

ELK ISLAND RETIRED TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

President's Message

A new year begins. The old trials stay with us. We continue to wage war against an invisible enemy, hoping to find the freedom we crave. The days lengthen and the promise of spring starts to whisper. We must remember to hope.

There have been many changes over the last while. The US election and its ongoing controversy have held our attention. The politics within our own province have caused quite a stir. I hope you have been able to let your voice be heard about the changes which may affect you – healthcare, road tolls, parks closures, ATRF vs AimCo. I know it seems futile sometimes to keep writing or phoning, but every little bit adds to the pile and eventually someone has to listen. Don't they?

Another big change at ARTA is the self-directed benefits plan. There have been some growing pains with the transition. I hope you have not been adversely affected by them. Have patience – it will be a great system!

We continue to meet remotely, restricted in our travel and our gatherings by the need to bend the curve. With the threat of new variants of the virus, our efforts must continue. Too often I hear of more people I know with personal experience of this horrid disease. Stay strong.

A wintry morning...
See there?
Furnace fog,
House vapours,
Wraiths caressing the street lamps high above,
Masking the glow of the moon
In patches;
Hear that?
The crunch and squeak of snow beneath your boots,
Crisp and sharp
As you climb the windrows
By the curb;
Breathe shallow,
The bite of the cold invades the lungs,
Seeks dominance within
Insidious and powerful;
Think now!
Soon the snow will melt;
The sun will regain its dominion;
Warmth will spark new life,
And spring will come.



WINTER EDITION January 2021

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Elk Island RTA website:

<https://artabranches.net/elkislandrta/>

NEW Elk Island RTA email:

newseirta@gmail.com



Elk Island RTA is a branch of ARTA

Like ARTA, Elk Island RTA supports an engaged lifestyle after retirement through member-centered services, advocacy, communication, wellness and leadership.

Paddling for Enjoyment and Health

By Dolaine Koch

Upon retiring back in 2012, I found a new winter escape in going to Puerto Vallarta and have been going there every January. My friend, Elizabeth, graciously hosts her girlfriends for a few weeks. She's an active senior, exercise is in her blood. Me, not so much, I just lazed in bed for an extra 2 hours as she went to the track and then swam in the pool every morning starting at 6:30am. She'd be done by 8:30am and we'd start our day.



Well, fast forward a few years, and I was walking the track. I hate sweating, so 10 times around was good. By the time I finished, Elizabeth would be done her track and swim. A few more years, and I was finishing up and swimming. She still beats me in laps, but I am not a trained swimmer. About four years ago, I brought the walking activity back home, getting on the treadmill most days. All was going really well for a long time. My husband even started to use the treadmill. We had a nice distraction watching TV as we walked. Winter and snow didn't matter. We just kept walking on the treadmill until I 'blew up' my treadmill last March.

I'm one of those very 'electric people' during the dry winter weather. I can zap you in a heartbeat. That's exactly what I did to the old treadmill control panel one too many times. The console was fried and the cost to fix was beyond the cost of a new one even if parts could be found. In the middle of Covid warnings we couldn't even buy one online as people were buying all manner of exercise equipment and the market couldn't keep up. We did buy one eventually, but not before I started walking in the river valley along the Rundle Park trails. I'm up to 6 kilometers round trip. I try to get out there every day and hills are a good challenge. ;-)

Well, the summer came and Elizabeth suggested I come out to the lake and take on some paddling. She had an extra kayak that I couldn't sink if I tried.

It started with us getting on the water about 6am! You have to be really positive getting up at that hour when you're used to bothering to rise by 9am. The sunny Alberta skies do make it easier though. I am thankful we live in a great province with such pleasant weather...most of the time. I managed to get on the water one to three times a week as time permitted.

And when I didn't paddle in a day, I built up my walk along the North Saskatchewan River in Rundle Park to 6 kilometers. Over hills and straightaways, avoiding the fast cyclists whizzing by. I'm not a runner but I have picked up my pace to be finished in about 75 minutes.

At my age, who would have thought I'd pick up paddling? I spent 3 good months, several times a week when we could, paddling in the early morning hours. I've grown accustomed to getting up earlier.

Now, the catch is to keep up the body building I started. It's been suggested I need to buy weights and exercise my arms. Thanks to my good friend, Elizabeth, I am now able to paddle without too much effort. I'm still working on technique, but this has been so very enjoyable.

What's next this winter as Covid is still influencing? I am looking at swimming lessons. My technique really needs work!

Now that it's getting cold, I'm still walking out there dressed in layers. I hope you're all getting some measure of enjoyment as we hunker down for the winter.

Elk Island RTA Executive

President: Karen Atkinson

Vice President: Deb Gerow

Treasurer: Dolaine Koch

Secretary

Compassion and Congratulations:
Carol Gilbertson

Past President and Communications:
Website and Email
Inge Coates

Newsletter

Julie Ginther
newseirta@gmail.com

Membership: Thelma Baumgartner

Phoning Committee Chair:
Dianna Millard

Social Committee:
Sylvia Roes

Sheila Busch

Ruby Okamura

Karen Carlson

ARTA Reps:

Dolaine Koch and Karen Atkinson



News from ARTA

Effective January 1, 2021, ARTA is self-administering its Retiree Benefits Plan. With regulatory changes to Health & Welfare Trusts being introduced by the federal government, the opportunity presented itself for ARTA to self-administer its Retiree Benefits Plan. Historically, ARTA has contracted a third-party benefits administrator to do this on our behalf.

Many of you have had experienced difficulties in registering for *My ARTA* on-line. ARTA has experienced a high volume in calls and emails. This has resulted in delays and frustration. If you visit the ARTA website at <http://www.arta.net> there is information and answers available for you.

ARTA has moved to a new building. Unfortunately, the ARTA office is closed due to COVID-19. The new address for ARTA is:
15505 137 Avenue NW
Edmonton AB T5V 1R9

Links to the *news&views* magazine and Artifacts can also be found on the ARTA website

Please Keep Us Updated

Please register changes in your membership information if...

- You have turned 80 years of age. (Membership is free after this age if you have been a member for the previous 10 years.)
- You have moved. (We need your new contact information.)
- You are not certain if your membership has expired.

To register changes, contact Thelma Baumgartner

WHY DO I GROW FLOWERS?

By Carol Gilbertson

“I must have flowers, always, always and always.” Claude Monet



“Happiness is to hold a flower in each hand.” Chinese Proverb

My gardens have been put to bed for the winter and I mourn their loss, but anticipate the spring and their renewal and my return to communing with nature. Such down-to-earth activities as digging in the dirt, pulling weeds, and dividing irises and other perennials gives me a second burst of energy. I love to decide what new perennials and annuals to buy, decide what plants I can move, which ones I can split and which ones to share with my daughter and my friends.

Growing flowers also brings back memories of my childhood when my father worked in his garden and going to my in-laws to see my mother-in-law’s geraniums, poppies and wild flowers growing haphazardly among the many wonderful vegetables.

I feel peace among my flowers – forgetting the world and its cares for a few hours each day. I thrive in the joy that I have created a beautiful masterpiece which gives me such pleasure to look at and share.



“Flowers are like friends; they bring colour to your world.” Unknown

Isolating, Coping, Smiling and Keeping Busy

I asked you to contribute stories and anecdotes of how you have been coping through the past 10 months. I was pleased to read your amazing stories of resilience and inspiration.

*Thank you for sharing,
Julie Ginther*

A group of us always met after our gym sessions and had coffee. When the gym closed, we went to the mall parking lot, sat at our cars, socially distanced and chatted.
When it got cold we moved into a heated garage and sat, socially distanced.
When the cases increased, we decided to change plans and being hearty Albertans, we dressed in our winter gear and again sat outside by our cars, in the parking lot.
Now we are back to FaceTime but it is not the same.

Lynnann Kroetsch

During the pandemic I have started a new hobby—genealogy. Interestingly, I have found a connection to the *Titanic*. My grandmother was to travel with her family aboard the ill-fated ship on its return journey to Liverpool as they were headed from New York to England and then to Argentina. After the sinking they booked passage on another ship and arrived at their destination in June, 1912. Unfortunately, they were unsuccessful at farming and returned home to Alberta less than a year later. Despite my research, I could not find actual documentation to support the story so it must remain an oral history.

Bob Draginda

This year has certainly been a different experience. I returned home from a month in Palm Springs at the end of January and went into an early isolation. I was able to golf at Countryside Golf Course with my seniors' group. That was a lifesaver! We had very many good days and were able to buy lunch at the Club and then bring it back to share on my large deck area. However, our early snow stopped all that. Fortunately, telephones and emails keep me in touch with my friends and family. I read, do puzzles, and was attending yoga and exercise at the pool until the recent closure. I survived the polio pandemic and know that I will survive this pandemic also. Keep cheerful and busy!!

Jackie Symbaluk

Go for an hour or two walks on trail along Argyll and Mill Creek Park.
In addition to walking, I've been watching *Ancient Moves* on TV, trying to assemble an Audubon 1000 half inch piece puzzle of BIRDS. In fact, I received 2 more 1000-piece puzzles that are awaiting to be assembled (SPRING SAKURA and JAPANESE GARDEN). This is not new to me. I've assembled many large puzzles which once glued together I posted on the basement wall but not having a basement where I now live, I gave them away.

John Takahashi

Isolating, Coping, Smiling and Keeping Busy (cont.)

This year has brought me a new vocation. I have been looking after two of my grandsons, aged seven and five, for three or four days each week since the middle of May. In the spring we did online schooling. Summer took us to the skatepark for scooter practice and on hikes. I learned skate terms, such as riding the bowl, and got many tips. In the fall, it was back to regular school, packing lunches and Covid health checks. One day after school my five year old grandson asked me if I was retired. I told him I was (thank goodness!). He then asked if before and after school pickup was my only job. I admitted that it was, but pointed out that I did many other tasks as well. He then informed me that he wanted me to keep doing it until he was a young adult. What can I say, I am still grinning ear to ear!

Susan Hughes

It's been a heartbreak not seeing our grandsons. It's their birthday January 14...sigh.

My time is filled with keeping things working at the rental properties. I don't feel too hemmed in as we deal with our properties. We have to keep things up for our roomers. It just becomes more technical when we have to remember to sanitize, keep things clean, and ensure each person is obeying the rules. Oh yes, and remember to put the mask on!

I've maintained my long 6 kms walk most days now. I should be in Puerto Vallarta right now, but sadly stayed home to be a responsible Albertan. Oh, I haven't cooked this much in ages! Even developed my own instant pot recipe to cook lamb.

I sure miss being able to meet with people in person, but Zoom has been a big help. We hope to see our grandchildren and our sons over Zoom very soon.

Dolaine Koch



A morning visitor

Health Matters

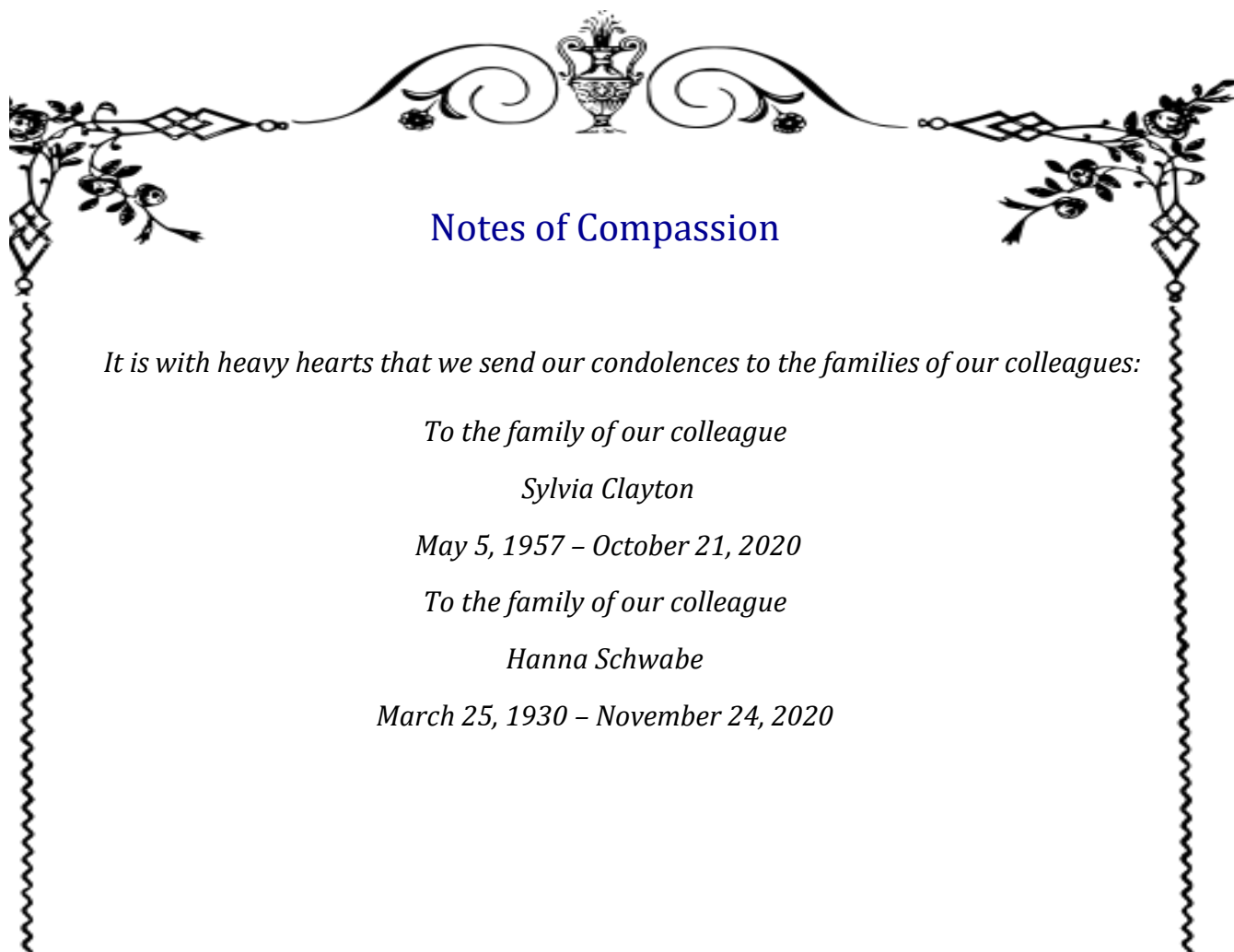
“Health Matters” is a feature written by Carol Gilbertson that offers health reminders. These reminders are meant to be helpful, and are not to be taken as medical advice. At all times, readers are advised to consult their own physician to ensure that what they are doing health-wise is in their best interests.

As winter is upon us, many seniors do not get enough vitamin D. Sunshine is one of the best natural sources of vitamin D, but sunshine is reduced in the winter months. Vitamin D is a crucial component of healthy aging. Some of its benefits include:

- Boosts mental happiness and mental health
- Helps defend against bone softening
- An important nutrient as a preventative treatment for everything from colon cancer to the flu
- Provides a strong defence against the likelihood of gum disease and tooth decay

Check with your physician if you have concerns about any of the above and for the best way for you to attain vitamin D benefits, especially during these long winter months.





Notes of Compassion

It is with heavy hearts that we send our condolences to the families of our colleagues:

To the family of our colleague

Sylvia Clayton

May 5, 1957 – October 21, 2020

To the family of our colleague

Hanna Schwabe

March 25, 1930 – November 24, 2020

Kindness

Are you aware of a member who is struggling?
Please let us know, and we will reach out with a call or a card.
Sometimes, just a little touch of kindness makes all the difference in the world.