \$18-\$20 per hour,
- often have just part-time work,
- have no benefits and
- have no paid sick leave.

And Anita Plunkett also pointed out that:

- about 12,000 PSW's graduate from programs every year but there is still a shortfall of 4,000 PSW's a year.
- over 40% of PSW's leave the field within the first two years.

The budget is extending the temporary \$3 per hour raise to June but there are no plans to extend it nor are there any provisions for paid sick leave or other benefits. According to Rob Ferguson in *The Toronto Star*, it is thought that maybe the government is "waiting on nursing home wages until the end of April, when a commission into the deadly impacts of COVID-19 in long-term care releases its final report." We anticipate receiving the recommendations of this report and hope that these recommendations will be implemented.

While advocates are pleased that the government is planning to increase the number of hours residents receive care to 4 hours a day, we are disappointed that this won't occur for 4 years. Most of our current residents won't live to receive this care.

The Webinar presenters also mentioned the **crisis of care for seniors who are living in their homes** and would benefit greatly from some PSW care. The home care PSW's are paid even less than the LTC home PSW's and have even worse working conditions. We must invest in these services as well.

All of us, as a caring community, must **keep advocating for improvements** in the health care system for older adults. We can do this by writing to our politicians - municipal, provincial, and federal. We must thank them for the improvements they are starting to make but must also strongly encourage them to make more essential improvements. Much work and investment still need to be done after decades of neglect. Now seems to be the ideal time to really push for this issue.

Again, while our district has chosen to focus on advocating for Long Term Care, we know that many of our members are also very concerned about the environment. We strongly encourage all of our members to attend the **Vibrant Voices Webinar, "Our Earth"** on April 29th at 1 p.m. These webinars at <https://rtoero.ca/vibrant-voices/> are always informative, motivating and well worth your time.

Bring a Book Donation – Nancy Baker



Since our spring luncheon, where we collect books to donate annually to the Action Read Literacy Centre, was cancelled last year and will be again this year, the Executive has made a donation of \$500 to the Centre from RTOERO District 31.

Travel Report – Lynn Morrison

Hi Folks,

In the last while, I've had lots of time for thinking, remembering, and hoping.

Now I'd like you to do some thinking, remembering and hoping about our trips in the past and about travelling in the future.

Call me at 519-323-2419 or email me at lynnmorrison@wightman.ca. Let me know:

- What are your thoughts or memories of fun times you had on our previous tours?
- Do you have some photos from those trips that you'd like to share?
- Where you would be interested in going when things open up again, either day or overnight trips? What would you like to do?

I'm always glad for your suggestions.

Hope to hear from YOU.

In Memoriam

"The loss is immeasurable but so is the love that remains."

RTOERO District 31 extends sympathy to all the families and friends of our departed loved ones:

Jean Connor – Fergus

Coralie Corlett – Elora

D. Ivan MacLean – Guelph

Michelle Villeneuve - Guelph

Membership—Scott Montgomery

As spring begins, our members look forward to getting outside to tend to gardens, have safe, socially-distanced conversations outside with friends, and safely reacquaint themselves with their communities after our most recent lockdown.

Our most recent membership numbers include:

- 1 377 retired educators including 6 new, recently retired educators;
- 38 actively working RTOERO members;
- 51 members who are over the age of 90; and
- 8 members who are under the age of 54.

Please, if you have friends who are still working in schools, remind them that they can join RTOERO before they retire without an annual fee. When they retire, the membership fee and benefit fees are less than other educational organizations.

Something to Shout About

District 31 is blessed with many talented and creative members who are engaged in many interesting and exciting activities. We continue to feature some of these achievements in our newsletters.

Please let our executive know about any of our members who are involved in interesting adventures or who have received awards or special

recognition for their work. We would like to acknowledge and celebrate and support the accomplishments and endeavours of our members.

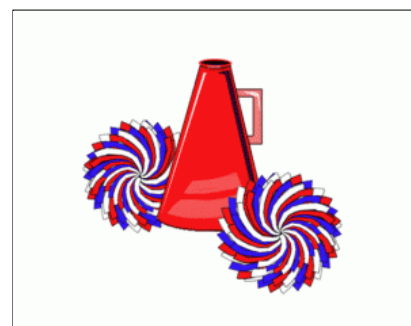
Anne Armstrong writes: " There wasn't much money available for piano lessons when I arrived in Canada. I tried to learn when I was in my twenties, even bought a piano, but I found that in fact, having toddlers on the bench beside me, was not conducive to practice. Enter the pandemic. I now had time to burn, lingering motivation, and enough money to hit Best Buy! I bought a fiery red Casiotone in October, an early Christmas present, a couple of manuals at Chapters, and I was off. After many attempts at getting the right height of chair. (thanks to my husband) and dealing with all the minor setbacks of an older body, I was set. I play every day rain or shine. I love my little keyboard. Now that my vaccine appointment is on the calendar, and my days start to fill up, I am keen to keep playing. My keyboard, which provides hours of enjoyment and challenge, was the best gift I could have given myself."

Glen Froom has recently (in November 2020) been certified as a Certified Senior Fitness Instructor (CSFI) through the Canadian Centre for Activity and Aging (CCAA) based out of Western University in London, Ontario. The certification program is for anyone who wants to learn how to design and lead effective fitness classes for community-dwelling older adults. Performance objectives promote the philosophy of CCAA, screen and assess older adults for their fitness program, use data, implement, evaluate exercise prescriptions to meet the unique needs of participants, provide a safe and participant-centred environment, and continued education towards recertification. Certification requires the candidate to complete a program involving thirty-six hours of in-class training, a take home exam achieving at least 80% success, at least sixteen hours of practicum supervised by a qualified CSFI, and a one-hour participant-based fitness program evaluation.

John Rawbone's 13 year-old granddaughter created a business and a website all by herself. She is selling 6 different colours of Tie dye masks (or a colour of your choice). She asked John's wife, Donna, to help her put positive tie dye words in vinyl on the masks to spread positivity in these times. The masks are \$6.00 each or \$5.00 with no word. A portion of the profits goes to the food bank. The masks are 3-ply soft cotton. If you are interested, you can order on-line at positivetiedye.com.

Joe Tersigni wrote a nostalgic article for *Guelph Today* titled: "Remembering the Games of the Ward" in which he remembers and explains such children's classics as: tin can cricket, marbles, (and getting big arnees from the old International Malleable Iron plant on Stevenson Street), chestnuts, cat and the rat, cheese roll, kick the can, and bocce. Many board games were also played: Table Hockey, Monopoly, Checkers, Chinese Checkers, Snakes and Ladders, Parcheesi and Battleship. He concludes the article with: "In these challenging pandemic times, maybe some of these games from the Ward could be revived to add a little variety to the lives of our kids and keep them happy and healthy, both mentally and physically."

Rick Westgarth wrote that "without Fairs to compete in during the pandemic, I decided to make jams and jellies for other causes. So far, I have made over 450 jars of jam/jelly that I have given away. I gave jam to our veterinarian's office, our pharmacy, our chiropractor's office, our dentist's office, and to anyone else to whom Dianne and I talked. I am currently making about 100 jars which I am taking to the Wellington Dufferin Guelph public health office in the next week or two."



RTO District 31 Executive 2020-2022

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	Brian Serafini	bserafini@rogers.com	519-763-0069

Upcoming Virtual Meeting Dates

April 26, 2021 District 31 Executive Meeting

April 29, 2021 1:00 pm Vibrant Voices Webinar,
"Our Earth"

May 17, 2021 RTOERO Annual Meeting

May 19, 2021 RTOERO Spring Forum

*District 31 Executive tentatively plans to meet
on the last Monday of the month.*

District Website

Visit our District website at rto31.org for up-to-date information about RTOERO events in Guelph and Wellington County and for photos of past events.

Each edition of Report Thirty-One is posted on the website. We encourage you to try opting for a digital version. If you would prefer to get your newsletter online, email John at mistercanoehead@yahoo.com.

RTOERO District 31 Budget 2021

Income

	Budget 2020	Actual 2020	Budget 2021
Annual Rebate	20 300.00	21 462.56	22 300.00
Retirement Planning Wkshp	.00	.00	.00
Luncheons	2 600.00	.00	.00
Bank Error	.00	.50	.00
Wellness Workshop	300.00	.00	.00
Community Grant (PSTO)	4 000.00	4 000.00	2 500.00
Miscellaneous	.00	500.00	.00
Carry forward from 2020	.00	.00	13 000.00
TOTAL	27 200.00	25 963.06	39 100.00

Expenses

	Budget 2020	Actual 2020	Budget 2021
Goodwill	2 000.00	1 659.65	2 000.00
PSTO (Community Grant)	.00	4 000.00	2 500.00
Retirement Planning Wkshp	200.00	489.35	200.00
Executive	1 500.00	67.00	700.00
District Luncheons	7 000.00	22.66	4 000.00
RTOERO Annual Mtg/Forum	2 000.00	.00	2 000.00
Newsletter	4 000.00	3 895.63	4 000.00
Office Expenses	500.00	127.09	500.00
Transportation	1 300.00	.00	900.00
Website	300.00	276.28	300.00
Scholarships	600.00	600.00	600.00
RTOERO Foundation	100.00	200.00	200.00
Christmas Donations	500.00	600.00	600.00
G/W Comm. Social Justice	1 100.00	50.00	50.00
Wellness Workshop	500.00	.00	.00
Miscellaneous (donations to teacher unions)	.00	600.00	.00
Additional Charitable Donations	.00	.00	5 000.00
Reserve Fund	.00	.00	8 000.00
TOTAL	22 100.00	12 587.66	31 550.00
SURPLUS	5 100.00	13 375.40	7 550.00

RTOERO District 31
c/o Mike Curtis, Treasurer
9450 Copeland Path, RR #2
Erin ON
N0B 1T0

Change of Address or Status

It is imperative that, if you have changed:

- your postal address
- your email address
- your phone number or
- your status,

you contact:

- OTPPB (5650 Yonge St., Toronto M2M 4H5 or 1-800-361-0105)
- RTOERO (rtoero.ca or 1-800-361-9888) - Ask for Membership, or email membership@rtoero.ca.

National Office sends out monthly membership lists which we use to create a database for sending out newsletters. Every attempt is made to ensure that this information is correct and up-to-date.

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