

Retired Women  
Teachers of OntarioOrganisation des  
enseignantes  
retraitées de l'Ontario**President's Message:**

Happy Summer ladies! As I type, we are in a heat wave. Personally, I like the heat and sun, however I am thankful to live in Canada to experience all four seasons. Thanks for a great turn out at the Holiday Inn Express. I think we can all agree that the guest speaker from Shaw's was "shawesome" as she says.

Our planning is mostly done for next year. A huge thanks to Sandy, Marilyn and Pam for offering to help with planning/jobs next year. Also: Millie really appreciated the extra help of Ruth Quenneville, Rosanna McGuffin and Monique Wood at our Registration tables. You are all appreciated! As mentioned at the meeting, if you are able to help out with a committee or one of the meeting tasks, please let us know. As the saying goes, "many hands make light work" and this executive is outstanding to be a part of. Thanks to Susan Grieve for putting together our summer reading list. I am looking forward to some new suggestions. Also, thank you to Millie and Rita who helped me represent our Branch at the RWTO provincial convention this month. As seen in this photo, their enthusiasm shone through! Have a wonderful safe summer!

From, Shelly



**From the Treasurer:** A big thanks to everyone who has already submitted their dues for 2025-26. If you have yet to pay dues this spring, rest assured that your current membership is valid until August 31 of this year. Please note that if you are carrying our Manulife Insurance, it is necessary to keep your membership up to date. Any dues outstanding may be paid by e-transfer to [rwto.ste@gmail.com](mailto:rwto.ste@gmail.com) or by mail to Millie Gremonprez, 12 Mary Bucke St, St. Thomas ON N5R 5J6. Your grateful treasurer Millie thanks you!

## BACKPACK PROJECT...all set to go!



Our members have done it again and this summer the dynamic duo of Gianna Filipovic and Monique Wood will be shopping for items to fill backpacks that go to Valora Place, our local women's shelter.

When mothers and children arrive empty-handed seeking shelter, the backpacks are there to facilitate a smooth a transition to keep students in school.

Our wonderful backpack project has been going for over twenty years, and has been recognized at the RWTO provincial level with a *Feather-In-Your Hat* award.

Special thanks to Golden K Kiwanis for their valued partnership.



Retired Women  
Teachers of Ontario



Organisation des  
enseignantes  
retraitées de l'Ontario

## LOOKING FORWARD WITH OUR EXECUTIVE PLANNING



Pictured is Past President Judy De Groot, completing the Induction of next year's executive: Shelly Sturk (Pres.) Millie Gremontprez (Treasurer), Rita Demcheson (Insurance), Susan Grieve (Sec.), Mary Lynch (Registration Convenor), Karen Auckland (Communication) and Sue Bandeen (Archivist).

Next year, our executive will begin the process of transitioning our leadership roles. We would love to have 2 or 3 new members join our executive team to shadow and assist with the following tasks:

-Enews creation, Archive of Records, Taking Minutes, Planning and Set up for Meetings, along with small roles during our meetings. **If you can help in any way, we would love to have you join us for our next Executive Meeting on Sept. 11<sup>th</sup> at 9 a.m.** You will be working alongside a current executive member as we value your input and assistance for these roles that will open up. Please join us! Contact President Shelly if you are willing to help us out. Many hands make for light work (and more fun for all!).

Please add these dates to your calendars for our 6 Branch Meetings of the 2025-26 year. More details about meals and program will be confirmed soon.

**September 18, 2025** - St. Thomas Sr. Centre 9:30- Coffee Hour

**October 16, 2025** - Lawrence Station 11:30 -Roast Beef Dinner

**November 20, 2025** - Masonic Centre 11:30-Turkey Dinner

**April 16, 2026**- Union /St. Thomas Golf Club- 11:30 Light Lunch

**May 21, 2026**- St. Thomas Sr. Centre- 11:30- Lasagna Lunch

**June 18, 2026**- Sparta Historical Museum-11:30- Strawberry Social





## **Summer Reading list RWTO 2025**



**Here One Moment** - Liane Moriarty- Contemporary Mystery – passengers on a short flight have their deaths predicted by a passenger and soon it becomes clear her predictions are accurate. If you were told you only had a certain amount of time left.....what would you do?

**The Book of Lost Friends**- Lisa Wingate – Historical Fiction – story of three young women who embark on a journey to search for family in post-Civil War South, and a modern teacher who rediscovers their story and its connection to her own students

**The Sicilian Inheritance**- Jo Piazza – Historical Fiction - story about a long-awaited trip to Sicily, a disputed inheritance and a family secret some will kill to protect.

**The Women**- Kristen Hannah – Historical Fiction – story of a woman who serves as a nurse in Vietnam, the trauma of war, and the battles she faces when she returns to a country divided, angry protesters and a country that wants to forget the war

**Recipe for a Good Life** by Lesley Crewe – contemporary fiction set in Cape Breton – a burned-out novelist travels to Cape Breton Island to unwind and recover – a warm, funny read with a cast of quirky characters

**The Briar Club** by Kate Quinn – Historical Fiction story of female friendships set during the McCarthy era. When Grace March moves into a boarding-house everything changes for the better but she hides a terrible secret that eventually impacts everyone.

**West with Giraffes** by Lynda Rutledge – based on a true story of a cross-country trip of 2 giraffes heading to the San Diego Zoo and the events along the way with the orphan boy who cares for them and how they save his life and his soul.

**The Secret History of Audrey James** by Heather Marshall – Historical Fiction – Kate Mercer takes a job caring for an elderly woman in Northern England...her story unfolds of her life during the war and how Audrey risks her own life to save her best friend Ilse who is Jewish.

**The Measure** by Nikki Elrick – Contemporary - every adult in the world awakens one morning with a box with a string and it is eventually figured out that the string reflects the length of your life – story tells of 8 different people and how they react (to open the box or not, how you live if you have a long life, a short life, a different length of life from your partner, etc.)

**James** by Percival Everett –Historical Fiction - a retelling of the story of Slave Jim from the Huckleberry Finn book

**How to Age Disgracefully** by Clare Pooley – Contemporary - interconnected story of several people between a Senior's Centre and a Day Care Centre – a group of quirky characters all come together to try to save their community centre – a funny, engaging read

**The House Keepers** by Alex Hay – Historical fiction/mystery - When Mrs. King is dismissed from her position as a house keeper in the nicest home in Mayfair in the early 1900's, she selects an interesting group of women to plan her revenge. On the night of the illustrious costume ball, they will rob the entire home of every possession right under the noses of the guests and host! Will they succeed.....or.....get caught?

**The Frozen River** by Ariel Lawton – an historical mystery inspired by the life and diary of Martha Ballard, a renowned 18th century midwife who defied the legal system and became a part of American history.

**The Rome Affair** by Karen Swan – set in Rome in 1974 and 2017, a great mystery and romance novel

**Etta and Otto and Russell and James** by Emma Hooper – Etta, at age 82 leaves Saskatchewan to see the ocean, her husband Otto waits for her with his memories, their neighbour Russell also lives with his memories of Etta and his dog James.

**When Breath Becomes Air** by Paul Kalanithi –Autobiography- At the end of his training as a neurosurgeon, a doctor is diagnosed with cancer and he tells his story of his journey.

**Becoming** by Michelle Obama – Autobiography - her life story

**Radium Girls: The Dark Story of America's Shining Women** by Kate Moore – a difficult non-fiction account of the young women who were hired to paint clock dials using paint illuminated with radium during the 1920's

**Homecoming** by Kate Morton – Historical fiction/mystery - spanning generations and involving a cold case mystery, Morton weaves themes of family, motherhood, choices made and secrets kept into an intriguing story

**The Night Portrait** by Laura Morelli – a dual timeline novel about one of Da Vinci's paintings and the woman who fought to save it from Nazi destruction during WWII

**When the World Fell Silent** by Donna Jones Alward – Historical fiction - Canadian author tells the story of the 1917 Halifax explosion

**The Tea Girl of Hummingbird Lane** by Lisa See - historical fiction - story of tea making in the mountains of China and one family's hardships as they are trapped in rituals and routine

**Start with Why** by Simon Sinek (Non fiction) – investing, business, success



**The Plague** by Kevin Chong – a modern retelling of the Albert Camus classic which sets the story of infectious disease and quarantine in contemporary Vancouver and our age of social justice and inequity

**Unreconciled** by Jesse Wentz – Non-fiction/ memoir - Indigenous author uncovers the lies and myths that affect relations between white and Indigenous peoples and the power of narratives to emphasize truth over comfort

**Little Fires Everywhere** by Celeste Ng – Contemporary - a woman with a mysterious past and a child, moves to Shaker Heights, a suburb where everything is planned. Worlds and lifestyles collide and the apparent perfection of some families proves to be anything but perfect

**The Four Winds** by Kristin Hannah – Historical Fiction - set in the Great Depression, Elsa Martinelli must make the agonizing choice to either fight for her land or go west in search of better life.

**Forgiveness** by Mark Sakamoto – Non fiction/Memoir - story of the experiences of Japanese families that were interned in Canada after the bombing of Pearl Harbour

**Finding Flora** by Elinor Florence – Historical fiction - a young woman from Aberdeen becomes a homesteader in the Canadian West

**The Eights** by Joanna Miller – Historical fiction- a group of 4 young women begin at Oxford in 1920, the 1st year women can matriculate

**A Forger's Tale** by Shaun Greenhaigh – non fiction story of Shaun Greenhaigh, who went to prison for artistic forgeries, but tells the back story of his life and love of art

**The Gown** by Jennifer Robson – a dual timeline of 1947 and 2016. A modern woman must unravel the mystery of a set of embroidered flowers from her late grandmother, who never spoke of her life in Britain where she worked on the gown worn by Princess Elizabeth for her wedding.

**The Lost and Found Bookshop** by Susan Wiggs – Contemporary - a story of complicated relationships and the power of books and stories. There is a book for everything.

**Hello Beautiful** by Ann Napolitano - homage to Little Women, told in modern times

**Mrs. Van Gogh** by Caroline Couchi - Historical fiction - story of Vincent Van Gogh's sister-in-law and how she promoted his art after he died and her love story with his brother

**Remarkably Bright Creatures** by Shelby Van Pelt – contemporary - unusual story about an octopus who helps bring people together and helps them to solve their personal problems

**Virgin River Series** by Robyn Carr – Contemporary - Netflix series is based on these books about the community of Virgin River and its residents

**Looking for Jane** by Heather Marshall – Historical Fiction- story about the Jane Network (an underground abortion network) and different stories from different perspectives and times

**The Fall of Marigolds** by Susan Meissner – Historical fiction - a beautiful scarf passed down through generations, connects two women who learn the things are made bearable by the love we give away

**The Lost Bride Trilogy** by Nora Roberts – tales of tragedies, loves found and lost and a family haunted for generations

**Tuesdays with Morrie** – by Mitch Albom – based on true story of a sports broadcaster who reconnects with a favourite professor who has been diagnosed with ALS.

**On Isabella Street** by Genevieve Graham - Historical fiction - set in Toronto and Vietnam during the 60's, story about 2 women caught up in the powerful social movements and the tragedy that will bring them together

**My Friends** by Frederick Backman - explores the friendships of 4 friends over decades

**The Kite Runner** by Khaled Hosseini – story of a family who escapes the Taliban in Afghanistan

**Tom Lake** by Anne Patchette – a mother of 3 daughters lives on a cherry orchard, has a secret past with a famous movie star that she shares with her daughters

**The Retirement Plan** by Sue Hincenbergs – Contemporary - 3 middle aged best friends turn to murder to collect on their husbands' life insurance policies, unaware that their husbands have a plan of their own

**Broken Country** by Claire Leslie Hall – story of love and heartbreak, family and sacrifice

**The Anxious Generation** by Johnathan Haidt (Non-Fiction) - a look at raising children in the tech age and where to go from here

**The Night Swim** by Megan Goldin (plus four other titles) books are mystery/suspense

**The Oligarch's Daughter** by Joseph Finder - thriller about a man on the run, living under an assumed name his security is breached and he must escape Russian operatives

**Three Days in June** by Anne Tyler- Contemporary - a family comes together for a wedding over 3 days while the main character is in crisis

**Every Fifteen Minutes** by Lisa Scotoline – mystery about a renowned doctor whose is struggling as a single father, and with a young patient in a psychiatric crisis who disappears when a murder occurs



**The Little Old Lady Who Broke All the Rules** by Catharina Ingelman-Sundberg –contemporary -  
- 79-year-old Martha, dreams of escaping her care home and robbing a bank to fund a much more  
exciting life style

**Blood Moon** by Sandra Brown – Cotemporary - an unruly detective and an ambitious tv producer  
work against the clock to prevent another young woman from disappearing before the next blood  
moon

**A Family Matter** by Claire Lynch – a novel about the devastating consequences of one woman's  
affair

**Even Now/To the Moon and Back** by Karen Kingsbury – a writer of Christian fiction

### **Congratulations to our 3 Cora Bailey Winners!**

#### **Cora Bailey Award Criteria**

**Cora Bailey was RWTO/OERO's First Secretary-Treasurer. She held this position for eleven years until 1982 and wrote the RWTO/OERO History Book, OASWT 1956-76. This award is made in her honour. A certificate(s) for the award is available from the Provincial office and will be signed by the current Provincial President. The Cora Bailey Award may be presented to a Branch member who has contributed outstanding service to her Branch.**



***(From Left to Right)***

**Sue Bandeen honours Aurilla Ripley; Beth Phoenix and Shelly Sturk honour Jeannette Jenkins and Millie Gremontprez and Shelly honour Rita Demcheson by introducing them as our 2024-25 Cora Bailey Award Winners**



**CORA BAILEY AWARD 2024-2025**  
**ST. THOMAS-ELGIN BRANCH RWTO/OERO**



**Aurilla Ripley**

**Aurilla started teaching in Sept 1963 in Burlington, Ontario. For thirty-five years she taught at Pineland, Burlington, Alexandra in London, Woodbridge District Christian School, Newmarket Christian Academy, Springfield and Davenport Public School in Aylmer. A highlight was taking a senior grade to Ottawa on a field trip at year's end.**

**In addition to a busy career, Aurilla's passion to help children began with the custodian at Davenport, who had a four-year old son who needed a costly wheelchair that his family could not afford. He asked her if her class would collect pop tabs for this cause. This led to a life-long commitment to help similar children in need.**

**Aurilla has dedicated the past thirty-two years to this worthy cause. She is proud to have a strong and committed team including Donna Timpany, John Taylor, Trixie Kretschmer, Dave Mallot, Dave Baughman, Susan Jacob, Wayne Kennedy, Donna Draper and Sandy Chapman. This amazing group works diligently to collect tabs from over three hundred public and separate schools, churches, service clubs, sports clubs and RV groups from all over Southwestern Ontario: Windsor to Warton, almost to Hamilton and down along Lake Erie and Lake Huron. To date, Aurilla and her group have collaborated to provide "wheels" for sixty-three students, with a few having been able to go on to college. They work closely with Thames Valley Children's Centre in London and Chatham Kent Treatment Centre in Chatham for genuine cases of need.**

**Aurilla would like to encourage her retired colleagues to find joy and opportunities to excite children and enhance their lives in the great adventure of learning.**

**CORA BAILEY AWARD 2024-2025**  
**ST. THOMAS-ELGIN BRANCH RWTO/OERO**



**JEANETTE JENKINS**

**Jeanette's teaching career started in Stoney Creek where she taught French from Grades 9 to 13. When she married and moved to Belmont, she taught Grade 7 at Oliver Stephens Public school in Woodstock. Finally, Jeanette taught at South Dorchester Public school for 15 years - Grades 4 and 5 her they were her absolutely favourite grades to teach.**

**Jeanette taught alongside her friend, the late Carolyn Cryderman.**

**In addition to teaching, she fed calves and started the milking for her husband Jim before coming to school. Jeanette joined RWTO after retiring and was approached by the greatest persuaders in the business Judy and Hazel and that led to eventually becoming president.**

**RWTO is a great organization, and she enjoys being a member.**

**CORA BAILEY AWARD 2024-2025**  
**ST. THOMAS-ELGIN BRANCH RWTO/OERO**



**RITA DEMCHESON**

Rita's teaching career began in 1988. She was hired by the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board to be an Occasional Teacher. In 1994, Rita became the President of Dufferin-Peel Occasional Teachers OECTA Local. She held that position until 1999. Rita became a full-time teacher in 1999. She spent most of her career teaching in Brampton as a kindergarten teacher. After 25 years of teaching, Rita retired in June 2013. In September 2013, Rita was invited by her former retired colleagues to attend a Peel North Branch RWTO/OERO meeting as their guest. She attends a couple of meetings as a guest member. Rita didn't sign up to be a member because she was moving to St. Thomas in March 2014 to be closer to her children who lived in London. After a couple of months of unpacking and settling in, she finally got the chance to read the local newspaper. An article written by Wendy Glover caught her eye. Wendy was writing about the charitable endeavors of the St. Thomas-Elgin RWTO/ERO Branch and inviting all retired teachers to their May meeting at the New Serum diner. At that May meeting, Rita was warmly welcomed by Sue Jacobs and became a member. For the June meeting, Judy De Groote volunteered to drive her to Ingersol along with Hazel Sims and Carole Watson. By the end of June, Rita was volunteering as a caller. In 2017, she became the Caller Convenor and a member of the Branch Executive. In 2022, Rita became First Vice President and then President in 2023. She created the moniker "Dream Team" for the Executive. Rita was so grateful for their support during her tenure as President. She has attended a few AGMs as a voting delegate for the Branch. Rita is currently the Past President and Insurance Convenor. She is also the Chief Elf at our Christmas November meeting and is the Jokester at each meeting. Rita has enjoyed being a member of this branch and cherishes the good times that she has had with her St. Thomas-Elgin friends. She has learned so much about her new home from them! Rita is honoured to be the recipient of the Cora Bailey Award for 2024-2025



## **Moments of June 19th Meeting: Sharing and Caring!**



### **Congratulations to our June Toonie Board Winners:**

**Our \$10 winner was Fatima Martins-Grabowski and the lucky \$100 winner was Nina Craig. Profits made from our Toonie Board help to defray costs of our meetings.**



## Highlights from our June General Meeting:

- Shelly gave a brief update on the provincial RWTO convention that she, Rita and Millie attended. Our delegates became aware that our branch is doing very well compared to some branches who have struggled since Covid. Next year's convention, celebrating 70 years, will be held in London. She also drew everyone's attention to invitations to join RWTO, which were on the tables, to give to anyone who has recently retired, or been retired for a while.
- Millie Gremonprez addressed the financial report and 2025 budget which were emailed to members. We have a healthy balance and managed a surplus for this year. Millie indicated that \$300 was added to the financial report to support a camper and the executive will discuss this for inclusion in future budgets. Millie informed members their new membership cards were tucked into their name tags. We currently have 115 paying members and 8 life members. Esther-Wendel Caraher spoke briefly about the request made by she and Fran Wren to sponsor a grade 8 student named Emily to attend camp at Pearce Williams, who would otherwise have been unable to attend. Due to our strong financial situation, the executive decided in favour of this request as mentioned above.
- Rita Demcheson reported that the Open Window campaign was very successful with an extra 351 RWTO members signing up for Insurance. In turn, provincial received rebates.
- Fran Wren introduced our guest speaker, Kelly Heleniak from Shaw's Ice Cream. Kelly gave us a wonderful presentation, including the original history of Shaw's Ice Cream in Elgin County, the Dairy Bar on Sunset Drive and how she and her sisters grew up scooping Shaw's Ice Cream at their summer jobs in Tillsonburg. When it was announced that Shaw's would be going out of business in 2001, these 3 sisters decided to buy the company and she gave a fascinating talk about the steep learning curve for these young entrepreneurs, and their current roles balancing business and family life. Kelly outlined their expansions and the incredible growth they have experienced. This local company is unique in that it is run by 3 women, it is 100% Canadian and it produces a product of excellent quality. Rita thanked Kelly for such an interesting and entertaining talk and then Kelly treated us all to some of their delicious ice cream flavours.





83 members enjoyed a great visit at the new Holiday Inn Express in St. Thomas where we had a delicious chicken meal made by Kathy's Catering. A special dessert was served by our speaker Kelly, from Shaw's Ice Cream.



Thanks to our generous members and to the support of Golden Kiwanis we have surpassed our goal for our Backpack Project. Additionally, our guest speaker, Kelly generously donated her speaker honorarium back to the backpack project. Thank you, Kelly!

LOOKING FOR A NEW WAY TO VOLUNTEER? CHECK THIS OUT!



## **COMMUNITY CORNER:**

My name is Nicole McNeil-Nuckowski, and I have been an adult education instructor for the YWCA St. Thomas-Elgin for the past eight years. When I learned that your organization dates back to 1937 with the goal “to care and share,” I felt it tied strongly with the YWCA's focuses and initiatives. I wanted to bring to your attention our need for a volunteer to help support adult learners in our classroom here in St.

Thomas. The link below highlights the many volunteer opportunities to be found at the YWCA St. Thomas-Elgin. <https://ywcaste.ca/volunteer/>

I am specifically looking to call attention to the STU Classroom role.

[Skills Training and Upgrading \(STU\) Classroom Volunteer \(Page 1 of 4\)](#)

If you are interested in volunteering with this YWCA program, I would be happy to find a day and time to meet with you to further explain how our STU classroom works, and what we are looking for in a suitable volunteer. I would like to share that an individual who is especially strong in math would be a great asset to our program. Please contact me at the number below.

Nicole McNeil-Nuckowski (she/her)

*Adult Education Manager for Skills Training & Upgrading*

*UPLIFT Coordinator*

YWCA St. Thomas-Elgin

**519-631-9800 extension 228**



YWCA ST. THOMAS-ELGIN



**PLEASE FORWARD THIS ENEWS, OR TEAR OFF THIS INVITATIONAL PAGE AND GIVE IT TO A RETIRED COLLEAGUE WHO MAY BE INTERESTED IN JOINING OUR BRANCH!**

**THE ST. THOMAS-ELGIN BRANCH  
OF THE  
RETIRED WOMEN TEACHERS OF ONTARIO**

**CORDIALLY INVITES NEWLY RETIRED  
WOMEN TEACHERS,  
EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANTS,  
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS,  
CHILD & YOUTH WORKERS,  
SPEECH & LANGUAGE PATHOLOGISTS,  
EDUCATIONAL AUDIOLOGISTS,  
SOCIAL WORKERS & PSYCHOLOGISTS &  
OFFICE SUPPORT STAFF**

**TO BE OUR GUESTS AT OUR SEPTEMBER COFFEE BREAK MEETING**

**TIME: 9:30 AM**

**DATE: THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 18<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

**PLACE: THE ST. THOMAS SENIORS' CENTRE**

**225 CHESTNUT ST. ST. THOMAS, ONTARIO**

**IF YOU PLAN TO ATTEND, PLEASE RSVP TO:**

**[rwto.ste@gmail.com](mailto:rwto.ste@gmail.com)**

**RWTO/OERO welcomes  
Retired Women Educational Professionals:**

- ~ Audiologists**
- ~ Child & Youth Care Workers/Counsellors**
- ~ Early Childhood Educators**
- ~ Educational Assistants**
- ~ Office Support Staff**
- ~ Psychologists**
- ~ Social Workers**
- ~ Speech & Language Pathologists**
- ~ Teachers**



**Please share with  
your friends!**