



May Newsletter

RWTO/OERO Newsletter BurlOak Branch

"May, more than any other month of the year, wants us to feel most alive." – Fennel Hudson

Since I broke my hip this last January, I am hoping to be popping up by May just like the Spring flowers.

Enjoy the lovely weather after the cold winter we had.

Forward this newsletter on to all

your retired teacher friends who are not members and invite them to join us. *Sharon J.*



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Tea Room Tours, Travel Club

In Memoriam, Luncheon highlights.

CHECK OUT THE WEB PAGE AT <https://rwto.org/branches/branch-news/>

CHECK US OUT ON FACEBOOK— RWTO BURLOAK

Email For BurlOak RWTO rwto-oeroBurlOak@gmail.com

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MEMBERS REPORTS

"The information collected by the Membership Committee will be used by RWTO BURLOAK Branch to create a database of members. This database will be used to analyze membership trends and to identify member interests. It will not be sold, loaned, or provided in any way to any other individual or organization. Some information will be provided to RWTO/OERO Provincial. RWTO BURLOAK Branch publishes a newsletter, e-notices, Facebook page and maintains an Internet Webpage. Under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPP) permission is needed to print/post images or information on our members. If you have any objections to your full name, picture, or member information being included on our website, e-notices, Facebook or newsletter, **please contact Sharon Jenkins.**"

For contact information of members please refer to your membership list.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Our March meeting with Emma from Backed by Bees was an engaging and educational presentation. We learned how much bees impact humanity and the planet. We should spread the word about the consequences of bee extinction. Eating honey has health benefits worth studying. We need to protect bees for the health of our planet. Thanks to Maureen Downey for the beautiful presentation of tables, settings, stickers, honey sticks, and centre pieces. It was a visual and intellectual delight. Many members lined up to speak to Emma and buy Beyond Bees honey. I hope our interest in this topic will encourage members to support bees and local honey.

Our interest groups are important gateways to our group. With many people attending these groups, the organization is richer and more supportive of individual members. Relationships develop in smaller group settings. Thanks to the convenors! Please thank them individually. They know you're a regular at book club, travel club, cards, knitting, card making, tearoom tours, and Lunch Bunch! If you have suggestions for other interest groups, let us know.

Diane Sinden, Linda MacDonald, Cecile Leach, Moira Plexman, and I will attend the June 2-4 Provincial Annual General Meeting as delegates to represent BurlOak branch and voice your opinions about the resolutions in our Provincial newsletter.

This newsletter is the last of my messages to the BurlOak branch as President. Thank you for allowing me to take on this role, to learn about you as members of our organization, and to work with the exceptional Executive Board members who have worked hard to present five luncheons each year. We all enjoy meeting regularly to see members and chitchat together. Linda MacDonald will be taking over as President in May after our AGM and will be a very capable leader. I look forward to continuing to represent you as Past President. One of my most important functions will be to recruit new Board members, so please consider taking on a leadership role to create more interest and take BurlOak into the rest of the 2020s and into the 2030s. *Claudia Stewart*



MEMBERSHIP REPORT

We're delighted to welcome new members, Andrea Clifford, Louise Craig, Sue Dunn-Eckstein, Carol Moores, Francine Nadeau, Carol Pashkievich, and Heather Pickerill to our BurlOak branch this year.

BurlOak members have enjoyed many fun and fellowship opportunities this year, including luncheon meetings with interesting speakers, interest groups, tea outings, euchre, knitting, card making, lunch bunch experiences, and book clubs. Our branch exemplifies "caring and sharing", as demonstrated by member donations to charities and gifts of socks and mittens to schools. We hope you will continue to enjoy your membership by renewing it for 2026-27.

The membership fee remains the same at \$65 for members who retired after August 31, 1980. Those who stopped teaching before that date pay \$25. Associate members who are full members at another RWTO branch pay \$15. Life Members, as determined by the executive, do not pay fees.

You are encouraged to participate in our Membership Incentives. By renewing your membership by May 4, you will have three chances to win.

Early Bird Spring Draw

Renew your membership on or before May 4th AGM to enter the draw to win your **September luncheon**.

Two names will be drawn.

Win your Membership

Members who pay by **July 31** will have their names entered in a draw to win their membership.

e-transfer membership to: rwtoburloak20@gmail.com

or

Send cheques to: Carolynn Blake, Treasurer

Important reminder to RWTO Insurance members: To participate in the insurance plan, you must be a paid-up member.

Membership Forms

Membership forms will be available at the AGM to fill out or if you need to make changes to what we have on file.

If you have no changes, there is no need to complete another membership form. *Moira Plexman*

BURLOAK



ARCHIVES REPORT

It's been my pleasure working as the archivist for the past six years. I'd greatly appreciate any help I can get, no matter how small, as I continue to serve our BurlOak Branch.

You will see me taking pictures at the luncheons, but I'm not at many of the interest groups. This means I don't have access to any photos from those groups. I would appreciate receiving any photos of the interest groups that they would like to share.

I look forward to gathering and sharing this information in our archives.

I'm also continuing to add to our archives. At each luncheon, I display a few of our books and photos in this 70th year of RWTO. *Peggy Blair*



TREASURER'S REPORT

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The Branch Treasurer is responsible for collecting Annual Membership fees and forwarding payment and updated membership information to RWTO/OERO Provincial. An audited year-end report is sent to RWTO/OERO Provincial by April 30th and is shared with the BurlOak Branch members at the Annual General Meeting in May. The Treasurer also presents a proposed budget for the following year, which members are asked to review and approve. We encourage all members to attend the AGM meeting in order to provide input into the running of your Branch.

RWTO/OERO Provincial increased their Membership fees to \$50.00, thus our Branch membership fee last year increased to **\$65.00**. This year the membership renewal fee will remain at **\$65.00**.

The Treasurer also collects Luncheon payments from members. RWTO BurlOak Branch offers e-transfers for membership, luncheons and activity payments. The email for this process is rwtoburloak20@gmail.com. Please **delete** any other email addresses that you might have used in the past.

We continue to accept cheques for payments, but please email the Treasurer at her email ([check your membership list for email](#)) to notify her if you are sending a payment by snail mail, as delivery of mail has not always been reliable. Carolyn will let you know when your cheque has arrived.

The cost of everything is rising. We're endeavouring to keep the cost of luncheons at \$50. Toni has increased his Luncheon price to \$53. To help members, the branch will be subsidizing the \$3 price increase for the 2026-27 fiscal year. The subsidy cannot be guaranteed beyond this year.

We average overall costs to keep luncheons consistent. Some meals, like the Christmas and Chicken Brie luncheons, cost more, so we include less expensive meals to balance things out.

Refunds **can't** be made once numbers go into D & T Catering 10 days before a luncheon. The catering company now offers to box up your luncheon if you can't attend. You must arrange for someone to pick it up and deliver it. The Executive can't do this.

At the Christmas Luncheon we encouraged our membership to donate to Food Banks in both Burlington and Oakville as the need for food and services continues to be high. We collected the cheques from those who participated and dropped them off to the Food Banks. All six were grateful for the personal donations.

In February, when times were tough, our branch donated \$200 to each of Burlington Food Bank, Compassion Society, Kerr Street Mission, Food for Life, Foodshare Food Bank, and Food4Kids Halton. The need for food is growing as families struggle.

A donation of \$550.00 was made to the Lions Foundation of Canada for Dog Guides as a result of our "Share The Wealth" draws at our Luncheons in 2025-26. If you have suggestions for organizations that might benefit from our "Share the Wealth" draws, please forward them to any Executive member. *Carolynn Blake*

To enlarge photos or printing in this newsletter press ctrl and the + key together.

COMMUNICATIONS

Communicating with our BurlOak Branch is accomplished by several members. Diane Sinden is the Communications Chair and sends out the information emails as directed by the Executive. Bev Hilton is the Newsletter Editor, and Sharon Jenkins does the Newsletter Layout and Design. Virginia McKee phones the members who don't have email to keep them informed. Sharon Jenkins keeps our Facebook page up to date. Communication with members is also accomplished through our Provincial Newsletter, "**Connections**". The Provincial Executive is working diligently to try and cut costs. One way of achieving this is to email the **Connections** Newsletter to members instead of printing it and mailing it to them. BurlOak members can help with this initiative by having **Connections** emailed to them instead of printed and mailed. Unfortunately, only one third of our BurlOak members have **Connections** emailed to them. If you receive **Connections** by mail, and have email, please consider having it emailed to you instead. Let me or Carolyn Blake know if you are willing to make the change, and your name will be given to the Provincial Office. *Diane Sinden*



OUR NEW EXECUTIVE

President: Linda MacDonald

Past President: Claudia Stewart

First Vice-President: Vacant

Secretary: Lynn Haniuk

Treasurer: Carolynn Blake 905

Insurance: Lynne Johnston

Membership: Moira-Jane Plexman

Program: Nancy Stavert

Communications: Diane Sinden

- All Member Mailings: Diane Sinden
- Newsletter Editor: Vacant
- Newsletter layout/Design: Sharon Jenkins
- Phoning: Virginia McKee
- Facebook: Sharon Jenkins

Goodwill: Virginia McKee

Visiting: Pam MacDonald

Archives: Peggy Blair

Member -at- Large: Vacant

Honorary President: Carol Martin

LUNCHEON DATES for Program Year 2026-2027

Mondays...

September 21

November 2

December 7

March 22

May 3

The Program Brochure will be released as a separate document as soon as details are complete.

Mary McCully



CARING AND SHARING

FOOD 4 KIDS

This year, BurlOak members have packed food for needy children in October and November. We will have two more sessions in May and June. On each occasion, seven or eight members packed over 500 bags for children in Oakville and Burlington. We would like to express our gratitude to Jane Cooper, Bev Thomas, Valerie Lucas, Leslie Watkins, Barb Longo, Betty Doyle, Cathy Lanc, Gloria Moore, Diane Sinden, Helen Elmer, Marjorie Julian, and Joyce Moreira for their contributions. We are always looking for more volunteers, especially younger members. Our last two sessions for the year are on May 20th and June 10th. Please contact Diane if you would like to help.

Diane Sinden



GOODWILL

This year we sent over 140 cards to members. Congratulations to Gail Cargo and Kathleen Hunter, who both celebrated their 101st birthday! We also had six members who turned 90! “Thank you” to everyone who kept me informed of “significant events” in our members’ lives. Please remember to contact me during the summer months as well if there is a need to send a card, make a phone call, or a visit. It could be for a special birthday, anniversary, get well, “Thinking of You”, or a sympathy card. We don’t want anyone to be overlooked. *Virginia McKee*



PURSE PROJECT

Our RWTO members are a generous group of women as demonstrated by our donations to worthwhile causes. Over the summer, our members gather and collect items to go into purses and prepare the purses for collection at the September and October luncheons. In November, the purses are sorted and prepared for donation to the various organizations ahead of Christmas.

This year we donated 29 purses, each filled with personal items such as shampoos, toothpaste, etc. The purses were given to women who are re-establishing themselves into Hamilton and Halton communities.

Some of the outreach organizations whose clients benefit from our donations are:

Home Suite Hope (Oakville)

Eagles Nest Association (Waterdown)

Compassion Society (Burlington)

More than 35 organizations are supported in Ontario. Overall, more than 10,000 purses have been delivered to recipients since 2016.

Please look at the Purse Project website for more details. *Maureen Downey*

www.thepurseprojectnetwork.com



VISITING

Throughout the year I had the opportunity to talk to many of our members who were unable to attend our luncheons, however they enjoyed a phone visit. It was really a pleasure to hear about their lives including their interests and hobbies. Many were happy to share stories about their families. If you are aware of a member who would like a visit or phone call, please notify me Pam MacDonald. *Pam MacDonald*



A special thank you to Bev Hilton who is retiring from her position as newsletter editor.

Thank you for your many years of service. THANK YOU!

ACTIVITY GROUPS

BOOK CLUB SPRING 2026

Our book club meets monthly in each other's homes, on the second Tuesday of the month at 1:00. We also have social gatherings periodically. We read a variety of books chosen by the members. We have read the following books this year:

<i>Forgiveness: A Gift from My Parents</i> by Mark Sakamoto	<i>Detective Aunty</i> by Uzma Jalaluddin
<i>Long Island</i> by Colm Toibin	<i>The Other Valley</i> by Scott Alexander Howard
<i>Cracking the Nazi Code</i> by Jason Bell	<i>Miss Austen</i> by Gill Hornby
<i>The 7 Husbands of Evelyn Hugo</i> by Taylor Jenkins Reid	<i>Breaking and Entering</i> by Don Gillmor
<i>How to Read a Book</i> by Monica Wood	<i>Finding Flora</i> by Elinor Florence
<i>Twist</i> by Colum McCann	<i>The Borrowed Life of Frederick Fife</i> by Anna Johnston
<i>The Things We Cannot Say</i> by Kelly Rimmer	<i>The Frozen River</i> by Ariel Lawhon
	<i>In Winter I Get Up at Night</i> by Jane Urquart



If you would like to join, contact Heather White. *Heather White*

EUCHRE PLAYERS

You are invited to join our Euchre club. We have a lot of fun! We play twice a month on a Tuesday at Port Nelson Church. Please contact Pam MacDonald. *Pam MacDonald*



THE KNITTING GROUP

We meet on the second Thursday of each month at the residence of one of our members. We welcome new members of any knitting level. For further information, please contact Norma Brown. *Norma Brown*



LUNCH BUNCH

Our members enjoy trying different restaurants in our area. This year, we dined at The Ancaster Mill, The Tipsy Fox Pub and Grill in Oakville, and many restaurants in between. All our lunches are on Fridays at 1 p.m.

We look forward to the following lunch outings:

April 24: Piper Arms

May 29: The Rose Garden

June 12: Baranga's on the Beach



Members are invited to attend at their leisure without long-term commitments. Email announcements are sent prior to the luncheons. Maureen Downey makes reservations based on the confirmations she receives from attendees.

Please do your own due diligence regarding any food restrictions.

Next year promises to be a lot of fun as we explore more places for a delightful lunch. A list of restaurants and dates will be provided in the Fall Newsletter. Maureen is always open to suggestions. Bon appétit! *Maureen Downey*



PAPERCRAFTING

There are numerous opportunities for individuals interested in creating cards for personal use. We offer a range of projects, from simple one- or two-step cards to more intricate, detailed designs. All you need is enthusiasm, a pair of scissors, some glue, and a willingness to try.

Our small group meets the second Thursday of each month at the Alton Community Centre (corner of Dundas St and Tim Dobbie Dr.) from 1:00 to 3:30 p.m. We value conversation and creativity, and we encourage you to attend a meeting to see if you enjoy our group.

Bonnie Folkard



TEA ROOM ADVENTURES

Any member of the BurOak branch is welcome to attend our Tea Room adventures. These events occur at random intervals throughout the year, with less frequent gatherings in the winter due to potential driving conditions. The location, time and cost for these adventures are communicated via email to the entire membership.

We have hosted tea gatherings with as many as 18 attendees and as few as four. Each event has been a delightful experience, providing an opportunity to compare various tea menus and determine our preferred scones. Engaging conversations are always a highlight.

We have visited The Escarpment Tea Room, The Dutch Mill, The Golden Tea Pot and The Boathouse. Some new establishments have recently opened, some of them are a longer journey but worth the trip. We plan to revisit some of our favourites in the coming months, so look for an email invitation. Transportation arrangements can be made for all attendees. *Mary McCully*



TRAVEL CLUB

Our travel club met four times this year: in September, November, January, and April. Our next meeting is this Friday, June 12, at 1 p.m. The location is still undecided. Sometimes we're small in number because members travel frequently, but we enjoy discussing future travel plans, sharing experiences, and recommending must-sees from past trips.

As we age and health and mobility issues arise, it's important for travelers to share insurance tips, single supplement issues, and pros and cons of different travel providers. Laura and I tried the all-inclusive packages offered by Senior Discovery Tours and were impressed with their quality and all-encompassing services for our trip to Malta.

In January, Moira shared highlights of her stay in London. If you're planning a trip to London, I highly recommend talking to her. Others are opting for Canadian experiences.

Travel requirements are changing. I applied for and received my ETA confirmation, which is now in my passport. I had no issues passing through Heathrow on my last trip. I'll need to apply for a similar document for my fall trip to Bordeaux. Despite the global chaos, travel remains safe and rewarding. Happy travelling. *Beu Balch*



Travel time

In Memoriam

BurlOak Branch lost 1 dear friend this year. We will honour her at our BurlOak In Memoriam Ceremony in May and she will also be honoured at the In Memoriam Ceremony held at the Provincial Convention in June

Those we love don't go away,

They walk beside us every day

Unseen, unheard, but always near

Still loved, still missed and held so dear.



Valerie Christine Kuehnel (Brown)



Valerie Christine Kuehnel (Brown)

Sat. March 31st, 1945 – Mon. Oct. 13th, 2025

Valerie passed away at her home in Burlington, on Monday, October 13, 2025, at the age of 80.

Valerie was a devoted wife to Ralf Kuehnel for 53 years. Loving mother of Petra (Benny) and Erika (Geoff). Cherished grandmother to Liam, Alyssa and John. Passionate educator in Halton for over 30 years. Valerie Christine was known to her teaching friends as Chris.

Chris was born in 1945 and grew up near Newcastle in England. She moved to Liverpool to attend Teacher's college where she studied English, French, and Music. She earned her teaching Certificate. While in Liverpool, Chris played the piano and the organ. She led the choir at the local church.

Chris emigrated to Canada and became a teacher in Guelph, Ontario. She met her future husband, Ralf, at a dinner dance in Burlington. Chris and Ralf married, bought a house in Burlington, and raised two daughters, Petra and Erika. Chris earned her undergraduate degree at McMaster University.

Chris continued her career teaching French and Music at Central Public School and General Brock High School in Burlington. She was also at Oakville-Trafalgar High School and the Syl Apps Youth Centre. Chris organized stage plays involving both students and staff. Her productions were always very memorable. She was the OSSTF representative for high school teachers in Halton.

Upon retirement, Chris and Ralf enjoyed their grandchildren and travelled the world. Chris joined RWTO and quickly became involved with the knitting group. She will be remembered for her kind willingness to get involved with any little job needed. She was a magnificent elf at our Christmas penny sale, organizing and distributing gifts to the winners of the draws.

LUNCHEON HIGHLIGHTS FEBRUARY/MARCH



A PICTURE IS
WORTH
A THOUSAND WORDS

