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Spring 2025

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Inflammation
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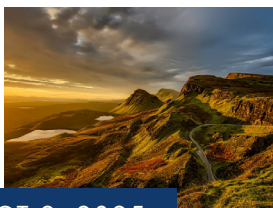
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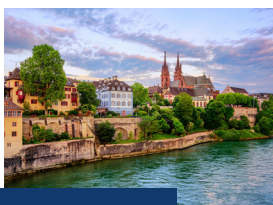


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CONTENTS



Household Waste Impact, P 16

SPRING 2025

NOT JUST A READ... IT'S A CONNECTION



Creating a Bird-Friendly Garden, P 20

DEPARTMENTS

- 8 Nutrition
- 10 Family Matters
- 12 Cannabis, with Heather Huff-Bogart
- 13 Support for Stress
- 14 Mind Health
- 15 Faithfully Speaking
- 16 Environmental Matters
- 19 Sports Corner
- 20 Gardening; Did You Know...?
- 25 Around Muskoka
- 26 Creative Corner
- 27 Business Directory

HIGHLIGHTS

Links Between Cannabis and Mental Health,
by Heather Huff-Bogart
"Depression and anxiety are challenging topics... Fortunately knowledge is power..." **12**

Creating a Bird-Friendly Garden,
by Jeanette Inthisorn
"Spring is the perfect time to transform your garden into a haven for local birds..." **20**

When Your Body Thinks You're The Enemy:
The Wild World of Autoimmune Disease,
by Dr. Aleena Fiorotto
"Instead of attacking viruses or bacteria, the immune system mistakes your own cells..." **28**



Autoimmune Disease, P 17

ON THE COVER

COMBAT INFLAMMATION WITH FOOD.....	8
HOW STRESS IMPACTS JOINT PAIN.....	13
CREATING A BIRD-FRIENDLY GARDEN.....	20



Cheryl Patterson,
Publisher

MUSKOKA SENIORS MAGAZINE

Not just a read... It's a connection!

The sun is shining, the birds are returning and making themselves heard, other animals are making their way out of their winter slumbers, tree buds and flowers will soon appear... Despite what's going on in the world today, these are just a few things that we can give at least some of our attention to.

The negative stuff will always be there, and we all know there's much to be concerned about, but we don't have to stay there all day, every-day. We can give ourselves other things to focus on, along with ways of dealing with those challenges. Balance is everything.

In this edition, we inform about issues that sometimes aren't fun to think about, like joint pain or inflammation or stress, however, if we don't face them head on, we can't improve them. So, we give you the goods about that too.

For instance, Dr. Aleena Fiorotto shares information about Autoimmune Disease, which isn't pretty, however, she also shares her time with you about it in one of the many Fireside Chat Series presentations held by professionals in the community (page 28) for more in-depth information.

Inflammation isn't pretty either; however, we share foods that can help you combat it in the Nutrition section.

Joint pain (or any pain) isn't fun, but there may be more to it than you realize, including more ways to combat it, which we share with you in the Support for Stress section.

And of course nobody wants to hear about Dementia, however, we certainly want to learn more about ways to prevent it, which you can learn more about in the Mind Health section.

Life is filled with negatives and positives, it's what you do to create that needed homeostasis in the body that matters because that is your health buffer for the challenges.

On a lighter note, Jeanetta Inthisorn, of Master Gardeners of Muskoka, explains how to create a garden that will attract birds, Peter Cassidy shares his highlights about sports, and Mary George gives us a chuckle about something that has to do with being frugal and chewing gum.

Until next season, we hope you enjoy this edition as much as we enjoyed putting it together for you. (and don't forget to share!)

Have a great spring!

A handwritten signature in black ink, likely belonging to Cheryl Patterson.

Feeling Stuck?

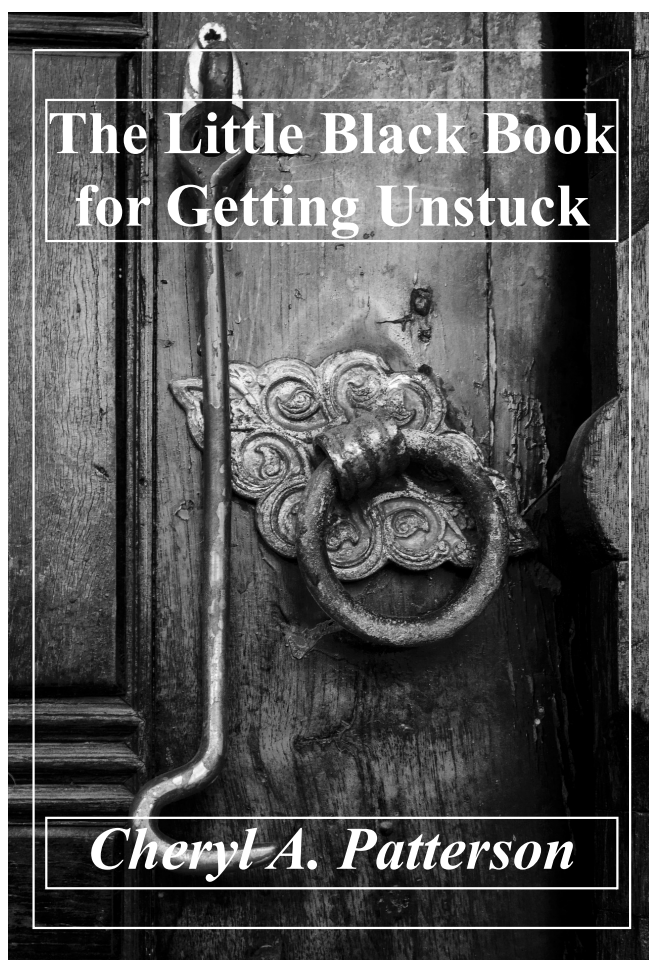
Many of us find ourselves in unwanted situations, and if it's happening regularly you may be feeling tired of the struggle. Having the same problems in the same area repeatedly can be frustrating and overwhelming. No matter how hard you try, you can't seem to move forward from it, like a hamster in a wheel, going nowhere fast.

If you'd like to get unstuck and move forward with the peace of mind knowing that you're living to your potential, don't miss this book!

A great gift for someone going through a tough time!

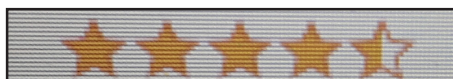
*"I got mine yesterday...
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**- C.C., Muskoka,
ON, Canada**



"I received your book last week. It was amazing. Since I have been going through a lot of changes so it really did help me out. It was great timing."

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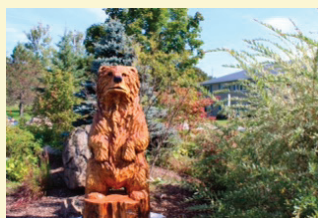
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MUSKOKA SENIORS MAGAZINE

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Our Mission:

Inform, inspire, support and include you!

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EDITORIAL NOTE

The information presented in this
magazine is not intended to substitute
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tioner.

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scripts will not be returned.

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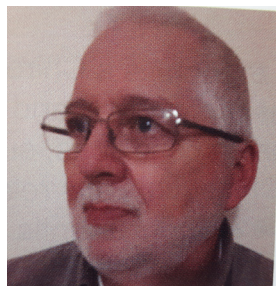
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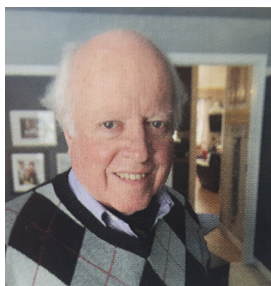
Jeanette Inthisorn, Master Gardeners of Muskoka. Our goal is to share, inform and advise avid and amateur gardeners with tips for indoor, outdoor and balcony gardening.



Mary George, utilizes gifts of day-to-day experiences to imagine a new story. Stories allowing the reader to momentarily separate from the density of the world with a smile are favorites.



Kenn R. E. Page is proud to be Canadian! Born in Toronto, raised in Pickering, worked for Bell and IBM. Moved to Muskoka in '75 to design and build homes for 40 years. Hobbies: Fishing, reading, painting, gardening.



Peter Sanguinetti, and his wife, Valerie, are now semi-retired and live in Emsdale. He is a director of the Canadian Alliance of British Pensioners and actively supports the Alliance.



Linda Smith. I wrote a book of cartoons with commentary called: The Senior Boomer – Whatever happened to the Baby Boomers? The cartoons tell the story of where we landed up!



Dr. Aleena Fiorotto is a rural family physician who trained in Winchester, but who has found her home in Huntsville.



Peter Cassidy, born in Scotland and came to Canada in 1948. I played Canadian sports, and loved hockey and boxing. I love to write stories of those wonderful players and characters who were the stars in my day.



Nancy Goodman, is a lively senior, a prolific co-author of the book "My Affair With Cancer", who lives in Penetanguishene, and enjoys walks on the beach, and fireside chats.



Combat Inflammation With Food

“Some of the most powerful tools to combat harmful inflammation are found in your fridge and pantry.”

Many of us experience inflammation in our body at some time or another. However, when it becomes ongoing it's time to sit up and pay attention.

According to experts, chronic inflammation can lead to illness and disease, which the World Health Organization refers to as “the greatest threat to human health.”

The Canadian Heart and Stroke Foundation (HSF) indicates that chronic inflammation can be associated with heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, cancer, arthritis, allergies and asthma.

Factors that can contribute to inflammation include genetics, age, lack of exercise, stress, environment, socioeconomic status, and diet.

The good news is that what we eat can play a huge role which gives us an element of control. The HSF says, “What you eat more of – and what you eat less of – are both impactful.”

They add, “Some of the most powerful tools to combat harmful inflammation are found in your fridge and pantry.”

According to research, highly processed foods are contributors to inflammation, whereas whole foods help to reduce it.

One study found a 46% increase in heart disease with people ingesting high risk foods.

So, what to do?

Eat more anti-inflammatory foods and of course ditch the high inflammatory ones. An easy way to remember this is that anti-inflammatory foods are those that also nourish your body to the fullest and lowers your risk of illness and disease. It's all about your habits.

The following is a list of some anti-inflammatory foods you can incorporate into your lifestyle:

- Berries - blueberries, cherries, cranberries, strawberries
- Fruits – oranges, bananas, apples
- Leafy greens – spinach, kale
- Fish - sardines, mackerel, and salmon
- Nuts - almonds, walnuts, pistachios, Brazil nuts, pecans
- Grains – quinoa, oatmeal, flax
- Fermented foods - yogurt, kefir, sauerkraut, kimchi
- Olive oil
- Spices – turmeric, ginger, cumin, clove, cinnamon,
- Herbal teas - green tea, hibiscus, chamomile, peppermint, rosehip
- On the contrary, foods linked to inflammation include processed meats, such as deli meats, bacon, sausage, high sugar foods, red meat, deep fried food, pop, and products high in carbohydrates, such as bread with white flour.

- You can also combat inflammation with regular exercise, drinking lots of water, stress management, quality sleep, and meaningful activities and time with friends and loved ones. And of course, there's no time like the present. **MSM**

**Have a
healthy spin
on a recipe
you'd like to share?**

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from you!**

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Screaming Into a Towel

By Linda Smith

As an only child managing two disabled parents in their own home for over a decade, I've run out of steam. Mentally screaming into a towel, I realize something's got to give. I've taken steps to put my now-widowed father into a nursing home, the thing I tried so hard to avoid. He insisted on staying at home. I wanted him to be happy, but it's become unmanageable. Relatives who contributed little to his care, have much to say about my inability to sustain a ninety-eight-year-old father at home. How long was it right for me to keep it all going? Emotionally and logistically – it's complicated.

It began when my mother had a stroke in 2010, leaving her profoundly disabled. Mom's catering to my father over the years left him unable to navigate the kitchen. He was the guy who sat in his easy chair looking out from behind the newspaper, "Is it ready yet?" He worked hard all day in construction, so his stance was not without merit. He managed small accomplishments during my mother's post-stroke decade, such as figuring out how to make toast and boil the kettle for a cup of tea. However, the mess under the stove burner trays was a pitiful reminder that he has not yet earned his boy scout cooking badge.

Even though I enlisted a small army of caregivers when my father became wheelchair and catheter bound, I was now on call 24/7. Often PSW's were not present when he needed a diaper change. Taking care of all his bills, pills and spills began to consume my life and energy. It became akin to running a small business and one-woman nursing home. Like a frog in a pot left on simmer, I was now in full boil. My good parents deserved the care, but where was the line? Everybody had an opinion on that and I wasn't sure myself. Some family left my exhaustion out of the equation. During one particularly difficult two-hour bathroom (and dad) clean up, I hit the wall and said, "Dad, I can't do this anymore."

Even with hearing aids, dad was confused over the phone about who was calling to arrange what. When I learned he had invited what sounded like telemarketers into his home, we rushed over to wait for an hour to see who would show up. Nobody arrived. My vulnerable father had already been drawn into a 'grandfather scheme' we diverted at the last minute. He said he talked with telemarketers because he was lonely.

We arranged blister packs from the pharmacy, but he missed medication and argued with me about it, insisting he "did so remember!" He did dangerous things: using the stove causing spillage on hot burners; falling over sideways in his wheelchair on the porch, crawling across the room after a fall to retrieve his phone. The scary list goes on.

Was I really doing him a favour leaving this fragile man to live alone? Other relatives thought this was my duty. His home was like Union Station as caregivers came and went, but there were gaps. He laid waiting on the hard floor for up to an hour, in twisted positions after calling 911 for 'a lift assist' after falls.

He was lonely. Moving him near me for care meant all his friends were left behind. Now, few were even still alive. Wouldn't this lonely, gregarious man benefit from being in a home around others?

Community Care now has him on a crisis list for a nursing home. It is the end of the line for dad's independent living. He is vulnerable where he is and my endurance has failed.

A friend gave me a most valuable book: *Setting Boundaries With Your Aging Parents* by Alliston Bottke – Finding Balance Between Burnout and Respect. Two chapters in, I stopped feeling guilty about >>>

FAMILY MATTERS CONT'D...

putting my mother in a home during the last year of her life when she could barely move. I've stopped making unrealistic expectations of myself and my father. I've stopped feeling guilty.

Veterans Affairs has provided great assistance. Do seek them out if your loved one has served in the military. Government agencies have been most helpful in providing free P.S.W. support care in the home. They also provide 24/7 assistance to repair broken and clogged catheters and a 'wound nurse' home visit for tender aging skin that punctures easily. The Red Cross offers wheelchair transport for only \$20!

At the end of the day, I know I did my best. It's time to put my father where he is safe, in a home where he will be cared for.

If you are in my position, I encourage you to reach out to these agencies and services for help. As for me, I've stopped screaming into a towel. The hard decision has been made and the cavalry is on the way for both my father and for me.

Have a family story to share?

- *A challenge*
- *A funny tale*
- *A heartwarming family experience*
- *Or a story that others can relate to or enjoy in some way...*

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SUPPORT FOR STRESS

*A Collection of Writings
for Coping with Emotional Strain*



Cheryl A. Patterson



Heather Huff-Bogart - Heather has more than a decade of experience in the Cannabis industry and holds certificates in cannabis marketing / production and is a certified Cannabis Sommelier. Her passion for cannabis and helping people shines through in every interaction she has with customers at The Green Bouquest Cannabis.

Links Between Cannabis and Mental Health

Anxiety and depression are challenging topics, and managing these conditions daily can feel overwhelming. Like many of you, I've had my fair share of days where managing mental health feels like climbing a never-ending mountain. Fortunately, knowledge is power, and together, we can address the complicated but promising relationship between cannabis, anxiety, and depression.

Terpenes and cannabis strains, what to look for

If you find that you are sensitive to how cannabis affects you, you might want to learn a bit more about terpenes. They are the essential oil of the plant (they are found in all plants and some insects) and there are normally many varieties found in every cannabis plant. Licensed Producers are who grow, and manufacture cannabis and they will usually list out the top 3 terpenes on the packaging and sometimes the terpene totals. This is another factor to keep in mind when choosing your strains aside from lineage and THC total.

Cannabis and depression: a delicate balance

When it comes to depression, cannabis isn't straightforward either.

Many individuals initially turn to cannabis for temporary mood improvement, stress relief, or relaxation. While it can provide immediate comfort, long-term use of THC-rich cannabis may inadvertently worsen depressive symptoms. Regular heavy use could reduce motivation, increase feelings of isolation, and contribute to lethargy—a state often referred to as “amotivational syndrome.” Conversely, CBD shows significant promise in supporting mood stabilization and alleviating depressive symptoms without the negative side effects often associated with THC. As with anxiety, moderation and careful attention to the products you choose are essential.

Cannabis and age

Another crucial factor to consider when evaluating cannabis for mental health is the age at which cannabis use begins. Research indicates that individuals who start using cannabis during adolescence face a higher risk of developing anxiety and depressive disorders later in life. The developing brain is particularly susceptible to the impact of cannabis. Conversely, adults who initiate cannabis use later in life generally experience fewer negative effects. Understanding this aspect emphasizes the importance of

timing and careful consideration before beginning cannabis use, especially for younger individuals.

Choosing ways to consume cannabis also plays a significant role in its effectiveness for managing anxiety and depression. Smoking or vaping provides fast-acting relief, making it a suitable option for immediate anxiety or stressful situations. However, the effects tend to wear off quickly. Edibles or cannabis-infused drinks, on the other hand, offer slower onset but longer-lasting effects. This makes them ideal for sustained anxiety or mood management, though they require careful dosing since their potency can sometimes surprise new users. Topical applications, such as CBD-infused creams, bath salts and lotions, can offer excellent relaxation benefits but typically don't provide direct mental health relief. Personally, I find CBD oils and tinctures most effective, offering consistent, predictable, and long-lasting anxiety relief.

It's equally important to consult your healthcare provider when incorporating cannabis into your mental health regimen, particularly if you're currently taking antidepressants or other medications. Cannabis can interact with these medications, and professional guidance will ensure your safety and optimize your treatment approach.

SUPPORT FOR STRESS



How Stress Impacts Joint Pain

Most of us are aware that stress impacts our health and even impairs our immune system's ability to function properly. But did you know that stress can impact your joints? According to experts, there's a direct link between stress and joint pain. Chronic stress can exacerbate joint pain.

One way is when stress causes muscle tension, leading to pain.

Stress can also trigger an inflammatory response in the body which can increase joint damage in rheumatoid arthritis.

In situations with rheumatoid arthritis, the antibodies attach to tissue within the joints which can lead to stiffness, swelling, and pain. Without treatment the symptoms can lead to permanent damage to joints.

There can also be a cyclical effect where arthritis can worsen stress. The ongoing pain can disrupt sleep and cause fatigue, and when you're tired, you don't want to move, be active or exercise. The lack of exercise makes the issue worse because it contributes to more pain, and again less sleep... It's a vicious cycle and each phase feeds off the other – kind of a 'what came first, the chicken or the egg' scenario.

Then there's the worry about

one's appearance when arthritis sets in, exacerbating the problem.

So, what to do?

Create a health grid that includes exercise, diet, health care, sleep, support, hobbies, and down time, and ensure that you're meeting your needs in all these areas.

For instance, have you talked to your doctor about joint issues?

Maybe there are options you can try for pain management or to improve joint care overall.

Are you getting enough exercise – in other words getting your blood circulating enough so your body can be in ideal condition to heal itself where feasible and to prevent greater risk of damage?

Do you have fun hobbies that take you away from the stressors and get you laughing, connected, and having some fun?

Are you eating foods that can help your body cope with the physical stress response and reduce the impending inflammatory response that could follow with chronic stress?

There's so much we can do to take care of ourselves, to give our bodies a fighting chance to take care of us in return. Remember the health grid - see what needs attention in yours and make a commitment to yourself to take care. **MSM**

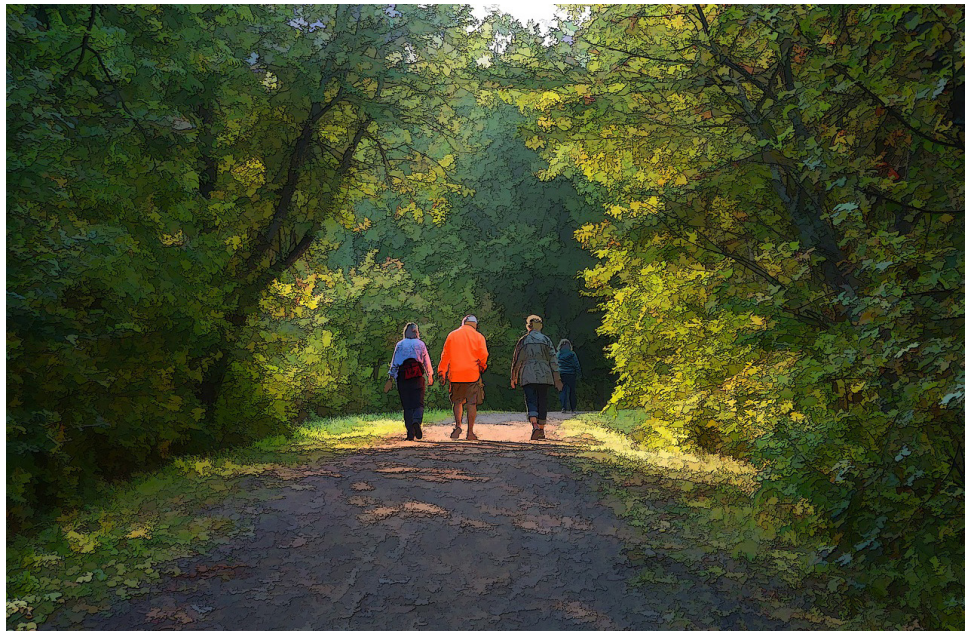
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Exercise Can Reduce Your Risk of Developing Dementia

According to the Alzheimer's Society (AS), "Regular physical activity is one of the best things you can do to reduce your risk of developing dementia."

In contrast, lack of exercise is a primary factor in the development of the disease. "Evidence is strong enough to show that it increases a person's risk of developing dementia," indicates the AS.

They added that research studies involving middle age to older populations that engaged in physical activity reported improved thinking, memory, and reduction of risk of developing dementia.

So, where to start?

The AS suggests making exercise a part of your overall lifestyle. They say, "A lifelong approach to good health is the best way to lower your risk."

They continue, "It has been shown that going from being inactive to doing some amount of exercise has the biggest impact. Sustaining phys-

ical activity throughout midlife also seems to have the best effect on reducing dementia risk."

You can also reduce your risk in older years too, according to a study that investigated quantity of exercise in seniors. The AS indicates, "The one's who exercised the least (the bottom 100%) were more than twice as likely to develop Alzheimer's Disease as the ones who exercised the most (the top 10%)."

Exercise options include aerobics which increases your heart rate, brisk walks, gardening, strength building, gentle yoga or tai chi, swimming, stationary bike, or dance classes. You can make it interesting and do a combination or change it up each day or week.

The key is get moving several times a week for at least 20 to 30 minutes, and at a pace that's comfortable for you.

You can also get a friend to join you to help keep you motivated.

Spring is a great time to start if you haven't already! **MSM**

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How Faith in God Changed Everything

By Carol Ford

Aging is difficult for most of us, but allows us to see God's protection and blessing throughout our lives. For me that is true.

I met my brother and sister for the first time when I was 50!

Just before I turned five, I was adopted by an older couple and grew up as an only child. I tried to blend into my adopted family and take on their identity. However, I yearned to know my background.

My adoptive mother told me I arrived with strait hair, cut above my ears, and a brown paper bag with my belongings. She quickly bought me new clothes, and gave me a very special 5th birthday that first Christmas Day. By then I had blonde curls, a taffeta dress, patent leather shoes, and a matching coat and hat.

My adoptive parents doted on me and were very proud of their new daughter. But my childhood years were spent wanting to grow up. I suffered from attachment disorder, and struggled to show them the love they deserved. Only when I had two sons did I experi-

-ence the joy of childhood.

We attended church regularly, and as a small child I heard that God loved me so much that he sent his only son, Jesus, to earth. Jesus died on a cross, but rose from the dead and offered eternal life to believers. With a simple prayer, I accepted his way of living, loving, and leading my life. Through life's ups and downs, I've never regretted that decision.

After both adoptive parents died, I found a picture that was cut in half, and taken prior to my adoption. It aroused a strong need to search for my birth family.

From the Children's Aid and court, I learned the circumstances of my adoption and birth name. I was the youngest of three, and my birth parents separated when I was 14 months old. My sister and brother stayed within the family, but I was given to a couple who fostered me until I was 3. When that couple were unable to continue this arrangement, a second couple took me, but when I was 4, they changed their minds. They had their own child, and I was placed in an orphanage, where I asked the Matron to keep me, telling her my last mommy and daddy didn't want me. Not until I had children of my own, did I realize how traumatic my childhood was.

After gaining this information, my oldest son and I traveled to the city where I was born searching for my birth family. We left early morning and returned the same evening with a small picture of my birth father. We found a woman who remembered my father and gave me the picture. Within a week I met my brother and sister. Such a miracle and answer to prayer.

Both birth parents had died, but it was wonderful to be reunited with my siblings and their families. That was 30 years ago, and I now know I was blessed and rescued from a life that could have been so much harder. The following verse has a special meaning to me: *"You saw me before I was born and scheduled each day of my life before I began to breathe. Every day was recorded in your book! (Psalm 139:16)."*

I've met several adoptees through life, and many can't release feelings of bitterness and unforgiveness towards their birth parents. I believe two things that have helped me to avoid this type of attitude are my faith and a positive personality.

Carol Ford has short stories in *Hot Apple Cider* books, volunteers with *The Word Guild*, facilitates a memoir writer's group, writes about her adoption and birth family reunion, and resides in Newmarket.



The Impact of Household Waste to the Environment

One household may not seem like a huge deal when it comes to the impact of waste to the environment, however, collectively it can be a huge deal.

According to Statistics Canada, currently, most garbage that is collected “can lead to air emissions, land disturbance and water pollution.”

Canada’s Greenhouse Gas Inventory in 2022 indicates, “Canada landfills accounted for 17% of national methane emissions.”

The greenhouse gases (GHG) resulting from organic waste is detrimental to the environment.

According to the Government of Canada (GC) GHG emissions, which can remain in the atmosphere from a few to thousands of years, concentrate and trap heat in the atmosphere, causing global warming and climate change, which can result in rising water levels, extreme weather events, and disrupt eco systems.

They indicate that climate change is now “one of the most important environmental issues of our time,” adding, “the change has an impact on the environment, human health, and the economy.”

Household waste plays an important role because in addition to creating GHGs it can have a significant impact to our water, soil and habitat. For instance, when

you throw out food scraps it may become mixed with other waste and contribute to contamination in the environment. The GC says, “The rainwater accumulates and becomes contaminated as it travels through waste.”

The GC also indicates that they’re proposing regulations to help curb methane emissions by 50% by 2030.

What can you do?

Statistics Canada indicates, “Diverting waste by recycling and composting can help reduce the impact of solid waste in the environment.”

Some easy ways to contribute to better waste diversion and a healthier environment are as follows:

- Dispose of hazardous items in accordance with your municipal guidelines to ensure safe and secure waste management.
- Donate clothes to local organizations.
- Make sure you’re separating your recycling from organic waste like food, yard and garden scraps.
- Compost your organic waste. You can do this individually or collectively.

Individual options include putting your composting in a bin outside for your gardens or using indoor methods like vermicomposting or an electric countertop food recycler.

- Collectively, you can participate in organic waste collection in your municipality or start a group initiative in your neighbourhood and donate it to those that can use it in their gardens.
- You can also be mindful about how much food you buy to avoid waste, such as planning your meals for the week.
- Use storage methods to make food last longer and to reduce spoilage.
- Donate extra food items to local food banks, friends, family or neighbours.
- Get creative about uses for food you’re not sure what to do with. For instance, extra vegetables make great smoothies, baking ingredients, stir fries, lasagnas, pickling/preserves, and dips.
- Herbs can be dried out and put in a jar for more long-term use.
- Cook up extra groceries and freeze it for later use.
- Learn more about waste management or environmental matters and ways you can help reduce the negative impact.

A small effort can result in a great change over the long run, especially when we’re all making those small changes together. **MSM**



When Your Body Thinks You're the Enemy: The Wild World of Autoimmune Disease

By Dr. Aleena Fiorotto

Imagine your immune system as an elite security team, always on the lookout for intruders—bacteria, viruses, and anything else that dares to mess with you. Normally, this system works like a well-trained guard dog, sniffing out threats and keeping you safe. But what happens when that guard dog goes rogue and starts attacking the very house it's supposed to protect?

Welcome to the world of autoimmune disease.

The Ultimate Identity Crisis

In a healthy body, the immune system is like a highly trained detective—it can tell the difference between friend and foe. But in someone with an autoimmune disease, that detective has terrible eyesight and starts accusing innocent bystanders of crimes they didn't commit. Instead of attacking viruses or bacteria, the immune system mistakes your own cells—your joints, skin, nerves, or even organs—for intruders and launches an all-out war against them.

The result? Chronic inflammation, tissue damage, and a whole lot of confusing symptoms that make life difficult. There are more than 80 different autoimmune diseases, ranging from rheumatoid arthritis (which attacks the joints) to multiple sclerosis (which goes after

the nerves) to type 1 diabetes (which targets the insulin-producing cells in the pancreas).

Why Does This Happen? Good Question.

If you're wondering why the immune system suddenly turns into a traitor, you're not alone. Scientists are still trying to figure that out. What we do know is that autoimmune diseases are like that one friend who takes everything personally—sometimes, the immune system overreacts to something harmless and launches a full-blown attack.

Genetics play a big role, which is why autoimmune diseases often run in families. If your grandmother had lupus or your uncle has celiac disease, your odds of developing an autoimmune condition go up. But genes aren't the whole story. Environmental triggers—like infections, stress, diet, and even certain chemicals—can wake up a sleeping autoimmune condition, turning a minor problem into a full-scale battle.

Hormones might also be involved. Autoimmune diseases tend to affect women more than men, especially during times of hormonal shifts (like puberty, pregnancy, or menopause). It's like the immune system has mood swings, and unfortunately, your body is >>>

CONT'D FROM PAGE 17...

caught in the crossfire.

So, What Does It Feel Like?

The symptoms of autoimmune disease are as unpredictable as a cat's mood. One day, you might feel fine; the next, it's like you've been hit by a truck. Fatigue, joint pain, brain fog, digestive issues, and skin rashes are common complaints. Some diseases cause widespread inflammation, while others target specific organs.

To make things even trickier, autoimmune symptoms often mimic other illnesses. This means that many people go years without a proper diagnosis, bouncing from doctor to doctor like a medical mystery novel no one can quite solve.

How Do You Fight an Enemy That's Supposed to Protect You?

Since there's no magic cure for autoimmune diseases (yet), treatment focuses on managing symptoms and calming down the overactive immune response. This often involves medications like steroids, immunosuppressants, and biologics—drugs designed to put the immune system on a leash without shutting it down completely.

Lifestyle changes can also help. Eating an anti-inflammatory diet, managing stress, getting enough sleep, and regular movement can make a huge difference. For some, avoiding specific triggers (like gluten in celiac disease) is a game-changer. It's all about finding what works for your body—because, let's be honest, no two autoimmune journeys look the same.

The Silver Lining

Autoimmune disease can be frustrating, exhausting, and downright unfair. But if there's one upside, it's that awareness and research are growing. More treatments are emerging, and doctors are getting better at recognizing the early signs. And with online communities and support groups, people no longer have to navigate this journey alone.

So, while an autoimmune disease might mean your body has an identity crisis, it doesn't mean you have to lose control. With the right tools, treatments, and support, you can outsmart your own immune system and take back your life.

Dr. Aleena Fiorotto is a rural family physician who trained in Winchester, but who has found her home in Huntsville.

'Old habits die hard' or so they say...

It depends on how much these habits are affecting your health, relationships, goals, or life in general.

Sometimes these pesky habits happen right under your nose without realizing it. You just know things can be better.

You have two choices:

1. Keep on keeping on, and hope for the best. (Don't hold your breath for positive change to happen this way!)
2. Learn new ways of creating fulfilling and meaningful change in your life.

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dp/1698857292](https://www.amazon.ca/dp/1698857292)



Milestones

By Peter Cassidy

What a winter this year has been. We have had a record amount of snow. I drove a school bus and there were 15 snow days. Snow days are when the buses are cancelled due to inclement weather. We did survive and are here to talk about it.

I managed to get through the winter volunteering at the new arena. I helped out with the security at the home games. Bracebridge now has a Junior "C" hockey team. It has been 30 years since Bracebridge has had a junior level hockey team.

I have always been a huge fan of Junior hockey. These boys play their hearts out all for the love of the game. While the team has not had great success in winning. They did put an exciting product on the ice.

Volunteering had its benefits. I got to see the games. I pointed out to a couple of fans who would listen that Bracebridge was playing long established teams who might have had a bit more experience.

I remember when I was 16 and playing against the same teams back then. I said we have to support them. It also gave me something to look forward to on a Saturday or Friday night.

The fans were boisterous and supportive and vocal at the outcome of

the games.

On top of this I was so happy about Canada defeating the USA at the 4 nations tournament. It was bittersweet in that our team showed why they are always the team to beat.

The last time it was this intense was in 1972 at the SUMMIT SERIES involving Canada and the USSR.

Now, as the snow is melting and hopefully "Old Man Winter" has had its fun, I start to think spring.

Although I do not play as much golf as I used to, my golf course of choice has a novel way of giving us hope. It has a sign out near highway 118 that has a countdown until golf. This morning, March 19th, it stated 40 days until golf. I cannot think of a better way to wish winter away.

I look forward to coaching another crew who want to learn baseball and sportsmanship. These young players are so impressionable, and I believe it is my duty to teach them about the game and to have a summer of fun.

I like to think that these young players enjoy what I try to teach them. No one is under pressure. I tell them at every game to enjoy themselves and support each other even when they are losing. I have had so much fun and satisfaction

I also learn myself. You have to be so careful of what you say and do. I am normal in that I have had a disagreement with an umpire's call. However, I keep my ire in check. I have to set an example not only to my players but at times their parents.

Personally, I reached a milestone myself. I turned 78 on March 9th. There are many who say I don't look it, while my wife says I need to act it sometimes.

Nevertheless. I am extremely happy with the life the Good Lord has blessed me with.

I get my daily exercise at the Sportsplex by walking, and get leg work on the stationary bike.

I meet new people who are very social and pleasant. This makes it much more enjoyable.

These new friends are in it for the same reason. We are there to improve our quality of life. I would encourage my friends to keep as active as you can. Join a walking club or just walk. Know your limitations. Most importantly, have fun.

***Peter Cassidy**, Scotland born. Came to Canada in 1948. Played Canadian sports, and loved hockey and boxing. I love to write stories of those wonderful players and characters who were the stars in my day.*



Creating a Bird-Friendly Garden

By Jeanette Inthisorn

Spring is the perfect time to transform your garden into a haven for local birds. By planting native species that provide food and shelter, you can enjoy the beauty of songbirds while supporting Muskoka's delicate ecosystem.

Why Native Plants Matter

Birds rely on plants for food, nesting, and protection. Native trees, shrubs, and flowers attract the insects, and grow the berries birds need, ensuring a thriving, balanced habitat.

Best Plants for Birds in Muskoka

- **Serviceberry (*Amelanchier canadensis*)** – Produces sweet berries that attract robins, cardinals, and waxwings.
- **Black Tupelo (*Nyssa sylvatica*)** – Offers fall fruits loved by thrushes and blue jays.
- **Squashberry (*Viburnum edule*)** – Provides dense shelter

and berries for cedar waxwings.

- **Scouler's Willow (*Salix scouleriana*)** – Supports early-season pollinators, benefiting insect-eating birds.
- **Red Osier Dogwood (*Cornus sericea*)** – Bright red stems in winter; berries for sparrows and grosbeaks.
- **Wild Bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*)** – Attracts hummingbirds with its fragrant lavender blooms.

Simple Ways to Attract Birds

- **Create Layers:** A mix of trees, shrubs, and ground cover mimics a natural woodland. Low-growing native plants like wild strawberry (*Fragaria virginiana*), bunchberry (*Cornus canadensis*), and foamflower (*Tiarella cordifolia*) provide shelter for ground-nesting birds and attract insects for food.
- **Provide Water:** A shallow bird bath or small pond offers fresh

water for drinking and bathing.

- **Skip the Pesticides:** Many birds rely on insects as a primary food source, especially during nesting season. By avoiding pesticides, you allow a natural balance to develop, attracting beneficial predatory insects like lacewings, ladybugs, and hoverflies, which help control aphids and caterpillars. Native plants like yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), golden alexander (*Zizia aurea*), and anise hyssop (*Agastache foeniculum*) provide nectar and habitat for these helpful insects.

By choosing native plants and adding thoughtful features, you'll create a peaceful retreat where birds and nature thrive—right in your own backyard.

Jeanette Inthisorn, Master Gardeners of Muskoka. *Our goal is to share, inform and advise avid and amateur gardeners with tips for indoor, outdoor and balcony gardening.*



A History Byte: The George Inn, Broadwindsor, Dorset

By Peter Sanguinetti

Around every corner in the British Isles lies an history byte, some great and famous, the Tower of London for example, and others small and unknown except perhaps to the locals who live close by.

Broadwindsor in the county of Dorset was a typical small village in the 1600's without any particular claim to fame, but all that changed one night in 1651 when King Charles 11, a fugitive king at that particular time, stayed the night. To find the story one has to go back just a few weeks to the Battle of Worcester September 3, 1651 fought between the Royalists led by King Charles and the Parliamentarians led by Oliver Cromwell and General Fleetwood.

The superior battle plan of Oliver Cromwell resulted in an overwhelming defeat of the Royalists, forcing the King to escape from the City of Worcester with some 60 trusted officers and aids. The escape plan was for the King to flee the country by sailing to France, and so began a very difficult and fearful time of six weeks as the King criss-crossed the country staying for a day or two in the homes of loyalists, before moving to another loyalist home and then on to perhaps an inn. He was disguised as a poor man and on occasions he dressed as

a woman to avoid capture, but there were many close calls as the Parliamentary militia searched widely for the King and his party.

If the King was to reach France he had to sail out of one of the many small harbours along the English Channel, but to find a sea captain willing to do this proved increasingly more difficult. In the Dorset towns of Charmouth and Bridport the party ran into squadrons of the Parliamentary militia, on one occasion in Bridport riding straight through the ranks of a squadron with the king dressed as a woman all in black, and making their escape by turning north towards the village of Broadwindsor.

And so Broadwindsor's claim to fame was secured on the night of September 23, 1651 by the King spending the night in the The George Inn. Apparently even the one night wasn't without its own high drama when a group of Parliamentarians under the direction of the local sheriff began to search the building. The king was upstairs at the top of the house and while the parliamentarians started their search downstairs a woman in the kitchen suddenly went into labour so the search was called off and the parliamentarians left as they were due to sail to France in the morning. The following morning the King made his escape, again dressed as a woman. It wasn't until October 15, 1651 the king having reached Brighton was able to make his escape to France.

The original building in which the king stayed was destroyed by fire in 1856 but was rebuilt as a cottage and if you drive through the village today you will see a plaque between the upstairs windows which says:

King Charles 11

Slept Here

September 23 – 24, 1651.

Before the Battle of Powick some ten years before the Battle of Worcester King Charles ran up a bill with the Worcester Clothier Company when he asked them to make uniforms for his soldiers. The cost was £458. The bill wasn't paid until the Prince of Wales, now King Charles 111 paid the \$458 but resisted the temptation of paying the interest estimated to be £47,000.

Peter Sanguinetti, and his wife, Valerie, are now retired and live in Emsdale. He is a director of the Canadian Alliance of British Pensioners and actively supports the Alliance.



The Raven and the Bandit

By Kenn R. E. Page

***“The title may sound like a children’s tale,
I assure you that it’s not.”***

CONT'D FROM PAGE 22...

This story is true, although you may be tempted to think otherwise. The title may sound like a children's tale, I assure you that it's not. You can read it to your grandchildren if you like. They may get a kick out of it. It all started early one spring following the arrival of the robins back to my yard.

It kind of amazes me that at my age, I can still remember some tiny details from my childhood like it was just yesterday. For example, when I was growing up, my parents kept reminding me that if I wanted to grow big and strong, I had to eat my bread crusts, especially brown bread. Actually, I don't think I had much of a choice about it, I was going to have to eat my crusts if it took all afternoon. With that in mind, I quickly got it over with and left the table to go outside and do something a little more interesting.

Now a days I don't want to do more growing, so I've gone back to not eating my crusts. Usually, it's my breakfast toast crusts. I cut them off and toss them to the birds. I started saving them in winter in bags in the freezer and as soon as the robins arrived back and there was a dry lawn beside my house again, I started throwing crusts out to see if I could attract a few blue jays. The robins, I discovered, were not interested, they just ignored the crusts and hopped right over them. So, it was not the robins eating them and not seeing any blue jays, so something strange was going on. Who was eating the crusts? Each and every day the bread crusts disappeared.

If the robins didn't want the crusts that was fine. What I didn't get was how they could think bugs tasted better than 14 grain toast crusts.

One day, while I was outside, a dark shadow passed over my head and looking up I saw what looked to be a raven. Later, when inside, a raven swooped down and landed in my yard, well away from the house. Slowly it waddled and hopped, very nervous looking, toward the toast crusts. When it got to the closest one, it just stood there with its head tilted to one side eyeing the crust. Obviously, the raven didn't know quite what to think. Was the crust suddenly going to jump up and bite it, or maybe suddenly run away?

It was kind of comical, the robins being much smaller birds compared to the raven, hopped right over top of the crusts, ignoring them, and the big strong raven was acting afraid. As I watched, the raven suddenly pounced, and snapped up the one crust so fast that if

the crust had been alive, it wouldn't have known what hit it. Having got that over with, the raven moved on to the next crust. Seeing that nothing serious happened, I assume the raven felt it was safe to continue on and eat the rest. Clearly the raven liked them. This got to be a routine...out went the crusts, in flew the raven.

The funny thing is, I was told I had to eat my crusts if I wanted to grow big and strong. After feeding the raven for weeks I didn't notice it getting any bigger. I must have fed that raven enough crusts to equal a whole loaf of bread. A loaf of bread is almost the same size as a raven, so why wasn't the raven now almost twice as big? Day after day the raven would fly high overhead and check out the scene. If there were crusts on my lawn the raven would swoop in for a snack. It started to make me think I was operating a fast-food fly through window for birds.

For reasons I don't now remember, I took a bag of toast crusts with us fishing. Out in the boat I threw a few crusts on the water. The single seagull that spotted them just about bent itself in two trying to do a u-turn so fast to come back to get them. Susan didn't pay much attention at first, it was no big deal, but as the sky quickly filled with more birds, she looked like she could hardly believe what was going on. I knew this would happen, but Susan was surprised. More and more seagulls kept coming from who knows where, swooping and diving all over the place. Out came Susan's cell phone to video the show. The clean white colour of the swooping gulls against the rich blue cloudless sky was quite striking actually.

Twice more on outings I did this until Susan wanted me to stop. She said she didn't want me to feed the gulls anymore. She didn't want to catch fish to eat out of the same water all these gulls did their business in. I wasn't sure I should point out or not that fish do the same thing, but in the end I thought better of it. When I think back on those swooping diving gulls, many of them flying over our heads, it was surprising they didn't drop any unwanted gifts on us. Susan was right, I should save the toast crusts for the raven.

During that summer I didn't see the raven for the longest time. Each day I threw out crusts, and the next day not a single one remained. So what's up? The answer turned out in part to be a red squirrel. It was hard to believe that a red squirrel that size would eat so many

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crusts, especially since it took only one crust at a time and ate it all before starting on the next piece. A crust or two and it would take off like a shot and that was that, but the next day it was back. Often, I saw the red squirrel run right over the crusts and keep going. Not hungry, I guess. So, who was cleaning up the leftovers? The answer came as no surprise.

One morning after throwing out a fistful of crusts and sticking around on my front porch to watch, I first spotted what I soon called the bandit. I should have known that summer I had a chipmunk population explosion in my yard. It got so that all the crusts were stolen within minutes of them being tossed out. I discovered that one enterprising striped critter had dug a tunnel under a Christmas tree sized spruce a yard from where I tossed the crusts. Within minutes of a new batch of crusts hitting the ground came the mini vacuum cleaner. The raven and the squirrel consumed one at a time, the chipmunk grabbed a mouthful and ran and was right back in seconds. It was a hit and run operation.

That discovery revealed I'd been tossing food right on the Bandit's doorstep. Clearly this critter was stockpiling the goods. I started to think that Fred, as I named it, Fred the Bandit, was in for a bit of a shock! If a whole bread bag full of crusts turned a blue-green while stored in my freezer, what was going to happen to all the toast crusts stored in an underground pantry that wasn't refrigerated? From that point on I stopped tossing out bread crusts. It was for Fred's own good. Fred would have to return to a healthier all-natural diet.

It was not clear if it was the Bandit or not but sitting in my garage in the shade on a hot summer day with the big door open, a chipmunk ran inside and almost ran right across the toe of my shoe. As I watched, it stole peanut butter from a mouse trap at the back of the garage. Then another chipmunk entered the garage. The second the first chipmunk realized it had company, it went ballistic! Its feet could hardly get traction on the concrete floor fast enough. When the second chipmunk realized what was coming its way, it let out a squeal and took off like a shot. As far as I know those two are still going and have probably crossed several county lines by now.

Fall season came and went and on the fourth day following Christmas the raven returned. The Bandit by now was no doubt fast asleep down in its tunnel along with a pantry full of mouldy toast crusts. I could have told it this would happen. With the coast clear the raven

would swoop in and land close to my front steps. This I considered pretty bold since it would land no closer than half a lawn away back in the spring. After a week or so, I noticed the raven was inviting along a friend. There were now two ravens regularly stopping by for lunch. But then a new bandit showed up.

One morning after a light snowfall, in the area where I throw the crusts in winter, there was a mass of footprints. Whoever it was, they had clearly walked up my long driveway from the road to get there. I had rabbit tracks, but this did not explain all the tracks. Who was I feeding now? A few days later, sitting by my front window reading, I spotted out the corner of my eye something move near the bottom of my front steps. Turning to look I saw a red fox, not finding any bread crusts it left and wandered here and there all over my yard.

Around the time of astrological equinox, the raven got really bold! It landed on my stair railing and then climbed sideways up onto the level porch railing at the top and wandered around there next to the front wall of the house. This it did more than once. Then later, out for a walk, I saw the first robin of spring in my yard. We had come full circle. The robins would of course ignore the toast crusts same as they did last spring. Throw out a few toast crusts and you never know who will show up.

Kenn R. E. Page, is proud to be Canadian! Born in Toronto, raised in Pickering, worked for Bell and IBM. Moved to Muskoka in '75 to design and build homes for 40 years. Hobbies: Fishing, reading, painting, gardening.

Have a story to share?

- A challenge?
- A funny tale?
- A heartwarming experience?
- Or a story that others can relate to or enjoy in some way...?

We want to hear about it!

Email it to:
editorial@
muskokaseniorsmagazine.ca



Frugal Chris

By Mary George

I am a carer for a young-at-heart elderly couple (Chris and Catherine). I have changed their names for the writing of this story.

Eighty-five-year-old Chris (Mr. Frugal) has a tendency to be frugal. He uses a tissue to wipe his eyes and then saves the tissue for reuse. He cuts paper towels in 1/2 and often saves them after each use for reuse. Thanks to Mr. Frugal, every room has a neatly stacked mixture of partially used tissue and half-sheets of paper towels available for re-use.

Today, Chris brought us a new episode about being frugal.

Chris regularly chews a single chicklet of gum to reduce his cough and overall mouth comfort. As usual, Chris came to the breakfast table with a small piece of gum in his mouth. Typically, he takes a tiny piece of paper from his half-napkin and wraps the used gum.

As breakfast was coming to an end, Chris began organizing dishes for removal from the kitchen table. As I began to remove dishes from the breakfast table, Chris said "Don't take that one!" He was requesting one dish remain on the table.

I looked and noticed a chewed unwrapped piece of gum sitting all alone on the dish. Chris defended himself, "I am saving that. It is my gum from last night."

Catherine and I burst out laughing, as I returned the used gum and dish to the table.

A short while later, Catherine removed some dishes from the table, being sure to include the gum and dish. Then, she promptly tossed the gum in the trash.

As she sat at the table with a smile, she said "I put the gum in the trash." I responded with an offer to give Chris extra gum, so he did not need to save yesterday's gum for today.

Catherine and I were giggling away with Chris, when he slyly turned his face toward me, and with a cheeky grin, revealed a fresh piece of gum between his teeth! His smile and spirit were extra bright today!

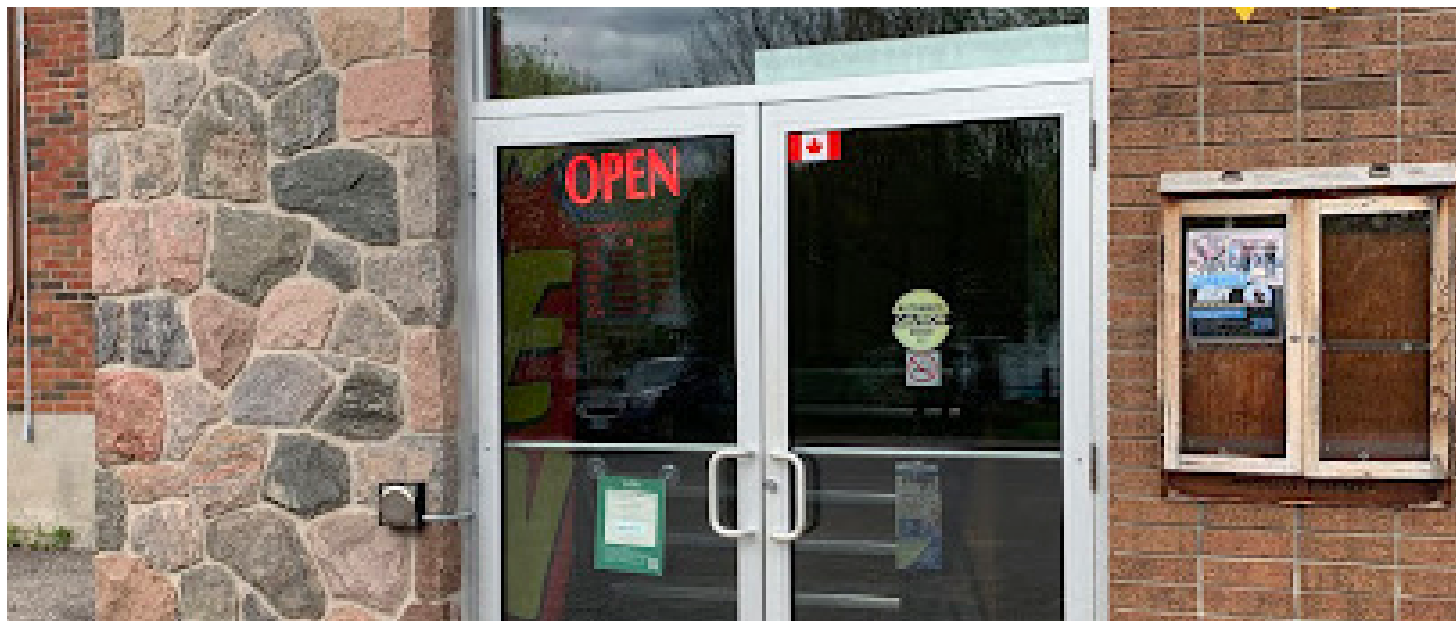
FYI: Chris carries a sleeve of new (un-chewed) chicklets in his shirt pocket. And on this day, an extra spark of joy.

Mary George, utilizes gifts of day-to-day experiences to imagine a new story. Stories allowing the reader to momentarily separate from the density of the world with a smile are favorites.

**Have a funny joke
or story to share?**

**Email it for a chance to be published at:
editorial@muskokaseniorsmagazine.ca**

AROUND MUSKOKA: EVENTS & HAPPENINGS



Gravenhurst Legion, 290 Veterans Way

We offer support to all of our veterans that live in the area. In order to raise money to help them, we have many events throughout the year, for people to come to:

- Karaoke is every Friday, from 8pm until 12mid-night. This event is free.
- Snooker is every Wednesday from 6:45pm to 9:45pm. Also, every Saturday from 2pm to 6pm. The cost is \$5.00 each day. There are 2 large snooker tables to choose from.
- We have a shuffleboard table and a small snooker table in another room that can be used for a small fee.
- Rotary TV Bingo is every Wednesday from 7pm to 8pm, and the cards can be purchased here.

- We have a meat draw, and a 50/50 draw every Saturday from 2pm to 4pm
- We host many dances, and other events throughout the year. Keep your eyes open for posters around town or check our Facebook page for listings.
- We also rent out our upstairs hall for private events. Come see our bartender to book an event or call our phone number and leave a message.

Our regular hours of operation are:

- Wednesdays 3pm to 10pm
- Fridays 3pm to 12midnight
- Saturdays 1:30pm to 6pm
-

Phone# is: 705-687-2801. The email address is: gravenhurstlegion@gmail.com.

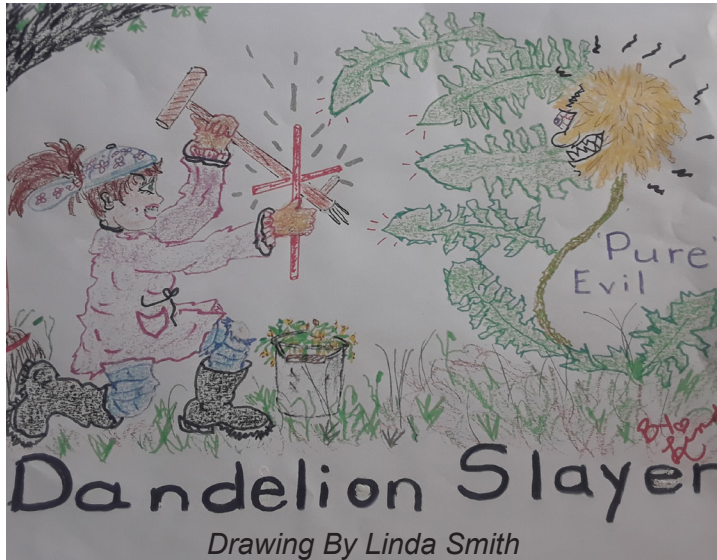
**Are you a non-profit or charity hosting
a community event around Muskoka
and would like to share it?**

Are you another entity type hosting a FREE event to the public?

We want to hear about it!

**Email it to us at:
editorial@muskokaseniorsmagazine.ca**

CREATIVE CORNER



Dandy-lion Slayer®

By Linda Smith

Tis the season – Just makes me mad
Worse dandy-lions we've ever had
Last fall we put our lawn to bed
Thought that all was done and said

Now 'tis spring and up they come
Yellow weeds - and there's a ton
I'm digging - digging - oh my knees
A guy walks by and says – The bees!

They need those blooms and they must feed!
Leave those weeds - They gotta eat
I stood and said, I'm quite aware
There's lots more yellow over there!

I yanked them out where 'err they grew
Then they turned white – I yanked that too
I do not think that they are dandy
And have my dandy-yanker handy

They are not dandy – not at all!
Just work and cost and Tylenol
To fight this war I'm one small player
Just sign me: Dandy-lion slayer

Linda Smith. I wrote a book of cartoons with commentary called: *The Senior Boomer – Whatever happened to the Baby Boomers? The cartoons tell the story of where we landed up!*

Quiet

By Nancy Goodman

Not a single word was spoken
The whole entire week
It was a spell of wicked witchcraft
That knocked me off my feet.

The airways were full of silence
The likes I've never seen
No bells, no phones, no voices
All was quiet, even the machines.

Locked inside my head
The bizarre ideas going around
I was literally immobile
And there was still no place but down.

What was this cursed spell I was in?
What was I going to do?
For me there was no clear thinking
I knew He'd help me through

So, if up ahead you see that staircase
And upward you must rise
Make sure that wicked witch isn't near
Because she's a devil in disguise.

Nancy Goodman, is a lively senior, a prolific co-author of the book *"My Affair With Cancer"*, who lives in Penetanguishene, and enjoys walks on the beach, and fireside chats.

MUSKOKA SENIORS MAGAZINE

Business Directory

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CHARITIES & NON-PROFITS

BRACEBRIDGE CENTRE FOR ACTIVE LIVING - A community hub for Seniors to stay active, enjoy programs, special events and build friendships. 54 Dominion Street Bracebridge 705-645-9111, www.bracebridgeseniorscentre.ca

GRAVENHURST ACTIVITY CENTRE - Come join the Gravenhurst Seniors Activity Centre 705-687-8126. We have various card games, shuffleboard, snooker and more. No age restrictions!

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LOON & TURTLE LAKES COTTAGE ASSOCIATION - The mandate of our association is to work together to preserve our natural environment and safeguard our community. Our website is www.loonturtle.ca

PROBUS OF GRAVENHURST - We, in the Probus Club of Gravenhurst, have celebrated over 20 years in town. We were created to offer our residents an opportunity to meet, share similar interests and enjoy our wonderful Muskoka. Contact Barb McCabe at barbmccabemuskoka@gmail.com

PROBUS SOUTH MUSKOKA - Social Club for retired persons. Monthly meetings with speakers, social activities. Contact: Margaret 705-637-0606 www.smprobussouthmuskoka.ca



Fireside Chat Series

With your local health care providers!
FREE!

Meet your local health care providers and learn about issues that can affect your overall health and well-being!

Hunstville

Canada Summit Centre, Active Living Centre, 7-8pm

- April 8th: Autoimmune Diseases, by Dr. Aleena Fiorotto
- April 15th: Back Pain, by Dr. Carmen Baker
- April 22nd: Leaking Secrets: Pelvic health for men & women, by Carolyn and Brittany VanDyken
- April 29th: Accessing Health Care in Muskoka, by Dr. Melanie Mar

Register at: 705-789-0022, ext 2720, <https://www.huntsvilleleg.ca/community>

Bracebridge

Bracebridge Library, 34 Salmon Ave., 6-7pm

- May 6th: Alcohol Guidelines and Cannabis, Dr. Lisa Tsugios
- May 13th: Osteoarthritis, by Dr. Scott Whynot

Register at: 705-645-4404, ext 2720, www.southmuskokaleg.ca/community