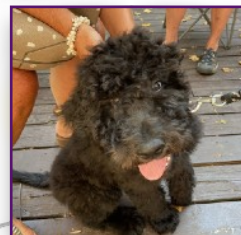


HIGHLIGHTS OF BEYOND THE BELL PICNIC



September 9 at *Kerr Park*

Members enjoyed perfect weather for our first in-person event since the pandemic began.



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seeks volunteers



Our executive could use your help!

Health Plan claims now due within 6 months of service

October has been a very educational month for me, having attended two workshops and the annual RTOERO Fall Forum. At each event I was reminded of the primary goals of our organization:

- ◆ Be the trusted voice for the broader education community;
- ◆ Improve the lives of members and seniors;
- ◆ Broaden the membership base.

Our District Executive will meet virtually in November to plan the way forward. We will discuss ways of best supporting our members and keeping lines of communications open to all our 500+ members and the numerous potential members in Muskoka.

If any member would like to sit in as a guest at our online meetings, please email president46@districts.rtoero.ca to get the meeting link.

Information that I gained in October that will interest our members includes the following:

The funding our District receives is primarily earmarked for our members. It allows us to organize events such as the *Beyond the Bell Picnic*, to support our members in celebrating birthdays for the more life-experienced members (80+), and to provide support in other ways. We have a Goodwill team that works tirelessly in this regard. As well, we plan to continue having our Bursary team provide bursary support for local students entering post-secondary educational institutions.

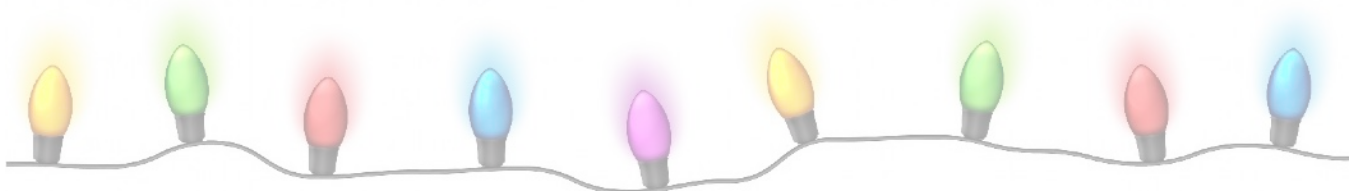
The health plan improvements will be shared with your District executive in November, and later with all our members. You should be aware of the new requirement to make any RTOERO plan claims within 6 months of the health, dental, or travel events. You can claim using the online form at <https://insurance.johnson.ca/>. For help you can also call 1-800-361-9888 or email insurance@rtoero.ca

We are exploring ways to better interact with our members who are still employed in educational settings and yet to retire. We will plan events for these members to respect the fact that they have working hours. Retirement Planning Workshops will continue to be available online for potential members. We encourage sharing the RPW date and link with your friends who are employed in any position with the local School Board, Community College or private school.

Our Executive could use your help! Perhaps you can spare some time to volunteer as an executive member at large. With your assistance, we can organize more ways to support our members and potential members still working in education. Be sure to contact me if you can help.



Laurie Fountain,
President, District 46 Muskoka



Faces of RTOERO Muskoka





Bursaries aid 8 Muskoka students

Early each year we send a detailed outline of our application process with spring deadline to all four high schools in Muskoka. Current-year graduates planning to enter a post-secondary program are eligible. During a pandemic students are challenged with unfamiliar hurdles, so this year we also welcomed applicants who took a gap year after graduating in 2021.

Budgetary savings generated by ongoing isolation restrictions allowed us to boost the bursary pool for the second year in a row. Eight applications were ranked according to a rubric, and \$8000 shared amongst them.

Rank #	Bursary
1	\$3000
2 - 4	\$1000
5 - 8	\$500

This year's applicants were entering programs in Environmental Science, Molecular Biology and Genetics, Biochemistry, Teaching, Law, and Nursing.



Pat Schofield, Bursaries



Shutterstock



John Beatty, Political Advocacy



2023 Post-Secondary Scholarship application now available on the RTOERO website at the following link: <https://rtoero.ca/giving-back/scholarships/>.

In addition to the online application, you will find information about eligibility and criteria, as well as downloadable application instructions.

Please note that applications are to be completed by the student applying, not the sponsoring RTOERO member, and can be accessed via the "apply" button at <https://rtoero.ca/giving-back/scholarships/>.

**Deadline to apply is
January 13, 2023 at midnight.**

If you have any questions please contact Anna-Rita Lunghi (alunghi@rtoero.ca) or Jessica Martin (jmartin@rtoero.ca).

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

- ◆ Secretary
- ◆ Benefits Rep
- ◆ 1st and 2nd Vice Presidents
- ◆ Political Advocacy

Please contact **Laurie Fountain** or any member of the executive if you are interested in learning more about any of these roles.

president46@districts.rtoero.ca



Unsung Hero

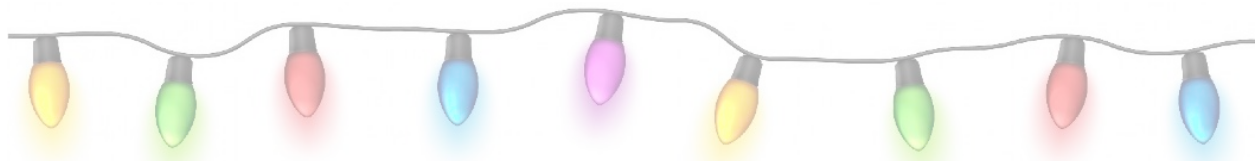
by Bob Harris

Tom Hewitt, as well as his wife Edna, were unwavering supporters and advocates for the Honey Harbour Public School. Tom operated the “school boat” for thirty-five years, transporting students who either lived on one of the Georgian Bay Islands or up the shore, with no road access. In winter, the mode of transport was snowmobile. His knowledge, gathered from a lifetime of working and travelling on Georgian Bay, was extensive. The students seldom missed a day of school, even during freeze-up or break-up. When it became impossible to do the run by boat, he knew another route to go that would support the skidoo, and vice versa in the spring.

Tom was a hunting and fishing guide his whole life. He found that we loved fish, and in the winter months, often brought us a feed of “crappies” that he caught through the ice. The last week in June, one year, he invited Shirley and me to join him and his wife on a fishing expedition after school. We seemed to spend a great deal of time cruising around the area enjoying *hors*

d’oeuvres, with Tom in his tour guide mode, sharing stories, local history and points of interest. Finally, we should try to catch some fish for supper. We made two or three stops where he indicated and immediately caught a good number of bass. We could actually look down into the crystal clear water and watch the fish take the hook. I don’t believe that we could have gone into a supermarket and purchased that quantity of fish any quicker. We then adjourned to one of the islands where he cleaned the fish and cooked us a delicious shore dinner, complete with wine. That experience provided us with a brief glimpse of the lifestyle enjoyed by many of the affluent tourist visitors to the Honey Harbour area.

Interestingly, as one of our District Executive members pointed out, he was not a teacher but he would likely qualify for membership in RTOERO under current guidelines. Tom passed away on March 30, 2022, at the age of 97. That definitely marked the end of an era, but one that we were privileged to experience.





UPCOMING EVENT

"After 4" Pub Gathering

Muskoka Highlands Golf Links

1036 S Monck Dr., Bracebridge

Tentatively planned for

Late winter 2023

*Appetizers to be catered by a local business,
provided by RTOERO46*

**Event to be confirmed and further details
provided on our website and by e-blast**



Study offers tips and strategies for maintaining friendships when dementia arises

Most of us have friends or relatives that have been diagnosed with dementia and every one of us wants to help... both the victim and the caregiver. But many of us are not sure how we can help. A study published this summer gave some practical tips on what we can do to maintain a friendship with one of our circle of friends who has been diagnosed with Alzheimers. Here is a link to that study:

<https://theconversation.com/maintaining-friendships-after-a-dementia-diagnosis-can-spur-feelings-of-joy-and-self-worth-187038>



CONTACT INFO

Executive Committee members may be reached via the president's email:

president46@districts.rtoero.ca

<i>President</i> Laurie Fountain	<i>1st Vice President</i> Position open
<i>Past President</i> Joanne Garvey	<i>2nd Vice President</i> Position open
<i>Secretary</i> Position open	<i>Goodwill Representatives</i> <i>Bala and Port Carling</i> Carolyn Dunn Rapson <i>Bracebridge</i> Norma Kaye <i>Gravenhurst</i> Kathy Allison <i>Huntsville</i> Doris Macdonald
<i>Treasurer</i> Joanne Garvey	
<i>Membership</i> Laurie Fountain	
<i>Pension & Retirement</i> Bob Harris	
<i>Political Advocacy</i> Position open with John Beatty and Joanne Garvey	<i>Benefits Representative</i> Position open
<i>Newsletter</i> Lorna Walkling and Jennifer Lyndon	<i>Bursaries</i> Pat Schofield
	<i>Communications</i> Jennifer Lyndon

NEW MEMBERS WELCOME!

RTOERO offers free membership until retirement to anyone actively working in the **education community in Canada**. Please visit <https://rtoero.ca/> for information on pension, insurance and the many benefits of RTOERO membership.



Ramblings from Raymond

As another winter approaches with COVID still looming, I think we've all grown pretty weary of masks and avoiding contact with others. It was wonderful to see such a great turnout for the picnic at Kerr Park in September, where we welcomed a number of new members and enjoyed a few hours of sunshine and a delicious barbecued lunch. It is our hope that we can have an indoor "After 4" pub gathering during the winter, and we hope to have both retired members and those who are still working attend this social event at Muskoka Highlands Golf Links. Further information will be sent to you by e-blast and posted on the District 46 website as plans are confirmed.

There seems to be a renewed interest in volunteering recently. With many community organizations struggling to find new people to carry out important tasks, I have had several requests to include information about volunteer opportunities in our newsletter. It is our policy to include articles about community organizations that our members actively volunteer with, and I hope you will consider becoming involved. Volunteering can provide a healthy boost to your self-confidence, self-esteem and life satisfaction. You are doing good for others and the community, which provides a natural sense of accomplishment. Your role as a volunteer can also give you a sense of pride and identity in retirement. Please feel free to send me an article about your volunteer activities to include in a future newsletter.

Winter has definitely arrived now, and with it the challenges of continuing to enjoy the activities that keep us connected with others in meaningful ways. I wish all of you a safe and happy holiday season, and a peaceful, healthy year in 2023.

Sincerely,
Lorna



Circles® Muskoka Program Inspires Families and Community to Thrive

by Kathy Patterson



Over the past number of years many Muskokans have become increasingly aware of and concerned about the affordability challenges that exist for many local residents living in Muskoka - Ontario's premier vacation destination. The difficulties encountered securing jobs that pay a living wage, finding rental accommodation that is not only financially in reach but also safe and well-maintained and navigating the bureaucracy often encountered when completing applications and contracts can be overwhelming. The ensuing reality is that many Muskoka residents live at or below the poverty line and often have no idea where to turn or what actions to take to change or improve their lives and those of their children.

Continued on next page →

In Memoriam



Although the list may not be complete, we are saddened by the loss of the following members and extend our condolences to family, friends and colleagues:

- Beverley Cowan (February)
- Florence Pengilly (April)
- Barbara Bryant (June)
- Cyril Fry
- Marion Standon (July)
- Hugh Brown (September)
- Robert Christie
- Russell Moore
- Paul Hutchison (October)
- Jim Lynch
- Marlene Waite
- Fran Hammond (November)

Please be sure to notify a member of the executive if you know of a member who has passed on.

Continued from previous page

Needless to say all of this, although already existing in Muskoka pre-pandemic, has only escalated with rising real estate values and inflation in the past few years and ripples out into the community at large affecting health care, mental health and, as all of us know as former educators, students in our schools.

A number of years ago the YWCA of Muskoka, recognizing the needs of people in our communities finding themselves struggling financially, began a program called Circles, a chapter of Circles Canada. The goal of the Circles program is to help individuals and families who have self-identified as living in poverty to move from surviving to thriving, to regain control of their

Median employment income in Muskoka 21% below provincial median

lives, to build stability and security for themselves and their families. The foundation of the **C i r c l e s** community is

based on building relationships. The Circles model matches those individuals who are striving to make positive changes in their lives (*Leaders*) with community volunteers (*Allies*) looking to make a difference. The *Circle* created nurtures supportive friendships which provide a framework for moving forward. The friendships developed build confidence and provide guidance and support. The larger *Circles community* works together to identify barriers, to find solutions to address poverty and to advocate for change.

For the past few years I had the privilege of being a part of the Circles Muskoka community. Prior to the pandemic we would meet each week to share a meal, often provided by a community group, and after the meal gather in a circle to focus on topics usually suggested by the Circle Leaders. Some of the topics included were financial planning, cooking on a budget, self-care and healthy living. Often guest speakers were invited and special activities were planned. The format of Circles

provided an opportunity for friendships to flourish amid lots of laughter and the occasional tear and for sharing the challenges and successes of each week. Circles was a judgement-free space for everyone involved. Circles Muskoka also initiated projects that not only benefited those who were part of Circles but were intended to reach a wider audience in the hope of reducing poverty and supporting those living in poverty.

Circles® Muskoka creates community through intentional friendships

One of these projects was creating a cookbook using ingredients readily available at local food banks and distributed throughout the community and online. Another project involved creating a podcast that featured the real life housing stories of the Circle Leaders in hopes of spreading awareness that would initiate change. When the pandemic brought in-person meetings to a halt, Circles Muskoka continued to meet via Zoom. Those online connections and relationships became even more important while navigating the uncertainties of those early pandemic days, and despite the physical separation, flourished.

Whether we met in person or zoomed the benefits for all participants were clearly apparent. As the name and model suggests this Circle of friendship and support was completely reciprocal. The learning, sharing, supporting and sense of participating in something meaningful flowed back and forth between Leaders and Allies. Circles made a difference in the lives of all involved.

To learn more about Circles Muskoka please visit this link: <https://www.circlesmuskoka.com/>. New community volunteer allies are always welcome and if you are considering volunteering in your community this is a wonderful opportunity to make a difference.

