



CHALK TALK - FEB. 2023

RWTO/OERO London-Middlesex Branch Newsletter

Website: rwto.org/branch/london-middlesex

Editor: Janice Thielenhaus



Message from our Co-Presidents: Linda Freeman and Mary Maxwell

Our organization of Retired Women Teachers of London and Middlesex did participate and learn in zoom meetings during fall and spring of 2020-2021, and we eagerly and carefully returned to in-person lunch meetings for fall 2021 and spring 2022. Our new executive began this term, 2022-2023, with lunch meetings hosting about 100 participants. We began September with the Thames Valley School Board Chairperson, Lori-Ann Pizzolato speaking to us about local education interests and how schools are still responding to the effects of Covid-19. Still keeping it local, in October, we hosted Trish Wiggell, the owner of Bijou Boutique, who presented a fashion show of Fall Fashions designed by Canadian designers and modelled by some of our own members. In November, we looked forward to the Christmas holidays with the Christmas Merry Makers, a local London group, under the direction of Janet Slavin, entertaining us with song. They definitely made us feel that "Christmas was in the air"!

This fall our community outreach was strongly supported and members were very generous in their donations to The Women's Rural Resource Centre in Strathroy, Our Children's Literacy Initiatives (A Book for Every Child), and My Sister's Place. We thank Mary McNabb Lutz and Donna Newcombe for delivering our donations. As well, following our tradition established in 2017, our Branch members donated \$200 to the Salvation Army Christmas Program instead of purchasing little Santa Gifts for ourselves.

Continuing the Birthday initiative, begun last year by Sandy O'Brien and Vera Rowland, members with special birthdays receive a birthday card. These special cards are sent out by Sharon Lunau. For Christmas, we sent Christmas cards to the members in their eighties and they were entered into a draw for a gift basket which was won by Faye Willis. Our ten members who are in their nineties received a Christmas card and a small gift bag which was delivered to them personally.

In March, we are looking forward to hearing from Robert Pio Hajjar talking about his book *I Love My Life*. In April, we will learn about the serious problem of Human Trafficking and crime along the 401. These are two other aspects of London we can highlight: a local author, and learn more about serious local social issues. Our Annual Spring Banquet and Annual General Meeting will be held in May when the executive will be reaffirmed for the second year of its term.

As you read this newsletter, you will realize that there are executive members and heads of committees who are involved in many areas for our branch. We thank them for all that they do. We have the wonderful opportunity to work together and have fun. We continue to plan activities for the interest and involvement of all. We always welcome people who may be interested in joining our executive; please feel free to speak to any of the current executive. If you have any ideas for Friendship Activities, please share them with the executive.

Yours in Caring and Sharing,

Mary Maxwell and Linda Freeman

Luncheon Dates to Remember



Thursday, March 23, 2023 Thursday, April 27, 2023 Thursday, May 25, 2023

Remember to bring back Book Bags for the Book Table

RWTO Supplementary Health Insurance

When a plan member has a need for nursing services at home, as a result of injury or illness, you must now send Manulife a PRIOR AUTHORIZATION FORM signed by a physician or nurse practitioner. If your need is urgent or immediate contact the Manulife Call Centre at 1-877-222-7340 for verbal authorization.

On the RWTO web-site (rwto.org/membership/insurance plans), you can find the Claim form & Prior Authorization form, or you can phone the call centre and have the forms mailed to you.

If you are in your first year of retirement and wish to apply for this supplementary insurance, you do not have to complete the medical section in the application. However, this section must be completed by new Branch members who are not in their first year of retirement but would like to apply for the Hospital and Home Care Plan. Please phone me, Helen Munce at 519-473-2050 if you have any questions. I can then send you a brochure with the application form.

Remember to inform Manulife if you have a change of address.

Helen Munce

Another look at Domestic Violence

Many of our members heard Dr. Peter Jaffe speak in October 2021 about the effect on children who have been exposed to violence in the home. Now I want to share some information from a lecture series offered by Western's Faculty of Education titled, "Ending Domestic Violence". Recently Dr. John Devaney from the University of Edinburgh spoke to a live audience and on-line to over 1500 viewers.

He quoted: Neil Postman:

CHILDREN ARE THE LIVING MESSAGES WE SEND TO A TIME WE WILL NOT SEE.

The worst case scenario of domestic violence is when one parent (95% male) kills the other parent, but long before it comes to that, the likelihood is that children have witnessed many incidents of violence between the parents. Violence is not the only adversity children face; there is also racism, poverty, maltreatment and disability. The consequences in terms of the mental and physical health of children are very serious.

Children in crisis need stability, a safe place and adults with whom to talk. Often the school is the safe place and a teacher is that adult. Fortunately, nowadays there is more awareness and discussion of the impact of violence and other adversities on the mental health of children not only amongst education, social and mental health care professionals but in the larger society as well.

I asked myself: What can we, as retired teachers, do to help children in distress? I suggest that volunteering in schools, particularly in the elementary panel, can support teachers **and** children; and perhaps also by supporting as volunteers, or financially, in the various local organizations that work with families, children and youth, such as "Youth Opportunities Unlimited".

Linda Freeman

November Christmas 2022 Celebrations

The Christmas Merrymakers choir entertained us.



On the left: Provincial President Judy Drummond was our guest.

See below - Book sales were brisk.



In Memoriam

It saddens us to announce we have lost these wonderful ladies during the past year. We have been privileged to have known them and extend our condolences to their families, friends and colleagues.

Penny Stevenson on April 4, 2022

Dorothy Chisholm on April 17, 2022

Vera Rowland & Sandy O'Brien

Special Birthdays

A year ago, Past Co-presidents, Sandy O'Brien and Vera Rowland were looking for ways to "care and share" with our RWTO/EORO members during the pandemic when meeting in person was an impossibility. They suggested that we could connect by sending birthday cards to members who were celebrating milestone birthdays – those ending in 0 or 5. When Sandy contacted you asking for birthdates, some were hesitant to share personal information as we have all been made keenly aware of the dangers of doing so. The executive approved the initiative and in 2022 cards were sent out to 41 members who celebrated birthday milestones from 60 – 95. If you are a new member or a veteran member and would like to join our birthday club, please contact Sharon Lunau at sal_032949@hotmail.com so we can add your name to our list.

Sharon Lunau

SUMMARY

RWTO/OERO Convention June 7-9th, 2022

Area 3 in London

"LAUGHTER LIFTS US UP!"

Although there were many anxious weeks and accelerated planning in the final days, our first Post-Covid-19 Provincial Convention went as we had all imagined and the over 200 members in attendance took all the small glitches in stride and proved that LAUGHTER indeed works! Spirits were raised everywhere throughout the 4 Points Sheraton on Wellington Road here in London.

Area 3 Branches, led by London-Middlesex, made sure the traditions were upheld, FUN was had, connections were made and new events were introduced. The work was shared and involved over seventy volunteers and the staff of our Hotel partner. We celebrated with our Team and from the glowing accounts and submitted reports; those in attendance enjoyed the three days, their lodgings and the delicious meals from the Chef. We certainly had lots to keep everyone busy and the Hospitality Suite was a gathering spot for chatting and refreshment.

Here are some of the HIGHLIGHTS mentioned;

The awesome Sundance Balloon basket with balloons above looked like it was actually floating! Most groups and Branches had pictures taken in and around it.

The Magician at Tuesday evening's Entertainment performed a levitation of a volunteer Delegate in front of our eyes. This created quite a stir.

A group of former Branch Choir Members performed the 50th Anniversary song, twice, with everyone joining in second time through.

A bus full of members went on a shopping or theatre Tour to Port Stanley, thanks to the planning and organizing from St Thomas Elgin. Many stayed behind but yoga, drumming circle and shopping were available.

Chatham-Kent looked after the Silent Auction which was very popular. The prizes were beautiful. Over \$3,000 was made.

It was a Convention for the Provincial History Books. We did not hear of anyone developing Covid-19 either during or just after Convention. Cheers!

SURPRISE BONUS!

There was a surplus after all the bills had been paid of approximately \$8,000.00 - \$2,000.00 went back to Provincial; \$3,000.00 is allotted to London-Middlesex and the remaining \$3,000.00 was divided equally among the four Area 3 Branches who helped us.

It was an experience and a great pleasure to be part of such a large, hard-working and collegial group. A very positive and uplifting adventure when all is said and done!

In Caring and Sharing and with heartfelt thanks to all –

Cathy Harrison, Convenor



Convention attendees seated at tables listen to a speaker.



Our Branch Volunteers celebrate a successful Convention.

New Members join in 2022

Deborah Owens

Karen Radley

Anne Jorna

Darby Garton (assoc.)

Christine Sangster

Simmy Kauldhar

Dee Cunning

Colleen Rundle

Janis Dixon

Joanne Gray

Shirley Hazelwood

Margaret de Ryk-Tavani

Maria Wiebenga

Jean Lutchin

Cynthia Di Carlo

Gail Lukacs

Andrea Paturel

Anita Renders

Vilma Caxaj

Barbara Dmitrienko

Ten of our new members were welcomed at our November '22 luncheon.



REMEMBER to send changes of mailing address, phone numbers or email addresses to Treasurer Jane Williams at janeandowen@sympatico.ca, thank you.

Hiking/Walking Club EVERYONE is WELCOME

This past October, the Club was able to get organized and off to some weekly walks thanks to Jackie Kinder who contacted Maureen and Cathy to volunteer her time and talents to help with organizing the group and doing the mail-outs! We both appreciate her support and help.

The walking is easy and hikes are chosen from the huge number of green spaces, parks and paths around the city. Usually start time is 10:00 am and the pattern is one hour out and one hour back. We have a lead and a walker at the back to ensure no one is left behind.

Everyone is encouraged to have sturdy boots with a good tread, poles, comfortable layered clothes and a water bottle. We are all different in pace and distance but watch out for one another. Following the hike some members choose to have lunch in a nearby restaurant. Weather is always a factor which is why walks are announced close to the day and a weekly email is sent out to all who signed up.

This Fall, walks have been on a Monday or Tuesday – sites to date have been Kains Woods, Greenway Park, Gibbons Park, and the North Adelaide Playing Fields near Huron and Windermere. Suggestions for future places to visit are always welcome.

If you are interested in joining us or would like more information, please contact any of the leaders.

Jackie Kinder jackiekinder11@gmail.com

Maureen Graham moe.graham@hotmail.com

Cathy Harrison grandmac@hotmail.ca

Cathy Harrison

Wednesday Book Club

Our club has been off to a great start post Covid-19 years and we have two new members who are avid readers. We have returned to our previous format which is - the group reading the same book monthly for a group discussion. During 2020 and '21 we were reporting on our own reads. Recently we read ***The Colony of Unrequited Dreams*** by Wayne Johnson – a fictional account of politician Joey Smallwood.

Madeline Carter

Friendship Activities

Breakfast Socials: Shelley's Restaurant, the Lamplighter Inn, Best Western, 591 Wellington Rd South.
All breakfasts begin at 9:30 am.

Wed, Feb. 8th

Mon, Mar. 13th

Tues, Apr. 11th

Wed, May 10th

Mon, June 12th

Tues, July 11th

Wed, Aug. 9th

Mon, Sept. 11th

Thursday Book Club

Despite Covid-19 restrictions we persevered and continued our meetings, outdoors under trees, on porches and patios. A February location was Cathy Harrison's garage. With the help of many blankets and hot drinks, we enjoyed a fun but chilly time.



Post Covid-19, our group looks forward to enjoying new books to read, spirited discussions and continued friendship. We now have a complete group of seven as we welcomed a new member in 2022.

Pat Savage

Good Reads' Recommendations

Hamnet and Judith by Maggie O'Farrell. This is historical fiction and tells the story of grief, loss and a possible inspiration for the writing of the play Hamlet.
Linda Freeman

A Rip Through Time by Kelly Armstrong. Homicide detective Mallory Atkinson is in Edinburgh. While out jogging one evening, Mallory hears a woman in distress. Upon investigating, Mallory is attacked and loses consciousness. What happens next takes the reader to Dr. Gray's home in 1865. An intriguing combination of mystery and historical fiction. A great winter read. **Jane Williams**

The Only Plane in the Sky by Garrett M. Graff. This is a Non-Fiction account of the 9/11 attacks – extremely moving, keep a tissue on hand. **Madeline Carter**

Off the Record by Peter Mansbridge. Non-Fiction Written in his retirement as a personal look at a journalist's life and career in broadcasting from the 1950s to the present day. **Cathy Harrison**

A World of Curiosities by Louise Penny (Nov '22) I had pre-ordered the book and began reading immediately as with all her other books. Another great read about the fictional town of Three Pines in Quebec. **Mary Maxwell**

French Braid is Anne Tyler's 24th novel, and like all of her books it is a story of the hopes and struggles of family life. Her writing is pleasant, inoffensive, deep and moving. She is one of my favourite authors. **Sharon Lunau**

The Personal Librarian by Marie Benedict & Victoria Christopher Murray – historical fiction of a true-life black woman "passing as white", personal librarian to J.P. Morgan, establishing the famous Pierpont Library in the early 20th century, New York. **Elizabeth Van Dongen**