



CHALK TALK - FEB. 2024

RWTO/OERO London-Middlesex Branch Newsletter

Editor: Janice Thielenhaus



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

Our organization of Retired Women Teachers of London and Middlesex is growing and continuing to enjoy our in-person lunch meetings. Our executive began this term, 2023-2024, planning summer friendship activities and we are now hosting lunch meetings with about 125 participants. We began September with the Dean of the Faculty of Education at Western, Donna Kotsopoulos speaking to us about local initiatives and research at Althouse College. Still keeping it local, in October, we hosted Joanne Johnson and Tanja Bleyert to discuss Downsizing and Decluttering. In November, we looked forward to the holiday season with our own RWTO Choir led by Johanna Hurd, entertaining us with song. They definitely made us feel that "Holiday Cheer 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); a new project we joined was 519Pursuit-SockDrive, (We collected over 450 pairs of socks); and My Sisters' 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 with the Birthday initiative, begun in 2021 by Sandy O'Brien and Vera Rowland, members with special birthdays receive a birthday card. These cards are sent out by Sharon Lunau. For Christmas, we sent holiday greeting cards to the members in their eighties (about 50 members) and they were entered into a draw for a gift basket which was won by Dianne Estabrooks. Our 15 members who are in their nineties received a holiday card and a small gift bag which was delivered to them personally by your co-presidents.

In November, we were made aware that the RiverBend Clubhouse, where we host our lunch meetings, was undergoing renovations in the winter and spring of 2024. This necessitated a search for a new location for our Spring luncheons. Several executive members were involved in the search, and we can now announce we have chosen **The Best Western Lamplighter** on Wellington Road. Decisions about meal menus and costs are still being discussed with the hotel.

In March, we are looking forward to hearing from Bernie Gilmore talking about his book, *Heart of Africa*. In April, we will learn about the Thames River and the indigenous peoples who settled along its banks, with London photographer, Richard Bain, who wrote the book *Shared Waters - London Listens*. Books by these two speakers will be available for purchase on the day of their talk. Our Annual Spring Banquet and Annual General Meeting will be held in May when a new executive will be installed for 2024-2026 term.

As you read this newsletter, you will realize that there are executive members and heads of committees who are involved in many aspects of 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. In September, we welcomed Lynda Faulkner, Sandy Wagter and Maureen Tipping as new Members at Large on our executive. We always welcome members' interest in joining our executive, or have ideas for Friendship Activities. Please feel free to speak to any of the current executive about your interest or suggestions, contact information can be found in the 2023-24 Program.

Yours in Caring and Sharing,

Mary Maxwell and Linda Freeman



Luncheon Dates at this Spring's location -

The Best Western, Lamplighter Inn

Thursday, March 28 2024 Thursday, April 25 2024 Thursday, May 23 2024

Please return with Book Bags for the Book Table

Poverty and Children at Risk

Dr. Donna Kotsopoulos spoke to our membership in September 2023. She is the current dean of Education for Western University. During her 25 minute speech, she highlighted the need to identify children at risk, due to poverty or other causes, and of the need for social and mental health services in our schools.

Donna spoke of her own family's circumstances when she had to leave school at a very young age in order to earn money for the family, and therefore could not receive a high school diploma despite her acknowledged intelligence. Fortunately, Donna was able to complete several post graduate degrees due to the help and guidance she was later given.

Today she is a fearless advocate of training teachers to be aware of potential issues with children that may interfere with their schooling. She also fundraises with Rosie Triebner, her outreach coordinator, and gives back to her community.

During the Q & A after her speech, some of the questions raised were, "the problem with learning in portable classrooms"; also about, "requirements for new teachers entering the faculty"; and, "the length of the program and its components". Donna then thanked women teachers for their contributions to education.

Linda Freeman, Co-President



Greeters welcome members to the luncheon

It's a full house in September 2023



New members are welcomed



Donna Kotsopoulos, speaker



Life Members

In RWTO provincial policy, a Life Member is described as one who is no longer attending meetings due to chronic ill health, physical impairment, mobility or age. She shall pay no membership fees. A member who reaches the age of 100 shall become a Life Member.

Our Branch has designated the following members as Life Members: Maxine Allison, Carolyn Brown, Margery Butson, Agnes Gallagher, Margaret Holdsworth, Doreen Knight, June Levy, Jean Newberry, Edith Van Keulen and Mary Vernon.

Mary Maxwell, Co-President

RWTO Supplementary Health Insurance

Insurance is a mystifying issue. Maybe these tips can help clarify benefits. Our RWTO health insurance continues to be an additional coverage to your other plan. Some call it the "cherry on top". As we age, home care coverage may become more of an issue if we have any hospitalization. After three days in a hospital, whatever your initial plan does not cover, 80% of the remaining can be covered with our RWTO insurance. In addition to that, you can claim for nursing care, physiotherapy, speech therapy etc.; in-home personal care, or home-making. If you can't drive or shovel snow, these items are covered by insurance. For more on the benefits of RWTO supplemental health insurance, please visit the web-site RWTO/OERO for detailed information and/or contact LeAnne Taylor 1-905-875-5953 or Kathy McLean 1-613-277-9771.

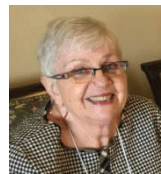
If you are in your first year of retirement and wish to apply for this supplementary insurance, you do not have to complete the medical section in the application. However, this section must be completed by new Branch members who are not in their first year of retirement but would like to apply for the Hospital and Home Care Plan. Contact **Helen Munce at 519-473-2050** or **Madeline Carter at 1-905-429-1551** if you would like a brochure with an application form.

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.

Remember to inform Manulife if you have a change of address, as well as inform our Membership Chair, Karen Tierney.

Helen Munce and Madeline Carter Insurance



Reminders

Please send changes of mailing address, phone numbers or email addresses to our Membership Chair, Karen Tierney or to our Treasurer Jane Williams (janeandowen@sympatico.ca) who will pass along the information to the provincial office.

It is also helpful if your care-giver, or Power of Attorney, or friend who is a member of RWTO, know to contact us if you change address and that they know that RWTO/OERO is a separate organization from RTO.

Help us Celebrate Your Birthdays

For the past two years RWTO/OERO London-Middlesex has been acknowledging members' milestone birthdays – those ending in 0 and 5. In that time birthday greetings have been sent to 72 women celebrating significant birthdays from 60 to 95. It is pleasant to find something in your mailbox besides junk mail!

The first list of 160 members who shared their birth dates with the executive needs updating. If you have joined in the past three years or decided you want to be on the list after initially hesitating to do so, we would be happy to add your names.

Email Sharon Lunau at sal_032949@hotmail.com with the year, month and day of your birth. She has your addresses from the membership list.

Birthdays are good for you. Statistics show that people who have the most, live the longest.

Sharon Lunau, Membership

The Cora Bailey and Shining Star Awards

After the hiatus of the Covid Years 2020 thru' to 2022 our usual Awards were presented in the Spring of 2023. The **Cora Bailey** Award was given to our Past Presidents, Vera Rowland and Sandy O'Brien in April 2023.



The three recipients of the **Shining Star** Award were Lynda Faulkner, Janice Thielenhaus and Dianne Heatherington in May 2023.

New Members join in 2023

Marisa Bucci-Cosens
Marilyn Regan
Ansley Ban
Helen Bobyk
Lisa Ansems
Judith Haylor

Estel Brown
Karen Moffat
Michele Specht
Sharon Burns
Rose Mary Coquim
Angela Cluett



Karen Tierney, Membership

Our Executive 2023 – 24

Cathy Harrison led the members of the executive and general membership through the installation ceremony last May.



Table decorations at Luncheons in 2023

By Irene Gauvin and her talented, creative team. They are Sue Scruton, Helen Munce, Cathy Harrison, Marg Williamson, Gayle Murray, Joy Morrison, Roseanne Wadsworth and Marg Delagran.



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.

These flowers were placed in the vase during our memorial service held in September 2023.



Patricia Laidlaw in November 2021
Eleanor White in June 2023
Geraldine Stol in June 2023
Irene Cudmore in July 2023
Dawn Martin in August 2023
Bernice Finch in August 2023
Angela Lang in September 2023

Karen Tierney, Membership

Many thanks to our photographer, Bernarda Norwood for all the pictures which definitely makes the newsletter more attractive to read and reminds members of the years' activities.

The Hiking/Walking Group

Going hiking with RWTO members and friends is a great way to stay healthy, have fun and enjoy social time with others. We try to meet every second Monday, in the afternoon, weather permitting. We like to vary the trails which means that some walks are easy on paved walkways and some are more challenging. Please email jackie11kinder@gmail.com to get on the mailing list and join us in enjoying the outdoors.

Jackie Kinder, Hiker

#1 Book Club

Our group of six meets once a month all year on the first Thursday of the month. We are a small but diverse group taking turns hosting twice a year. The whole group really enjoyed reading **Educated** by Tara Westover. Some biographies, author studies, and Canadian authors were also enjoyed. We are in the process of making format changes so it's a good time for new members to join our group. All are welcome, contact Deb Kaiser at 519-520-1864.

Deb Kaiser, Reader

Wednesday Book Club

Our Wednesday morning book club was off to a great start this year in September. Our first book was **When We Meet Again** by Kristen Harmel. We enjoyed it so well that some of us will read her newest release, **The Paris Daughter**.

A discussion about the book leads us to discuss other books we have read. We all have very eclectic tastes in books as well as theatre and hobbies. This keeps our discussions active. Our next book was **Little Fires Everywhere** by Celeste Ng – it is a Reese Witherspoon favourite. We are currently hoping for a few more members, contact Madeline at 1-905-429-1551 or seagrave333@gmail.com

Madeline Carter, Reader

Additional Book Recommendations

A Walk in the Woods by Bill Bryson, a well-known humorist travel writer – when he turned 60 he decided to walk the Appalachian trail where he met interesting characters. **Linda Freeman**

Lady Tan's Circle of Women by Lisa See, a fascinating, well researched, historical novel set in 13th century China.

Lessons in Chemistry by Bonnie Garmus, a hilarious read - better than viewing the TV series.

The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek by Kim Michele Richardson, set in 1940s Kentucky mountains. **Editor's choices**

Friendship Activities

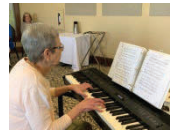
Breakfast Socials: Shelley's Restaurant, the Lamplighter Inn, Best Western, 591 Wellington Rd South.

All Breakfasts begin at 9:30 am.

Wednesday, Feb. 14 th	Monday, June 10 th
Monday, Mar 11 th	Tuesday, July 9 th
Tuesday, Apr. 9 th	Wednesday, Aug 14 th
Wednesday, May 8 th	

Speakers in 2023

Robert Pio Hajjar in March, Police Officers in April, Our Choir directed by Johanna Hurd in May, Donna Kotsopoulos in September, Joanne Johnson & Tanja Bleyert in October, Our choir again in November.



"Good Reads" Recommendations

If you are thinking of an exciting, one of a kind family saga, **The Seven Sisters** by Lucinda Riley is perfect for you. Visit Norway, the U.K., Brazil, Spain and New Zealand. Meet the seven sisters of Pleiades and revel in the twists and turns of these girls' lives and the mysterious Pa Salt who adopted them. This reader couldn't put the 8 novels down. **Dianne Heatherington**

Crook Manifesto, is a novel by Colson Whitehead – it is 1971; trash piles up on the streets; crime is at an all time high; the city is careering towards bankruptcy and a shooting war has broken out between the NYPD and the Black Liberation Army. Amidst the collective nervous breakdown, the furniture store-owner and ex-fence Ray Carney tries to keep his head down and his business thriving in Harlem – a unique part of New York city. **Jane Williams**

Thomas King, the best-selling author of **The Back of the Turtle** and **The Inconvenient Indian** masters the comic mystery novel in **Thumps Dreadful Water**. Six more books follow in the series starring ex-cop Thumps who reluctantly solves mysteries in his new hometown. Laugh out loud dialogue and a good plot make for fun reading. **Sharon Lunau**

One of my favourite books read in 2023 was **Someone Else's Shoes** by Jo Jo Moyes ... a female main character who has to balance job and family while struggling against inequalities in the workplace that face many women. It has great character development and a story told so that the reader finds herself really caring about her. Made me read everything else the author has written. **Sandy O'Brien**

This year, I discovered an Australian author – Jane Harper who writes brilliantly about life in the Outback weaving the challenges, the culture and the geography into her stories. The characters are so well-drawn, page turner mysteries every one – **The Dry, Force of Nature, The Lost Man, Exiles, Survivors**. **Cathy Harrison**

Standing in the Shadows by Canadian author Peter Robinson. His final novel involves an archeologist unearthing a skeleton in the English countryside. DS Alan Banks and his team are called in and they discover the past and present meeting with devastating consequences. **Vera Rowland**