



RWTO Newsletter

Niagara South Branch

Winter 2021

Welcome to our winter edition of our third newsletter. We hope everyone is well and keeping safe during this unprecedented time. It will be so nice when we can all be back together and sharing our special events. Our Executive meets on Zoom every couple months to keep updated on our RWTO provincial and local news. In this letter, we are privileged to highlight two of our members Rhoda Marr and Filomena Presti. It is so nice of our members to share their teaching stories and we look forward to being able to share everyone's. Also, Margot Smith will share an interesting insurance narrative.

First, we would like to share what our group was able to do because of you. Due to the epidemic and our inability to meet together, our bank account has resulted in an amazing balance. Under normal circumstances, we would be asking our members to vote on the following plan. The following proposal brought forward by Kathy Smith was unanimously accepted on your behalf, by the Executive. Kathy Smith suggested that our excess funds be given to help our communities in this extremely difficult time. The following will be donated by our RWTO branch.

1. \$500.00 each to 4 food banks: Fort Erie, Pelham, Port Colborne, and Welland.
2. \$1000.00 to Pathstone Mental Health
3. \$500.00 to Women's Place

Thank you for your generosity. Our donations will make a difference.

An Insurance Highlight

WHAT IF THIS HAPPENED TO YOUR SPOUSE?

By Margot Smith
Branch Insurance Convenor

The spouse of a member had been taking out Manulife's Hospital and Home Care Insurance for 10 years at a yearly rate of \$186.84. In August of 2020 he contacted his Family Doctor about some concerns. The large gain in weight was attributed to not being able to partake in his usual 3 times a week pickle ball or club-sanctioned kayak trips. Also, a persistent, horrible cough lasting about 10 or so minutes every morning led him to seek a test for COVID 19. It was negative. Three days later that spouse rode his motorcycle to the testing lab near Brock University to his "routine tests" arranged by his Doctor. While he was there the test was halted and he was told "Your heart rate is in severe A-Fib. You need to go to a

hospital Emergency now! Do you have anyone who can drive you there or, do you want us to call an ambulance?" Because he could not reach his wife right away, his brother came from his home in Fenwick to drive him to the nearest hospital (St. Catharines). He was in danger of congestive heart failure. After 6 nights he was released, after undergoing a specific procedure 3 times, where the heart is stopped and restarted again. It was decided that their son, who lived in Port Dalhousie would be there for the discharge instructions and drive him to his home in Fenwick. In the 3 weeks that followed, he was seen at home by nurses every week, a physiotherapist twice and a dietician. Within 2 weeks he was seen by his own doctor and then 6-8 weeks later had a telephone appointment with his surgeon, who had sent him for retesting before the appointment. His family doctor did fill out the physician's portion of the claim form and charged to do so.

SPOILER ALERT.....THAT SPOUSE WAS MINE! Can you guess the amount of the cheque received from Manulife we got in early January?\$1761.00! By December, with a complete change in our diet, Dave has lost 50 pounds and is able to walk about a mile every day and do light yard work. If we were not in lock down, he would be back to playing pickle ball and if it were spring- going by motorcycle.

What I have learned from this experience is the following:

1. Do not call the company itself: Always call, toll free our broker Terry Kennedy AT 1 877 565 7446 (she also knows your policy number, should you not be able to locate it right away). Even as the Branch Insurance Convenor, I would not attempt to fill out the claim form by myself. She will tell you under what sections of the form you can claim.

2. Re: Mileage: Learn to Track mileage in a chart form and keep track of dates. Remember to do so even to a specialist before and after your hospitalization because it can be covered.

Mileage for us was covered between the Life Lab to the hospital (Of course we did pay some of that cheque to my brother-in-law and also to our son. My husband and I found a way to repay his friend and wife who helped to get the motorcycle home from the Life Lab parking lot!)

3.Re: Parking fee: Whoever is driving to the hospital and upon the discharge can be covered. Just remember to get a receipt from the machine before leaving. In our case, my brother-in-law did not think he could stay. My own parking was not covered when I got there later on the same evening, nor for any of the next 5 days for visiting hours. Of course the Restrictions now during the pandemic may not allow for staying after drop-off.

4. Personal lesson learned: IF YOU HAVE A CELL PHONE.....REMEMBER...TURN IT ON!

On the next page we have the honour of highlighting two of our members.



RHODA MARR

Way back in 1949, fresh out of Grade 13, I went off to Hamilton Normal School. At that time the school was a very old three storey building, no elevator and the Home Ec. room was of course on the third floor and last class of the day when we were all puffed out from going up and down stairs! The very busy year ended with interviews by various School Boards and I was hired by the then Welland Board of Education to teach a Grade Two class at Central School.

In September of 1950 I met my first class— all 52 of them. Looking at the sea of faces I suddenly felt that I was at sea on a paper plate. Mr. Peterson, our dignified principal, seeing how crowded we were, arranged for five of the children to transfer to another school. That left 47 little eager beavers including a little boy with a severe handicap who was required to wear a hand brace which he regularly took off when I wasn't looking. It was a very challenging year, with several ability levels, mountains of lessons to plan and books and papers to mark. I managed to stay afloat and the next two years were easier.

Because I had only an interim certificate I needed to take summer courses so spent the next two summers taking the Primary Methods course in Toronto. That was very helpful.

In the summer of 1953, Harold and I were married and the next spring I was transferred to a Grade Two class in First Street School. There I had the privilege of meeting Mrs. Jessie Carruthers and learning from her how to be a better primary teacher. In the spring of 1956, I took a leave to start our family and resigned in 1957 to be a full time Mom to our two boys. When they both were in school, I joined the list of supply teachers thinking it would be good to keep in touch with what was happening in education.

For several years I supplied for Wainfleet schools under the direction of Mr. Sam Stevenette. This led to a part time assignment replacing a teacher on leave and in 1974 I was offered a full time Grade Two Class at the Burnaby Rd. School, known as the Elephant School because of the little elephant carved on the front peak of the school.

This was a K-3 school with Grade 3 in a portable room. I loved it there. The children were well behaved, the staff were positive and friendly and the parents very supportive.

Around this time student population was shrinking and the then Niagara South Board of Education with input from Wainfleet agreed to combine Burnaby School and the also small Carl McNeil School in to a new, larger up to date building. In 1975-76, while we watched from our classroom windows, our backyard and lovely trees were demolished and our big new school was built right before our eyes. What a learning experience! We wrote stories, made pictures, felt sad and excited all at the same time. In the fall of 1976, we moved into our beautiful new school.

That year our dear principal Catherine Bessey stepped down and Bert Murphy became principal of what became Wainfleet South Elementary School, Grades K-4. What happened that year has gone down in history in the memories of Wainfleet and surrounding area. On Friday, January 28 we were trapped in our school by the blizzard of '77, a never to be forgotten experience. Teachers and 44 children spent the night snuggled in our winter clothes on gym mats on the floor. Hoping it would put the children to sleep we watched "Roots" on the TV. It worked and we had a reasonably quiet night. Only one of my 23, a little girl, cried for her Mommy and had to be comforted. The children were amazingly cooperative in spite of the unusual conditions.

The next years were spent, mostly in Grade Two, but there were years with a 1/2 or 2/3 split and sometimes classes shared with another teacher. These years also saw many changes in curriculum and policies. They also included summer school and many night school classes at Brock University. At Bert Murphy's urging another teacher and I worked at getting our BA degree as the Board was now making this a requirement. By 1980 it was finally mission accomplished and we all celebrated.

For another nine years I worked at teaching, learning and enjoying the privilege of helping children on their learning adventure. I retired in 1989 with many great memories. It wasn't always easy. I made lots of mistakes but what pleasure it is to meet former students who take time to share a happy memory of our days together - mostly in Grade Two. To all appearances, I never got out of the second grade!



FILOMENA PRESTI

I was born in Italy and came to Canada in March 1955. Our family crossed the ocean on the Andrea Doria, landed in New York and made our way to Toronto. We stayed there for a few months and then moved to Port Colborne where my dad got a job at INCO. In September of that year I attended De Witt Carter School. All the new immigrants that had arrived that year were all put in the same class where we learned English and adjusted to the Canadian lifestyle. The following September we were all placed in the classroom appropriate to our ages. I am pleased to say that we all became respected members of the Canadian society and professionals.

I graduated from Vimy School, Port Colborne High School, Brock University and St. Catharines's Teachers' College.

I began my teaching career with the Port Colborne School Board at Vimy School, moved to Steele Street School, Caroline M. Thompson and completed my 35 years of teaching at Ross School with the amalgamated District School Board of Niagara. I must say that I thoroughly enjoyed my teaching career. I worked with some great teachers, had wonderful principals and I always treasure my students' memories.

During that time I got married, and along with my husband Carmelo raised a family. We have three children, two boys Joseph and Emilio, and a girl Agatina. Currently I am a grandmother "nonna" of ten grandchildren, six boys and four girls.

When I retired in the year 2000 I joined the R.W.T.O. whose motto is **Caring Sharing and Having Fun** ; I am proud to be part of this organization where I get to meet some wonderful teachers and make good friends.

Since my retirement I have learned to play bridge and joined bridge groups, “bocce” teams. I enjoy and give back by volunteering to different organizations I belong to: my church, C.F.U.W., ethnic groups such as Casa Dante and The Italian Cultural Centre.

My most rewarding activity is enjoying time with my husband and my family. I enjoy vacationing in Mexico and Europe with my husband and often with my family as well spending time with all my grandchildren.

Looking forward to seeing you again after the pandemic.

Thank you so much Rhoda and Filomena. We appreciate you taking the time to share your stories.

As I close this newsletter, I want to add that there are 51 days until spring. The hostas in my garden are poking up and I reminded them that it wasn't quite time. My squirrel feeder is doing well. The squirrels look nice and fat but I hope some birds get to enjoy it too.

From your Executive, we send our love and best wishes. Also, if anyone has any concerns or would like to chat please contact any one of us. We are here for you.

