



Retired Women Teachers of Ontario / Organisation des Enseignantes Retraitées de l'Ontario

## President's Message

Comfort Food—the theme for this issue brings lots of happy memories to mind. I think of the shortbread cookies my Scottish mother made, the cabbage rolls my Polish mother-in-law cooked and a traditional turkey dinner at Thanksgiving. Comfort food provides a relaxed experience and enjoyment in consumption. We savour the food but we also relish sharing our time with others.

Hot foods, like soup, help us through our cold Canadian winters. We all have our favourites. I first discovered Dill Pickle Soup in a small, dark Polish restaurant located in the basement of an old church. I promptly quizzed the chef on the ingredients, found a recipe online and eventually entered my own version in a soup-off. Every time I make the soup, I remember all the time I spent perfecting the taste and I feel content about the results.

Chocolate is a special type of comfort food. Not only does it taste sweet, but the texture is soft and melts in your mouth. The taste and texture work together to put a smile on anyone's face! And sometimes, there's a surprise—a bit of crunchiness which can be found in a Kit Kat bar or sweet and salty together like a Sweet Marie.

And, of course, no meal is complete without a beverage. The possibilities are endless! There is a garden center

in Essex County which is well-known for its hot apple cider. People come from far and wide to enjoy it with a fresh cinnamon doughnut. Pumpkin spice coffee is served at almost every local café. Visitors at our homes can enjoy special dinners with vintage Ontario wine and various craft beers. The family gets together to relax, have fun and entertain each other.

But the best thing about comfort food—long after we've consumed it, the “warm fuzzies” can endure. The taste, texture, temperature and the people we've shared it with, all add up to wonderful recollections.

After a long drive across the Province to arrive at an RWTO/OERO Branch, it is very comforting to know that someone is expecting you and is ready to make you feel welcome. Each visit has brought a new experience of culinary expertise. I was told that our members are quite the cooks but now I know it's a reality. Some examples: Bread and butter pickles in South River, Cherry Cheesecake in Haldimand, Chocolate cupcakes in Belleville, and a potluck luncheon in Orillia.

RWTO/OERO members are very similar to comfort foods. They provide a tasty, warm meal with many



*Karen Clark-Lauzon  
Provincial President*

*Continued on page 2* ▶

## Retired Women Teachers of Ontario Organisation des enseignantes retraitées de l'Ontario

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rwtoconnections@gmail.com • Website: www.RWTO.org*



# Call for Nominations 2020-2021

## 1. Provincial Executive Officer

Nominations for the following elected Executive Officer for the Provincial Board of RWTO/OERO are to be sent to the Nominations Committee Chair by January 31, 2020. See the candidate's Form for RWTO/OERO Provincial Executive Position in the Policies and Procedures Manual 2019, page D-4. Submit a bio of 200 words maximum and a photo for the March Newsletter, Connections.

### a) Criteria for Provincial 2nd Vice-President

Nominees should have experience at the Board level as well as at the Executive level in an RWTO/OERO Branch or other organizations. The job description is printed in the RWTO/OERO Policies and Procedures Manual Appendix C. If you have any questions, answers may be available from your Area Director, members of the Nomination Committee and/or on the RWTO/OERO website at [www.rwto.org](http://www.rwto.org).

The Candidate Form found on page D-4 should be submitted with the 200 word bio, a picture and a nomination from your Branch Executive. Nominations should be e-mailed or mailed with a postmark, no later than January 31, 2020 to Sharron Colter, 298 Stokes Bay Road, P.O. Box 364, Lion's Head, Ontario N0H 1W0 or [dshcolter@eastlink.ca](mailto:dshcolter@eastlink.ca)

## 2. Area Director

Any new Area Directors will be elected or selected according to the established protocol within their Area. (See Policies and Procedures Manual 2019, Appendix A) Once the new Area Director has been chosen, the name should be sent to the Provincial Nomination Committee Chair by March 31, 2020. For

further information, please contact any member of the Nominations Committee, Sharron Colter, Committee Chair, Le Anne Taylor, Area 12 Director, Suzanne Rondeau, Area 10 Director and Karen Clark-Lauzon, Provincial President.

## 3. Provincial Communications Newsletter and Membership Committees

These Committees are complete at this time, but may have a need for additional committee members in the future. If you wish to join either of these committees, (one year term, renewable for one more term) when a vacancy becomes available, submit a description of relevant experience by January 31, 2020 to have your name considered for the future.

### a) Criteria for Communications Newsletter Committee Members:

The Communications Newsletter Committee edits the issues of Connections three times a year in August, November and February. Members do not change the style or the flavour of the material but maintain consistency of language and punctuation.

An editor requires the following:

- i. Excellent language skills, especially grammar and spelling. A style sheet will be provided for consistency.
- ii. Previous editing experience. Please specify these activities.
- iii. Solid computer skills in Word or Pages. Continued access to a computer with Adobe Acrobat.

*Continued on page 3* ►

## President's Message - continued

friends that are happy to make a memory with you. They welcome you with big hugs and smiling faces. Members quickly become friends and the experience creates those "warm fuzzies". We may have arrived feeling sad and discouraged, but we leave feeling uplifted and hopeful for the future. Tomorrow will be a better day.

Wishing all of you a season of comfort, love and peace! Na zdrowie!

Karen Clark-Lauzon  
Provincial President 2019-2020  
Special thanks to KJM.

## Call for Nominations 2020-2021 - continued

- iv. The ability and the desire to commit to online editing in the first two weeks of August, November and February.

### **b) Criteria for Membership Committee Members:**

Membership Committee Members will be expected to be willing to:

- i. Support existing Branches and assist any Branch in need, if requested to do so by the Convenor.
- ii. Generate ideas for maintaining existing membership and suggest creative ways of encouraging newly retired women teachers to join RWTO/OERO.
- iii. Help to identify areas of the province, not currently served by RWTO/OERO, where our organization might be of interest and, if required, assist in forming new Branches.
- iv. Offer workshops or presentations if requested to do so by the Convenor.
- v. Commit to responding to any online discussions promptly and thoughtfully.

Applications for either Committee should be submitted by January 31, 2020, to:

Sharron Colter, Nominations  
Committee Chair, P.O. Box 364,  
Lion's Head Ontario, N0H 1W0

### **4. Communications Website Convenor**

The major responsibility is maintaining the content, currency and accuracy of the RWTO/OERO website. The job description is printed in the RWTO/OERO

Policy and Procedures Manual Appendix C- 10 ii. Further information can be found in the Constitution and Policy & Procedures documents. Our current Convenor, Kathy Gallagher, can also be contacted at [rwto cyberlady@gmail.com](mailto:rwto cyberlady@gmail.com).

### **a) Criteria for Communications Website Convenor:**

A candidate for Communication Website Convenor should have the following experience and qualifications in computer skills:

- i. Word processing and graphics applications
- ii. Using various file formats
- iii. File compression and transfer
- iv. File management
- v. Web page design and editing (.html files)

Nominations should be e-mailed or mailed with a postmark, no later than January 31, 2020 to:

Sharron Colter,  
298 Stokes Bay Road, P.O. Box 364,  
Lion's Head, Ontario N0H 1W0 or  
[dshcolter@eastlink.ca](mailto:dshcolter@eastlink.ca)

Respectfully submitted by:  
Sharron Colter  
Past Provincial President  
Nomination Committee Chair



## **Resource Sharing:**

*Health Resources based on scientific research:*

<https://www.baycrest.org/Baycrest/Education-Training>

<https://www.mcmasteroptimalaging.org>

*Free Learning Courses:*

<https://www.futurelearn.com>

*APP for iphone or ipad:*

\$1.39 *Heads Up* (Created by Ellen Degeneres) Trivial Pursuit game (App Store)



## Honorary Membership Award Nominations

Our organization has a very special tradition, that of awarding Honorary Membership to up to four members, at our Annual General Meeting.

The Provincial Honorary Membership Award in RWTO/OERO is the highest honour that can be bestowed on a member. It recognizes her outstanding services at the provincial level. Specific criteria for this award is listed in Article XIII in our Policy and Procedures Handbook, which can be found on the RWTO/OERO website. The award is dependent on nominations from the branches and/or members-at-large.

Your nomination letter should include an outline listing the provincial committees on which the nominee has served and the noted service to RWTO/OERO at the provincial level. All nominations must be received by the Committee Chair by January 31, 2020. Please provide full name, address, telephone number and

email address of the nominee. Please send nominations to:

Peggy Stock,  
Honorary Membership Committee  
Chair, [peggystock3@gmail.co](mailto:peggystock3@gmail.co)  
8 Old Mill Road,  
RR #1 South River, ON,  
POA 1X0



### *Membership Award Nominations*

Submissions for “Feather In Your Hat” must be made to the Membership Convenor after January 1st and before March 1st. Mail a hard copy via Canada Post to:

Joyce Ratz,  
Box 487, Iron Bridge, ON  
P0R1H0  
[ratzdj@gmail.com](mailto:ratzdj@gmail.com)



### **CRUISING DOWN THE WATERS**

SAILING INTO KINGSTON  
RWTO/OERO  
CONVENTION 2020

## **RWTO/OERO 64<sup>th</sup> CONVENTION**

**June 2 - 4, 2020**

**Ambassador Hotel & Conference Centre  
Kingston ON**

**Room Bookings: 1-800-267-7880**  
[reservations@ambassadorhotel.com](mailto:reservations@ambassadorhotel.com)

Hosted by the Eastern Ontario Branches  
of Areas 8 & 9: Brockville, Gananoque, Kingston,  
Lanark, Napanee, Ottawa-Carleton,  
Upper Canada East

***For more information, contact Convention Convenors:***

Judy Drummond 613-275-1354 [jjdrum@xplornet.com](mailto:jjdrum@xplornet.com)

Anne Graham 613-259-2207 [annegraham2207@gmail.com](mailto:annegraham2207@gmail.com)

<https://rwto.org/convention/convention-2020/>



## Insurance Matters - Terry Kennedy

Great news about the Hospital & Home Care Plan Open Enrolment Period! Due to the demand, Manulife has agreed to extend the window. If you haven't taken advantage of this wonderful opportunity, you still have time. Until December 15, 2019, members and/or their spouses can enrol in the Hospital & Home Care Plan and acceptance is guaranteed. No medical questions asked, you cannot be declined. So, don't wait. The window closes December 15th and won't open again for quite a while!

As we've travelled around the province making presentations, we've had some interesting questions asked that we thought we'd share with you. If others are asking these questions, you might be as well!

I was asked, if a member passes away, can her spouse continue coverage? Yes, spousal coverage will continue for as long as the spouse continues to pay premiums when due and he/she continues to live independently.

Can a member living in an Assisted Living Facility continue coverage under the plan? Yes, provided she continues to be a member of the Association in good standing and is not receiving nursing services as part of her residence fee. When she requires nursing services, she should then cancel her plan.

Can a member who was granted a life membership in the Association enrol in the plan if she is no longer paying dues to the Association? Absolutely! Having a Life Membership bestowed is quite an honour and the member is in good standing for insurance purposes.

Do my benefits under the Hospital & Home Care Plan expire when I reach age 85? No, there is no age maximum under the Hospital & Home Care Plan. The age maximum stated in the brochure applies only to the Personal Accidental Death & Dismemberment Plan. So long as a member is in good standing, continues to live independently, is covered under a provincial health insurance plan (such as OHIP) and pays her insurance premiums when due, she can continue to be covered under the Hospital & Home Care Plan. In fact, we have members insured under the plan who are in their nineties!

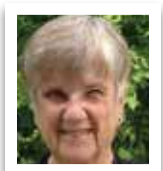
We've had lots of questions about pre-existing conditions and the limitation that applies to them. I thought it might be helpful to explain it. If a member or a spouse, has a condition that existed in the 3-month

period immediately preceding the effective date of their Hospital & Home Care policy, that particular condition will not be covered until such time as the member recovers, or until she or he has been insured under the plan for a year. After that time, the limitation drops off and they are then covered for that condition. For example, if a member at the time of application has pneumonia and is receiving treatment for that condition, her pneumonia won't be covered until she recovers from it or is enrolled for a year. Now, let's assume that 2 months later, she's fully recovered from her pneumonia and is no longer receiving treatment. The limitation that was applicable to her pneumonia falls away and she's now fully covered.

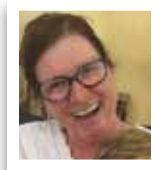
My partner and I live together but we're not actually married. Can he be covered under the Hospital & Home Care Plan? Yes, if you are living together, your partner is your spouse. And, yes, same-sex spouses can be covered.

So, as we say in our presentations, "Don't be Bashful! You'll be Grumpy if you miss this opportunity!" Please consider enrolling for the Hospital & Home Care Plan before the window closes on December 15, 2019. If you have submitted an enrolment form you should receive a policy within a month. If you have not received your policy within this time frame, please contact Terry Kennedy at 519-583-0098 or via email at [tkennedy34@bell.net](mailto:tkennedy34@bell.net).

Insurance Convenor  
Anne Wilde  
905-774-8330  
[wildeanne.wa@gmail.com](mailto:wildeanne.wa@gmail.com)



Assistant Insurance Convenor  
Karin Mussen  
519-272-0629  
[kmussen.rwto@gmail.com](mailto:kmussen.rwto@gmail.com)



Manulife Financial 1-800-268-3763  
Broker: Terry Kennedy  
The Dolphin Consulting Group  
(519) 583-0098 Fax: (519) 583-2876  
[tkennedy34@bell.net](mailto:tkennedy34@bell.net)



Whether it be a Retired Teachers' Insurance plan through OTIP, RTO, RWTO/OERO or an alternative plan, know your coverage. Singularly, or in combinations, these plans offer an amazing variety. With the open window for the supplemental Hospital & Home Care Insurance plan, offered through RWTO/OERO between September 15 to December 15, 2019, it seemed an opportune time to bring forth this discussion. During this open window, any uninsured member or her spouse may enrol in the plan and acceptance is guaranteed. You cannot be refused coverage...even if you had previously been declined. See Terry Kennedy's article for further information.

So how can you familiarize yourself with the plan you have chosen or are about to choose? I personally suggest a flow chart with each insurance company at the top. Then choose the features that are most relevant to you, that are offered by these plans. One plan might have better coverage for items such as: semi private coverage, convalescent care, prescription drugs, paramedical practitioners, surgical services, eye vision, aids and appliances, medically related education plans, dental, accidental dental, out-of-province and out-of-country travel. Which plan most closely meets your needs?

After you have compared and chosen which plan or plan combinations fit you, read and know the features and how these features are accessed. This includes giving due diligence to the perusal of brochures that are mailed at the beginning of each year or throughout the year. There are often changes and upgrades in coverage amounts or deletions that are imperative you know.

Now, once you have made an informed decision and chosen your coverage, let's discuss some tips

on managing usage. Many claims can be submitted through your health care providers, for your convenience. There is usually a sign posted at reception but if not, be sure to ask. If you still have receipts that you must submit on your own, this can be done online. Not computer savvy, then find someone who is and ask for help. Please bear in mind that the RWTO/OERO Hospital & Home Care Plan claims cannot be submitted online. The claim form must be completed by the insured or their representative and receipts (where required) must be submitted with the claim form.

If you are traveling, be sure to refer to the most recent rules and regulations, as these seem to change frequently. I recommend reading the article, "Top Three Travel Myths", from the summer 2018 edition of OTIP Retirement News. [www.OTIP.com](http://www.OTIP.com) I also recommend an article from RTO Communique 2019 pg. 2 discussing Best Doctors Services available. [www.bestdoctorscanada.com/rto-ero](http://www.bestdoctorscanada.com/rto-ero)

Finally, leave a copy of all your insurance information with your power of attorney, legal representative or inform that person of the location of these important documents. So often, we hear from our Insurance representatives that features of the plan are not being used, as the plan member is not able to handle her affairs and the caregiver is unaware of coverage.

Hopefully, this article has been informative and encourages you to read, compare, be informed, and be up to date with one of your most valuable assets.

Leslie Carroll-Frey,  
Area 3 Director



### Archives

It has been quite interesting being the Archivist. Since it is my last year as an Area Director, I will not be on the Board of Directors next year and will miss the Provincial involvement. Recently a new book has been established to recognize the recipients of the Honorary Membership Award. It is similar in format to the binders for recipients of the Areas' Cora Bailey Award. Just a reminder to the Branches – please send

me the photos of members who have passed so that they can be recognized at the In Memoriam Service June 2020. Thank you...

Sandie Bender,  
Archivist





## *Goodwill – Nancy Bell*

This fall, 71 birthday cards were sent to our Over 90's members. Nine more members joined this prestigious group and 5 more ladies turned 95 years young. I was delighted to receive notes and calls from several ladies sharing their stories.

Congratulations to Aileen Christie, from the Mississauga Branch, who became our newest centenarian on October 19th! Aileen's branch honoured her with a beautiful shawl and presented flowers on behalf of RWTO/OERO Provincial.

Preparation is underway to send personalized Christmas cards to these inspiring Over 90's members.

Your compassionate outreach to the elderly members in your area is much appreciated. Please remember to visit those who have entered long-term care facilities or are isolated, as they welcome your enthusiasm. These precious gifts of time brighten their spirits and offer happy connections.

May your holidays sparkle with love, laughter and happy memories.

Nancy Bell,  
2nd Vice President,  
Goodwill Convenor  
[n3bell@rogers.com](mailto:n3bell@rogers.com)



## *Program - Seasons Greetings Area Directors and Branch Presidents!*

What a busy Fall everyone is having and the year ahead is filled with interesting speakers, projects and entertainment, as highlighted in the notes and minutes I am reading from the Area Directors' and Presidents' meeting.

I am especially pleased to see a renewed interest from our Branches in bringing forth resolutions to our Annual Meeting – for 2020 and in the future. Thank you to the Area Directors for spreading the message and encouraging everyone to become involved in how RWTO/OERO supports its members across the Province.

Your monthly calendars will continue throughout the winter along with a very important Convention Bulletin to be sent to all Presidents and Area Directors in mid to

late January. I encourage you to print this document as it contains a lot of very important information you will need to refer to often.

Also, please contact me immediately if for some reason you are not receiving my communications....

Remember, your Area Director and I are available to assist you – no question is too trivial.

Judith Bennoch  
Provincial Program Coordinator  
[judithbennoch@icloud.com](mailto:judithbennoch@icloud.com)



## *Communications Website Convenor*



Check the Communication Website Convenors Page <https://rwto.org/branches/communication-convenors/> for: What, When, and How to send information to [rwto cyberlady@gmail.com](mailto:rwto cyberlady@gmail.com)

Kathy Gallagher,  
Communications Website Convenor





## Newsletter Convenor

I am always amazed by the talented writers who submit articles for Connections, they help to ensure that Connections is informative as well as entertaining. A special thank you to the editors of Connections: Kate Head, Nancy Bell, Linda Huizenga and Karen Clark-Lauzon. With their keen eyes and strong editorial skills, our newsletter looks very professional. If you have any suggestions for future themes please forward them to me. Taking content and writing it within a theme allows the creative juices to flow. According to the leading neurologists at Baycrest in Toronto, this type of composing stimulates the brain, firing up new neurons. It also makes for very entertaining reading.

I encourage everyone who has an email and an ipad or iphone to start receiving Connections in PDF form. You can transfer the PDF document to ibooks, Kindle or Kobo and then you have Connections in your reading

library where you can access it easily, no matter where you are in the world. The September Connections 2019 was read by individuals in various provinces in Canada, several locations in the United States as well as Spain, France, the United Kingdom, and the Ukraine. If you are concerned about climate change, making this move is a positive step forward, since PDF copies of Connection will never be found in landfill sites.

Send Gloria Drake an email and ask her to make the change for you. [info@rwto.org](mailto:info@rwto.org)

Jan Murdoch,  
Communications  
Newsletter Convenor,  
[rwtoconnections@gmail.com](mailto:rwtoconnections@gmail.com)



## News from the Branches – “Comfort Food”

### Area 2

#### Cambridge

In an online message, I asked our Cambridge members to tell me their favourite comfort food. Twenty-two members responded, fifteen of whom had savoury choices, the remaining seven chose sweet foods. The most popular item was mac-n-cheese (4), followed by spaghetti (2), grilled cheese (2), baked or mashed potato, toast and peanut butter, chicken noodle or tomato soup, chips, roast beef and Yorkshire pudding. Sweet choices were more diversified and were mainly desserts such as apple crisp, rice pudding, tapioca, ice-cream, caramel and chocolate. Most of these foods meet the definition, including my own favourite, Kraft dinner, which I fondly remember from my university days. Sadly, a box no longer costs ten cents, it's now closer to \$2.00. One of my first memories was eating macaroni at my grandmother's which must have been when I was around 3, so perhaps that's how I came to associate pasta with “comfort”.

Submitted by Mary Jane Novak,  
Secretary, Cambridge Branch, Area 2.

#### Guelph-Wellington - Comfort Food Memory

I recently read the book “The Greatest Cook in the World” by Rick Bragg. For readers, the stories and recipes reach back to a time when summer gardens

were huge. Young children and adults scoured the land around them to sustain the hungry mouths that sat at the supper table each night. His story could have been written about my grandmother. She grew up in a family of 12 children with a widowed mother on a skirt of rural land in Mississippi. There she learned all the skills of survival and the knowledge that full tummies rest well through the night and can work hard the next day.

Moving forward she brought favourite learned recipes that at least stretched back two generations. So when I think of comfort food, I remember my father cooking a pot of Collard Greens, flavoured with a ham hock, on the stove for most of the day. He would serve it to us in special soup bowls. On the side was a big glass of iced cold buttermilk with day old cornbread chunks added for substance.

Nothing absolutely delighted his children more. We must have subconsciously known that this was a dish of love from our ancestors and graciously shared with us by the most important man in our short lives.

Patrica Spedaler

#### Kitchener- Waterloo My Comfort Food

My comfort food is {was} a chocolate cake! This is what my mother made for us to welcome us home for

Continued ►



## *News from the Branches – “Comfort Food” - continued*

our rare weekend visits from boarding school. Born Canadian, I was brought up in Bolivia, South America. Since I grew up in my non-passport country, I am what you call a “Third Cultural Kid” T.C.K. According to several books written about us T.C.K.s, we are unique in many ways. We have two complete cultures in our personalities that combine into a third culture.

As an adult I can now appreciate growing up in Bolivia! I have so many wonderful experiences that have helped me see our world more globally. The lovely folkloric Bolivian civilization and the warm caring society are all a part of me! The boarding school experience is another story. So having a chocolate cake, made especially for us three kids, was special comfort knowing we were home, loved and appreciated! The chocolate cake welcomed us home to precious family life and times together that helped to create many memories that I have today!

My name written in Bolivia would be  
Sharon Phillips de Alvarez.

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### *Listowel*

The idea of a comfort food brings so many thoughts and memories to mind. S’mores roasted around the campfire with a piping hot cup of cocoa. Turkey dinner served with all the trimmings, and Grandma’s gumdrop cake and jam cake for dessert. Granny’s best ever lemonade, made from real lemons, and her soft shortbread with little sprinkles to decorate. All these are very tasty, but what makes them so memorable is not the ingredients, or the effort to prepare, but the people behind the food. Isn’t that true about so many things we have done in our lives? It is not the places we go, but the people with whom we travel. It is not the turkey dinner (although delicious!) but the family who gathers around the table. And it is not the cool, quenching lemonade, but the special visit with Granny, who has put out your favourite glass and plate to serve you your special treat. Love is at the heart of all comfort food. May you enjoy the bounty of love around your table this year!

Sue Knowlton

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### *Palmerston - Aunt Dot’s Nutmeg Cake*

Aunt Dot flew all the way from British Columbia to visit us, in 1964, when I was ten. She was wild, witty and

wonderful. She loved teaching us many aspects about how to live a spectacular, creative life. I have warm memories of my grandmother, mother, sisters and I, all gathered around the table, sifting, chopping, and blending, as Aunt Dot shared her baking expertise.

The pièce de résistance was her nutmeg cake, with its thick, crispy bottom, made of butter, brown sugar, nutmeg and walnuts, pressed into a deep layer at the bottom of the tube pan. The batter was rich with many eggs and nutmeg aplenty. As the cake rose high, the smell was glorious.

Not long ago, she reunited with Grandma. Perhaps she’s up there right now, sharing her baking secrets, with as many as can crowd around the celestial table.

Debra Kalb,  
Palmerston and District RWTO

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### *Stratford*

Comfort food! That phrase takes me back to my childhood. My comfort food was peanut butter and honey. Apparently I was a fussy eater. My sisters tell me that I survived on peanut butter and honey.

Honey was not a luxury in our home as my father was a beekeeper. I remember when he would bring home honeycomb, dripping with the luxurious sweetness! We would keep on chewing long after the honey was gone, pretending that it was gum.

It was exciting when the queen bees that he ordered would arrive in little wooden boxes along with 5 or 6 worker bees who attended to their needs. And then there were the drones. We could play with them because they don’t sting and in the fall they would get kicked out of the hives.

Nice memories...and sweet (literally)!

Helen Harrison

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### *Area 3*

#### *Chatham - Kent*

Everyone has that special dish, that comfort food, which can be whipped up without a recipe and you know it will always be a success and everyone loves it.

Similarly, if we’re home alone with no interruptions,

*Continued* ►

we grab that soft sweater, worn jeans or track pants and slippers. Ah! the perfect day. We can sit back, relax and let whatever happens happen.

Unfortunately, some of us find our RWTO/OERO meetings to be just that comfortable. We sit back, relax and let things just happen.

But, remember that feeling of accomplishment when you put the extra effort into preparing a delicious Christmas or Thanksgiving meal. Remember that special feeling when you put on your party dress and welcome guests at your door.

Perhaps as members of RWTO/OERO, we need to put out some of that special effort, step up and take an active part in making our branches the best they can be. Be that active member who steps forward, no matter your age, to fill those empty spaces and be rewarded with that wonderful feeling of accomplishment, knowing you have done your part.

Sharon Nicholson, President

### *London - Middlesex*

This past fall, we have had four monthly meetings where we were inspired, challenged and entertained. In September, we shared the words of Doug McCarthy who inspired us to share our words with others. We were encouraged to share a friendly word or a sympathetic greeting with our members. In October, we were challenged to understand the hardships faced by women and children in Cambodia and how they are helped by the work of the Tabitha Foundation of Canada. In November, we were entertained by our wonderful RWTO choir under the direction of Gillian Laidlaw and Johanna Hurd. These ladies shared with us their wonderful singing talents. Our Christmas Antic drama group under the direction of Sandy O'Brien and Nancy Bell shared their hilarious comic and singing talents. Our monthly meetings give us great opportunities to share conversation with each other.

Mary Maxwell, President

### *Sarnia - Lambton - Comfort Food and More ...*

September is a special Caring and Sharing time, when we present our annual donations. Representatives from Lambton Nature Trail, Parents for Parks, Hugs for the Homeless and Summer Snack Program received cheques to assist them with their projects.

Hugs for the Homeless is a program that provides food,



snacks, beverages and personal care items to those who need them. Cloth bags filled with 15 to 20 items served as our donation to the effort. This project is a recent extension of the Summer Snack Program started by three school-aged sisters a couple of years ago.

November will bring a highly anticipated food-focused experience, as we host our Christmas luncheon. Plates of homemade cookies are eagerly purchased, possibly by members who helped bake them. A traditional turkey dinner rounds out the day.

Comfort from food can soothe body and spirit, both by giving and receiving.

Mary Ann Barstead

### *St Thomas - Elgin*

In considering the topic “Comfort Foods,” I have substituted the metaphor “food for thought” as a more accurate description of our branch activities. Although food choice is an important aspect of our monthly gatherings, we also look forward to a planned program of interesting speakers and informative presentations. The ideas communicated provide “food for thought” when considering community issues and support.

This year our guest speakers will present topics ranging from international outreach experiences, “Me to We,” provincial volunteer organizations and charities, “Ronald McDonald House,” to local assistance programs, “Grace Café.” On a lighter note, our fashion show presentations offer more casual “food for thought” ideas relating to travel and packing suggestions.

As members of RWTO/OERO, our monthly meetings certainly stimulate conversation, an interesting

*Continued* ►

## News from the Branches – “Comfort Food” - continued

exchange of ideas and an enjoyable social experience. We certainly look forward to both the food and thought that characterizes our time together.

On a final note, St Thomas Elgin members are commended for sharing their time, expertise, friendship and financial support with each other and the local community. We continue to explore opportunities to enhance and engage our membership. To create meaningful experiences continues to be “food for thought.” For the present, our goal to provide a warm and welcoming “comfort food” experience at each of our gatherings.

Lynn Christie



### Windsor - Essex

My Baba, in her hand-made apron would single-handedly prepare a traditional Slovak family dinner of Pyrohy ( aka Perogi) in her tiny kitchen. She mixed the dough in her blue and white striped bowl, rolled and cut circles with a jewel-toned tin glass and filled and pinched then boiled and served. An entire day was devoted to our family favourite with potato & cheese and prune fillings.

My mother continued the tradition and sometimes I assisted as a “pincher”.

The next generation adapted the “one-man ” method , gathering in “assembly-line” style.

The recipe has been tweaked a little and the process refined but the tradition continues with great grandchildren now joining in. Each sister has her own jewel-toned tin glass – no cookie cutters allowed! Baba’s blue & white mixing bowl and Baba’s apron are proudly displayed. Pyrohy making is an indelible reminder of the “Vrabel” family Slovak heritage and definitely our Comfort Food.

Linda White, President RWTO/OERO  
Windsor-Essex

### Area 9

#### Lanark

It surely is the most wonderful time of the year to talk about comfort foods. The weather outside can be frightful, but we are tucked up inside, fire burning brightly with, no doubt, something tasty and comforting to nibble on!

It is interesting to note that whenever we gather together as friends, branch members, church members, business associates or neighbours, food is a central unifying force. The aroma of home baking coming from the kitchen, whether it be bread, soup, cookies or even a turkey dinner, makes our mouths water in anticipation of that first bite. Comfort food can help soothe anger or sorrow, promote feelings of happiness and contentment and make everyone feel welcome.



Comfort foods are often a family tradition and connected to holiday celebrations. Recipes are frequently passed down through generations; my sister-in-law still guards the Christmas shortbread recipe and continues to make batches for everyone to enjoy when we get together. I love getting a request from my daughters and daughter-in-law for a favourite recipe, which often may be one of my own mother’s that I have saved through the years.

Comfort food unites us all as a group and sharing at a potluck, with a shut-in, or a sick or hurting friend, helps us all demonstrate our motto of sharing and caring.

Jane Graham,  
President, Lanark Branch

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### **Ottawa - Carleton**

Comfort food is about connections - connections to family, friends, special occasions, traditions and familiar dishes. It tastes like childhood and gives us a sense of well-being. A recipe written in a mother's handwriting evokes the remembered taste and scent of Christmases past and becomes part of future generations' shared memories.

Comfort food is personal whether it is chicken soup, grilled cheese, meatloaf, mashed potatoes, butter tarts, apple pie, bagels, dim sum or chocolate. It likely says a little something about where one grew up.

There's no better way to welcome a new neighbour, support a new mom or help someone who is recovering from an illness than to take a classic comfort food dish. Friendship and support are the comfort food of our organization. It is the sound of conversation and laughter as we join together in "caring and sharing". It warms your stomach and fills your soul.

Sharon Chop,  
President, Ottawa-Carleton Branch

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### **Area 12**

#### **Burlington**

Burlington Branch composed of 140 members has been around for more than 45 years. We look forward to our 5 annual luncheons for their excellent food experiences, entertaining and informative speakers and opportunities to share and make warm memories. The Victorian Medical Nurse, the Bata Shoe Museum speaker, Dog Guides, a local author and a member's niece who works with the blind will offer experiences for us this year. We reach out to our community by serving breakfast at the Seniors Centre and making cards for retirement and nursing home residents. We donate to and work with other community groups so that we can provide valuable experiences for ourselves and others. Penta lunch allows us to share memories, visit with colleagues and embrace new friendships from other branches in our area. Like a favourite recipe, branch participation is important not only to our members but also to their families.

Bonnie Folkard, President

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#### **Lydia Snow North Halton**

Our Lydia Snow meetings are like comfort food to our members if we think of them as coming away with warm

memories and feeling satisfied and enriched in some way. We enjoy the relaxed atmosphere and social time before meetings over tea, coffee and treats, as well as the chance to learn something new from our speakers followed by delicious luncheons. Some recent meeting topics include Chair Exercise, Meals in a Mason Jar, Challenges in Education Today, and Balinese Cats. By caring and sharing, our members show their warmth towards one another whether it's with a greeting card, phone call or visit. Through generous giving to Food 4 Kids or donations to Halton Womens' Place, we aim to bring warmth and comfort to others in our community as well.

Gill Stevens

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### **Mississauga - Chili – The Ultimate Comfort Food**

When we think of comfort food, most of us think of something thick, hearty and starchy, as well as tasty and familiar. Chili is the ultimate comfort food for me, not only because it is full of some of my favourite spices, but also this food's preparation is calming for me, part of its "comfort", as much as the anticipation of eating it. In keeping with the growing emphasis on eating less meat and more grains, my chili recipe is a vegan one... but you would absolutely never know it. Bulgar is what gives this dish its body and texture. Preparation might seem "intense", but consider that chopping veggies is pretty uncomplicated and can be pretty therapeutic; no food processor needed. It is a dish that I associate with preparing ahead for a large group of friends, after a day out walking or cross-country skiing or whatever the occasion. If I make it for the two of us, I always count on leftovers, since chili is definitely one of those dishes that tastes better the day after. You can use any combination of vegetables for my recipe; leave things out, add others. It is also a great way to clean out your pantry. Of course, you can use most of the same vegetable ingredients in the traditional meat chili (ground beef or pork or turkey) being sure to brown the meat right after the sautéed onions, but I have

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## *News from the Branches – Nurturing our Gardens - continued*

come to prefer this vegan chili, even though I come from a meat eating family.

A suggested accompaniment to this vegan chili is another comfort food, polenta ( or creamy grits, if this makes more sense to you) served in a cereal bowl on the side. Purchase the already cooked polenta in a roll or whip up your own. Polenta was one of the first solid foods I ate as an infant, since it was so readily available in Northern Italy where I was born, so this is definitely nostalgic and comfort eating for me.

Louise Pivato,  
RWTO Mississauga Branch Newsletter editor  
(recipe in attached document)

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### *Oakville*

No matter what we do, food and drink are a part of our lives. They sustain us, nourish us, socialize us, comfort us, let us share with the less fortunate. They warm our hearts and souls and bring us great comfort.



From Breakfast Treats at the Book Club, Thursday at 10, Garden Club; to Dessert Treats at the Bridge

Groups; to Coffee at the Town Hall Tour; to Five Luncheons where money is donated to Sleeping Children, Kerr Street Mission, Food4Kids, Mercy Ships, Halton Learning Foundation, SJA Therapy Dog Program; to enjoying Out to Lunch Brunch, RTO High Tea, RBG Tour and Lunch, Tea Room Outings, and Dinner at the Waterdown Garden Tour; all of these provide comfort and remind us of fond memories and occasions.

The Oakville Branch of 61 members displays an overabundance of comfort and pleasure, whether it be food or drink, as we celebrate friendship, fellowship, fun, sharing, and giving at our luncheons, events, groups, executive meetings, and charities.

Leslie Watkins

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### *Peel North*

Food doesn't really conjure up the idea of comfort for me. I savour dark chocolate, enjoy a decadent dessert or a main course with the right balance of spices and seasoning but I come from a place of privilege. I do not struggle to have my basic needs met. I have a full stomach and a safe, warm place to rest my head at night. There are many in my community who do not. The members of North Peel have several initiatives to provide comfort to vulnerable women and children in our community. Change for Change donates change collected at our monthly meetings to a local children's program. The Helping Hampers initiative, which was a monthly focus (e.g. school supplies, warm winter clothing, pyjamas and fun, and games equipment), donates to local shelters. This past year we donated to Autism Ontario. The members of Peel North care about their community and endeavour to provide support to comfort those in need.

Kathy Avey, President

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*“As I ramble through life, whatever my goal, I will unfortunately always keep my eye upon the doughnut and not upon the whole”  
- Wendy Wasserstein (1990)*

*“One cannot think well, love well, sleep well, if one has not dined well”  
- Virginia Woolf (1929)*

*Spread the warmth  
of the Christmas Season  
to all those around you  
and make this world a  
beautiful place to live in.  
Merry Christmas  
and a  
Happy new Year*





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