



# ACA News

**Alberta Council on Aging**  
Summer 2013  
Vol. 45 No. 6

## Getting the House in Order

Canadian Publication Mail Product Agreement No. 40028759  
Return Undeliverable Canadian addresses to:  
Box 9 - 11808 St. Albert Trail, Edmonton AB, T5L 4G4

**Editor & Publisher**

Alberta Council on Aging

Cover art provided by Yvonne Dickson. This painting is of a house called Tatterscott, located in St Andrews, NB. See page 17.

**Annual Report 2012**

Contact us for a copy or visit us online:

**[www.agacing.ca](http://www.agacing.ca)**

Views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the Alberta Council on Aging. The council reserves the right to condense, rewrite and reject material.

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Members may request electronic newsletter.

**Mission Statement**

"To empower seniors, educate the public and advise government to support the quality of life for seniors and encourage their participation in all aspects of society."

We're re-working our mission statement!  
Please give us feedback on this version by contacting the ACA.

## President's Report

**News from our First Quarter**

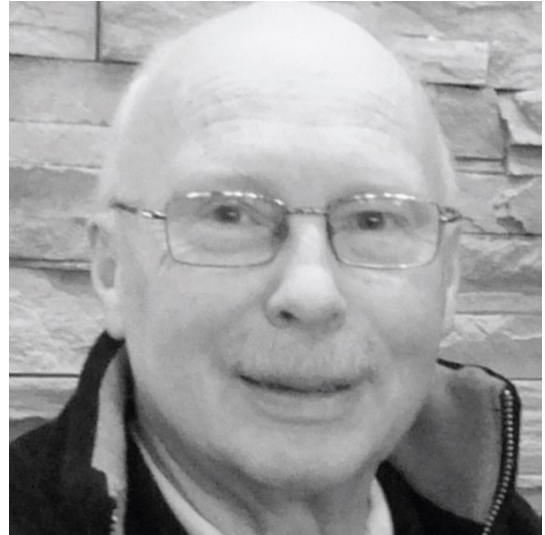
By Gary Pool

During the first quarter of this fiscal year, April - June, we continued working on the priorities that we have been concentrating on for the past few years. The most notable success and our prime area of focus is the Senior Friendly™ Program, which we revised from a program established in the 1990's. The reinvigoration took more work and time than we initially planned, but I believe the resulting program is well worth it. We have continued to develop and upgrade the Senior Friendly™ Program and have run training sessions. As more communities work towards becoming Age Friendly, we are seeing increasing interest in this tool, both inside and outside the province of Alberta.

We have continued to work collaboratively with a number of other groups. The two most significant areas of activity have been with ANSRO (Alberta Network of Seniors Related Organizations) and with the Seniors Task Force coordinated by Public Interest Alberta.

ANSRO's vision has been adapted to fit with the implementation of Family Care Clinics. We understand that Alberta Health plans to implement Family Care Clinics in some form this year. The modified vision is to promote the "development of a network of provincially standardized, community-based seniors resource centers that can provide information, support and integrated management of the health and social care services that seniors need to achieve optimal health and independence."

The Seniors Task Force of PIA has been focusing on five issues which have been reviewed with the Minister of Health and the Associate Minister for Seniors. They are: the shortage of long-term care spaces in Alberta, the concept of an independent Seniors' Advocate, adequate staffing levels in seniors' care facilities, the need for more accessible and affordable home care, and the



future direction of seniors' care in Alberta.

In addition to the collaborative efforts, we have increased our level of contact with the Health Minister, Associate Health Minister and other MLA's (representing both the government and opposition.) We have also provided a panel member for some specific topics on Access TV. Our increased visibility on provincial issues has resulted in many requests; at times, we have declined to comment, because we (as ACA) have yet to develop sufficient policy in those areas. The Board recognizes this is an area we need to further develop.

Late in the 2012-2013 fiscal year as part of our fundraising effort we worked a two-day stint at the Yellowhead Casino. For this we received an amount of \$77,806. This is several thousand dollars higher than what we had budgeted. I again thank the approximate 25 volunteers who worked for us. These volunteers came from Region 4 (Edmonton and area) and Region 9 (East Central.)

In closing, I remind you again that the 50th Anniversary of ACA is only a few years away. We continue to look for suggestions and sponsors for this celebration. On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to ACA's work, whether your gift of money or the gift of time. Thank you very much for your commitment and ongoing support.

## Executive Director's Report

# Getting the House in Order

By Donna Durand

Getting the house in order addresses the most important investments we make in our life-time: our health and our housing. I had an instructor at Mount Royal College who defined wellbeing as having enough energy to get through daily activities, plus having a little left over for leisure and relaxation. For many, this will sound like a cake-walk; however there are others who face a tremendous struggle just to get one foot from bed to floor. I have had the immense pleasure of collaborating with Dr. Duncan Robertson, one of Canada's first and most respected geriatricians. He gives a very clear message on brain health, which is also applicable to overall health and getting our personal house in order.

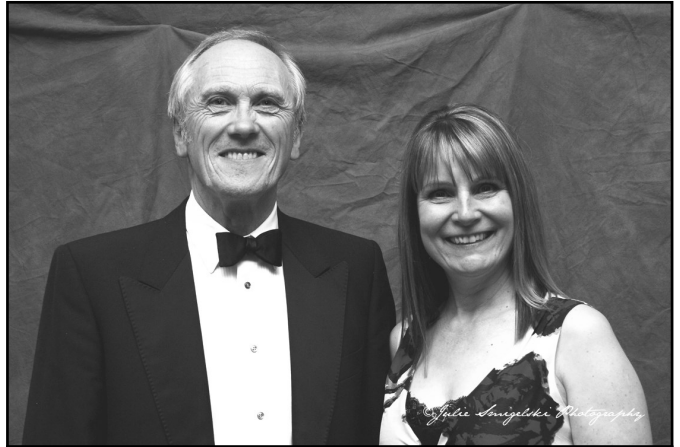
The **brain loves oxygen**: in order to bring more oxygen to the brain, **exercise matters**. Even if you can increase your heart rate for a few minutes, research indicates this is very good. Other factors include:

**A healthy diet**, including fresh vegetables and fruits, lean meats, grains and unsaturated fat. We also need to stay hydrated! ACA knows the challenges posed by limited income, or restrictions to mobility and agility, and seeks to address these by developing social policy.

**People need people**. We all need a purpose. To be included and to be able to impact our environment is important. The Senior Friendly™ Program speaks to the changes necessary to encourage inclusiveness in our communities.

**The brain needs challenge**. We need to learn new things, whether it is a new dance step, or solving a puzzle. Life long learners win!

**Reduce stress**. Manage what you can and learn to make peace with what you cannot



Dr. Robertson poses with Donna at a gala for Alzheimer's disease and related dementia research.

control. (Sometimes we need professional help to learn these skills.)

**How do we get ready for the future?** Write your personal directive, have a current will and name who will help you with finances. Start downsizing and de-cluttering, ask for help, and have family meetings where you make your needs clear. These are all proactive steps to meet the future with a calm certainty and strength. The political aspect of this is that many of our services are crisis driven and navigation through the system can be very challenging. The Alberta Council on Aging is motivated to influence this for the better. We are continuing to work on programs that will educate seniors and the general public on how to enjoy the latter part of their lives, and we will continue to engage all levels of government to promote this ideal.

**We look forward to hearing from you**. As you get your house in order, what are your tips? Thanks for reading and sharing.

## Our Perspective

## Response to the Provincial Budget as it Relates to Seniors

When the budget was announced, we were worried about how budget priorities will affect the quality of life of seniors. We requested a meeting with the Minister of Health to discuss the implications of the budget.

On an operational level, the Alberta Council on Aging, as with many non-profit organizations, experienced a setback when STEP (Student Temporary Employment Program) was cancelled. It is a relatively small amount (\$7 million, employing 3000 students) of the overall budget, yet the promotion of students and the skillset they bring to the agencies is so rich.

We decided to hire a recent university graduate regardless of losing out on a stipend from STEP, and Kristina Belyea has already helped to improve our organization. She has taken the lead on the SCIP team, (Serving Communities Internship Program - a bursary program for specific projects) has become the webmaster and is completing the writing of a grant. This newsletter is also the result of her work as she asked if she could trial publishing the newsletter in house rather than having it out-sourced.

The Community Spirit Grant will end December 31, 2013. This was one of the few grants that had a matching donations component as well as use of funds directed at operations if the recipient so desired.

The direct cuts showed up in the Alberta Seniors Benefits where approximately 9,000 seniors saw changes to their benefits. Immigrants who have not been in Canada for more than 10 years were no longer eligible to receive benefits, while those on CPP Disability and Workers Compensation Benefits saw changes also affecting or

eliminating benefits. At the time of publication, the details for Seniors Drug plan has yet to be announced. The Education Tax Deferral Program is being phased out and in its place is a property tax deferral grant program which Associate Health Minister George VanderBurg states "is not for everyone. There must be a minimum of 25% equity in the home." What we also noted is the change from grant to loan.

Some will say it is too late to change the budget, yet we believe it is important to express our concerns to our representatives. We believe government, as representation of citizens, requires feedback to ensure balance in social programs and financial responsibility. Although many groups representing seniors have distinctive mandates, we celebrate partnerships such as Consumers Coalition of Alberta, ANSRO (Alberta Network of Seniors Related Organizations) and Seniors Task Force, PIA, as we see strength in collaborating while continuing to empower seniors and educate government and the general public through our communications and educational programs.

We urge you to get involved where and how you can. Contact your MLA - **your voice matters!** We have posted a template for writing to a government official on our website. We will send this to you via mail if you prefer. We always welcome your calls and we do track concerns.

Working to improve the quality of life for seniors.

[www.acaging.ca](http://www.acaging.ca)



## Stories

## Canning is a Work of Art

By Moneca Wilson

Midsummer is berry-picking time. My primordial hunting-gathering instinct kicks in, and I want to head for the hillsides with an old ice-cream bucket in hand.

This instinct was well nurtured in my youth. Our entire family participated in what was, in those days, a common event:: several journeys each summer by horse and buggy to the Sand Hills in search of saskatoons and chokecherries. That area, around 15 miles south of our farm, was an uninhabited stretch of tree-covered, rolling land. Rumour had it that strange animals lived there, and one rancher who hated people, especially children of my age.

In those depression and war years, summer camp or a trip to the mountains was out of the question, so an all-day jaunt to the distant berry patch was the highlight of our school vacation. It also provided us with adventures that grew in significance with the retelling over the winter months.

On berry picking days, we left home at the crack of dawn, our horse-drawn buggy loaded with sandwiches, coffee, pails and even a wash tub, in anticipation of a profitable trip. Since there were six children in the family, we took turns going with either Mother or Dad.

Sometimes we went with our neighbor Mr. Jake and his wife Katie, in their big Bennett buggy. A trip with them usually turned into a jolly picnic with few berries to show at day's end. Mr. Jake was a big man with hulking shoulders and a perpetual smile. He entertained us with silly jokes and songs as we drove around exploring the area. More frequently than necessary, we stopped at some vantage point - on the top of a small round hill where the grass was brown and brittle and the view wonderful, or under the trees at the edge of a



murky slough where we ate our bologna sandwiches.

By the end of the season we always had at least one tub full of saskatoons. We enjoyed them in muffins and pies, but they were most delicious uncooked, piled in the little berry bowls and covered with thick cream and sprinkled with a few granules of sparkling sugar.

Those tasty desserts were incentives to keep us involved in the tedious task of preparing and preserving the fruit. All members of the family were commandeered for the "picking over" phase – except Dad, as urgent business took him to town on those days. Bent over the tub of berries, we scooped up a handful and as we picked out twigs, leaves and dried berries, the good ones trickled through our fingers into another pail. Soon my hands, and the chubby little hands of my younger sisters, were stained purple. And our mouths, too, though soon we had enough tasting and even the biggest and juiciest berry did not tempt us.

After the berries were washed in the water we lugged in from the pump and warmed on the stove, they were packed, with hot syrup, into glass

jars and placed in the big copper boiler filled with water. Though the day was likely to be hot and sunny, we kept the fire stoked and the water boiling for about an hour. Then Mother, flushed with triumph and heat, removed the steaming jars filled with purple fruit and placed them upside down on the kitchen table to cool and to be admired.

In due course the saskatoons were canned, the chokecherries made into jelly and all the jars filed away on shelves in the cool earth-walled basement. Mother made at least one hundred quarts of Saskatoon preserves, and often she would announce the great accomplishment to her neighbours. However, one lady, without fail, and without burden of proof, insisted on topping her count, and that banter provided us with a chuckle.

Nevertheless, the sense of accomplishment

in creating an edible work of art and providing nourishing food for her family gave Mother a feeling of pleasure and happiness. Canning was a ritual that happened every summer and autumn and grounded and connected us with reality and the source. Perhaps that point is missed today when we pick up a jar of jam at the supermarket.

In those years, when the family gathered around the big kitchen table for the evening meal, the food was often bland and unvaried. But, when we had a dish of succulent berries swimming in rich purple juice from Mother's basement lode, we did not envy the repast of a king.

Moneca Wilson is a published author currently residing in Sherwood Park.



## Norwegian Laft Hus, a Central Alberta Treasure

A great place for seniors to keep their minds sharp by learning about a new culture is the Norwegian Laft Hus in Central Alberta. Nestled in a treed park in downtown Red Deer and close to the Golden Circle and many senior residences, it is one of Western Canada's most unique Norwegian Interpretive Centers. The Laft Hus offers many different classes to the public such as hardanger embroidery, rosemaling painting, chip carving, Norwegian language, and Norwegian baking.

Besides being a cultural centre, the Norwegian Laft Hus is a tourist attraction as a log house with a sod roof. It is a replica of a 17<sup>th</sup> century house from the Numedal district of Norway and inside you will find a good collection of Norwegian artifacts. As well, you will enjoy browsing through its butikk of Norwegian items for sale.

Every Wednesday throughout the

year you can find people at the house working on Norwegian crafts for their annual craft and bake sale. In the summer months the house is open every day except Monday, so stop by for a visit. The friendly people here will offer you a cup of coffee and Norwegian goodies.

For more photos and information, visit [www.norwegianlafthussociety.ca](http://www.norwegianlafthussociety.ca)



### NORWEGIAN LAFT HUS 25th ANNIVERSARY FESTIVAL

4402 - 47 Ave., Red Deer, AB  
**August 17 & 18, 2013**

Exhibits, demonstrations, Scandinavian performers, dancers & singers; Vikings, fjord horse, games, troll contest, food & drinks.

Email [norwegianlafthus@gmail.com](mailto:norwegianlafthus@gmail.com) or phone 403-347-2055 for more information.

## Community Dialogue

### Of Recent Concern to our Members

Over the past few months we have heard from our members and callers on the following topics:

**RRIF (Registered Retirement Income Fund):** One member told us he noticed his bank charged an unexpected administration fee of \$100. When he questioned this, he was told his account had gone below a certain amount, (\$25,000.) He checked the fine print and could not find mention of this. His banked waived the fee for this year. Our member advises seniors to check their RRIF accounts and make sure they are not being charged an administration fee they did not agree to. Banks we contacted said they don't have such a policy, however, by our member's findings, some banks do.

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**Mammograms after 69 years of age:** One member discovered 69 years of age is the cut-off point for eligibility for coverage under Alberta Health for mammograms. There is still debate on whether health screening of this nature should be an annual requirement, (see Seeking Sickness by Allan Casels, which raises some important questions about medical screening,) but our member nevertheless questions, "Why is it that after 69 years there is no longer coverage for this?"

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**Property tax deferral program:** In the form of a loan, not a grant, this new program is questionable in terms of who is helped – for instance what if the home does not easily sell? What happens to the loan? What if people who have challenges with budgeting use this as fun money? What if there is an expectation that the reason to access this grant is to pay for care they otherwise would not afford?

**Driving, medicals and DriveAble exam:** We have had more than a few members express concern over passing their medicals, then being required by their physician to take the DriveAble test. DriveAble is a private company and the fee for this exam (\$300+) is not covered by Alberta Health. This is a virtual test and members say it requires computer savvy to understand the test and to actually pass it. The patient advocate told one of our members to seek another opinion. We support the right to drive being based on being medically fit to drive, which should not be based on age or hinge on passing the simulated driving test should the patient pass the medical exam.

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**Education Property Tax Assistance for Seniors program:** This grant that is income tested ends December 31, 2013.

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**Day Programs:** The question was asked, "Are day programs for people with the disease or only for the caregiver's need for respite?" One caller stated he was told by a manager in Alberta Health Services that the Day Programs are not for the person in the program (likely with dementia) but to give the care provider a well-needed break. Good programming on the continuum of care would ensure both parties receive appropriate services; otherwise a day program will have the appearance of a warehouse, which is not acceptable and would be a step back in time.



## Community Programs

**Seniors Health Strategic Clinical Network**

Alberta Health Services

One year ago, in June 2012, Alberta Health Services launched six Strategic Clinical Networks (SCNs), several of which relate to health conditions that occur more commonly with advancing age. These include diabetes, heart disease, dementia and cancer. One strategic clinical network, the Seniors Health SCN, was created to bring together the voice of patients, physicians, other healthcare providers and researchers from across Alberta to improve the quality of health care services for seniors and their families.

A Core Committee has been guiding the work of the SCN and has met regularly over the last year. Two areas of focus have been identified – Aging Brain Care and Healthy Aging and Seniors Care. For both areas, the “patient journey” of older Albertans across the healthcare system from primary and other care in the community through to encounters with hospital and back to the community will be examined. Over the next years the SCN will create “Care Pathways” that provide patients, caregivers and healthcare professionals with current information and recommendations for prevention, treatment and clinical care of conditions prevalent in the last years of life.

Changes in memory and other cognitive abilities increase in frequency with advancing age. Age associated memory changes are universal; however, more serious impairments caused by Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia require support and, in some cases, a move from home to a care facility. Opportunities exist earlier in life to prevent or delay the occurrence of cognitive changes in old age. Even when cognitive decline has become apparent, optimal care and management can maintain an older person's ability to function. Our care pathways will advise Albertans,

patients, caregivers or healthcare providers, on the best practices for prevention and care management to maintain quality of life for the individual and their families and caregivers.

The Seniors Health SCN is working in collaboration with the Addiction and Mental Health SCN to improve interdisciplinary team care of residents with dementia in Alberta's continuing care facilities. The SCN also promotes “Elder Friendly Hospitals” where every effort is made to maintain seniors' abilities to mobilize and manage those aspects of self-care that will be necessary for successful discharge to their homes following inpatient medical or surgical treatment.

Over 35 people from all parts of the province are members of the Core Committee and many more participate in working groups to develop projects that will be established in the coming months. Several hundred healthcare professionals who work with seniors are part of our “community of practice” and we are developing a “community of interest” for other citizens who wish to know more of our work and engage with us as we prepare for an “Aging Alberta.”

If you are interested in joining the Seniors Health Strategic Clinical Network Community of Interest please contact Vanessa Bulmer, Assistant to Dr. Duncan Robertson and Dennis Cleaver (Executive Director, SH SCN), at [vanessa.bulmer@albertahealthservices.ca](mailto:vanessa.bulmer@albertahealthservices.ca) or phone (780)-735-0297

## Thank You for Your Donations!

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There are over 420,000 Seniors currently living in Alberta.  
If you know anyone who you think would like to be a member of the Alberta Council on Aging, have them contact the ACA today!

A membership makes a great gift and there is strength in numbers.

## Alberta Council on Aging Membership Form

**Membership Type:**

New ☐ Renewal ☐

☐ Household: \$22 \*please include both names

**Donation:** \_\_\_\_\_ (Thank you)

☐ Life Membership: \$250

(Tax receipts are issued for donations of \$10 or more.)

☐ Organizational membership: \$60

Other (specify): \_\_\_\_\_

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Alberta Council on Aging is the only province-wide senior serving organization in Canada.

## Report from the Annual General Meeting

### The 2013 Annual General Meeting

Over 70 people turned out to take part in the Annual General Meeting, hosted by Region 9 held at the Sunbeam Drop-In Centre in Daysland on June 11, 2013. After singing "O Canada," master of ceremonies Fred Olsen, President of Region 9, greeted Mayor Darrell McNabb and thanked the committees that assisted in hosting: Region 9 Senior Center executive and volunteers.



Guest speakers Bruce West and Wendy Armstrong

The first speaker was Bruce West, Executive Director, Alberta Continuing Care Association. He is one of Alberta's foremost speakers on seniors' health and housing and has worked in the industry for many years. Next, Wendy Armstrong, Policy Analyst and Consumer Advocate, presented on Citizens, Societies, Health and Health Care. Wendy stressed the importance of everyday citizens using their voices to speak to corporations and government. Shannon Patershuk and Jessica Simpson of Johnson Inc. provided an overview of benefits for members.

Door prizes and 50/50 prizes were handed out before a set by cowboy comedian Ol' Ugly entitled "Seniors can still think Funny!" Diana Anderson, President Region 2, talked about the need for Alberta Council on Aging to have an active Health Committee.

After a lunch of roast beef prepared by the volunteers at the center, the business meeting started. As past president Floyd Sweet is deceased and the nominations chair Yvonne Dickson was away due to a death in her family, Gary Pool conducted the business meeting. At the count, it was determined there were not enough members for a quorum (23 eligible voting members, 25 required for quorum). It was agreed by the membership the meeting would go on and the recommendations would become motions at the board of directors meetings in the fall. Gary Pool agreed to stay on as president for the period of 2013-2014.

Reports from the Annual Report were shared, and there was plenty of discussion. There was an expression of appreciation for past directors Beth Turner, Alex Herdman, and Norm Bezanon.

"We must make the world Senior Friendly™ in order to make life easier for seniors to travel and engage in their communities"

Finally, a member challenged everyone to make the world Senior Friendly™ in order to make it easy for seniors to travel and engage in their communities. What a wonderful closing comment to end to the day. In 2012/13 the council launched the revised Senior Friendly™ Program which is designed to dispel myths and raise awareness about the needs of seniors.

In conclusion, the Annual General Meeting was a resounding success. It was wonderful to connect with our members. Thank you to those who came from near and far, and especially to all of the volunteers. See you next year!



Thank you Daysland Sunbeam Centre and Region 9 for hosting the event!

## Annual General Meeting



Guest speakers Shannon Patershuk and Ol' Ugly



Gary Pool and Bev Hanes enjoy lunch at a local cafe



Region 9 Executive:  
(right to left)  
Arlene Lohner, Alice Hillaby,  
Ernestine Ferris, Fred Olsen



Points well made!



Senior Center volunteers prepare a lovely meal



The 50/50 Crew



## Feature

# Getting Your House In Order: Suggestions for Your Peace of Mind

## Writing a Personal Directive

By Glenna Thompson, Representative of the Office of the Public Guardian

What happens if you are unable to make personal decisions? This could happen suddenly due to a car accident or a stroke; or gradually as an illness like dementia progresses. You can plan for these situations and alleviate uncertainty and stress for your family and friends.

A personal directive is a legal document which allows you to name a decision maker and/or provide written instructions to be followed when, due to illness or injury, you are no longer able to make decisions such as health care treatment or

where to live. A personal directive can help protect your wishes and reassure family and friends that the decisions made during a time of crisis are what you wanted. Health care providers can also take direction from a personal directive to make sure an individual's wishes are carried out. Many Albertans include wishes, values and beliefs about end of life care within their personal directives.

All adults are encouraged to make a personal directive. Information kits, which include a form to help write a personal directive, are available free of charge at any Office of the Public Guardian or by calling toll-free 1.877.427.4525. More information is also available on the Human Services website at [www.humanservices.alberta.ca/opg](http://www.humanservices.alberta.ca/opg).

## Tips for Wills, Personal Directives and Power of Attorney for Couples

by Christine Tchir, Lawyer

- Be sure that all property titles are in **both of your names**, as well as all bank accounts and utilities. If you're unsure, a lawyer can help.
- Do not put your kids on land titles** with you for the following reasons:
  - If their spouses divorce, they can acquire ½ of all the assets
  - Common-law relationships can claim the same legal rights as a marriage
  - If a child or spouse gets in an accident, insurance companies can go after ½ of all assets including any business you have their name on
- If you have children that have personal or financial problems, **set up trusts** for their share of your estate which issues an income on a per year basis instead of a lump sum

- Talk to an accountant before** planning your estate to discuss tax implications of your will.
- If you exclude a member of your family or their relationships, you need to have a reason why so they cannot contest the will on the basis that you "forgot them"
- You need a list of all of your property and bank accounts** with your will, as well as your personal directive and power of attorney
- New legislation regarding wills was introduced in February 2012, so review your existing will with your lawyer to see if the changes affect you
- When choosing an executive, **get the list of their duties from your lawyer and review it with them** to be sure that they understand what their responsibilities would be. State in your will if you want to pay them and be sure that your choice is someone you can trust. Family members are not always the best choice
- If doing your own will, it must have **2 witnesses** and current addresses, and it must be in **your own handwriting** or it will be declared invalid

## Feature

## Getting Your House In Order: Suggestions for a Clutter-free Home

Once you've settled into a home and community, it can be easy to acquire bits and pieces over time until your house seems to be full of clutter. An orderly home can have a number of benefits, such as providing a better outlook, less stress and a more relaxing environment, as well as helping to reduce problems if a move is in order. Below are some simple tips that can help you reduce the amount of unnecessary things in your home, and make it easier to keep your home clutter-free.

**Get rid of belongings that you never use:** If you haven't used a given item in over a year, you likely don't need it; ask yourself why you're hanging on to these items. Sometimes, these are held onto for personal reasons that don't need to be ignored; however, often we hang onto things in the vain hope that it will someday be useful. If you never use it, consider donating it or giving it away. Common problem areas for keeping items you don't need are the pantry, the medicine closet and the wardrobe.

**Store seasonally:** Sort your clothes into warm weather and cold weather items, and store those items from the off-season nearby but out of sight – in a box under your bed or at the back of the closet. Every season when you switch your closet over, get rid of anything from the previous season that you haven't worn since the last time you switched.

**Reduce the number of possessions that you bring into your space:** Simply stopping the influx of items into your home can help control clutter. Consider adopting a "One in, Two out" rule, where for every item you bring in, you get rid of two items that are no longer needed.

**Make a plan of how you intend to tackle your mess:** Whether you choose to do it all over a weekend, or once a week, make realistic goals and try to stick to them. Set a pace that appeals to you and work methodically, one room at a time, so you don't get overwhelmed. Avoid simply moving clutter from one room to the next.

**Have someone help you de-clutter:** When it comes to de-cluttering, two heads are definitely better than one. In addition to helping with the physical aspects of clearing potentially heavy items, sometimes an objective friend can help you determine why you're hanging onto something, and can advise whether you should keep it or get rid of it.

**Realize that your things are just things:** The clutter can seem too important to part with sometimes; however, by and large if you don't use it and it is not a valuable item, (financially or emotionally,) you won't even notice when it's gone. Once you start questioning why you're holding onto stuff that you never use, it can be freeing and become easier to avoid buying clutter you don't need.

Remember that your space is an important factor in determining your outlook on the world. Clean and tidy environments can help you manage and reduce stress, and you will feel better about yourself while preparing for the future.

"Summer's lease hath all too short a date."

-William Shakespeare

## Summary of Activities

# What Has the Alberta Council on Aging Been Doing?

### Meetings

- Alberta Health Stakeholders Meeting to review and give input on revised Continuing Care Standards
- Honourable George VanderBurg, Associate Minister of Health, Tyler James, Alberta Health, Seniors Services and Continuing Care to discuss provincial budget, patient funding model, Home Care standards and self-management grant
- Seniors Town Hall Meeting at the Strathcona Community League Edmonton concerning an overview of the impact the provincial budget will have on seniors
- Board of Directors meetings: April and June, plus Strategic Planning Day with Board of Directors and facilitator Glynis Boulton Wilson
- Annual General Meeting in Daysland, June 11
- Coaches: Wendy Armstrong, on consumer advocacy, Gail Hiller, systems coach, Moshe Lander, economist and educator on current provincial budget
- Interview and tea with Mary Englemann and Wanda Cree

### Senior Friendly™

- Launch revised Senior Friendly™ Program Toolkit
- Training update for existing senior trainers and group session for Train the Trainers (and what a group... retired physician, two teachers, two board of directors, a gerontologist)
- Presentation on Senior Friendly™ at Edmonton Retired Teachers Association Annual General Meeting

### Communications

- Letter and spring newsletter sent to all MLA's
- Template developed and posted online for writing a letter to a government official
- Continued efforts regarding Alberta Council on Aging branding
- Annual General Report, including audit 2012-2013 published, hard copy and online

"Kudos to all for the last edition of ACA News! It was very well done and informative. It sure answered the oft-heard question 'What does ACA do for me?' Best wishes,"  
Beth Turner

### Partnerships

- Community Relations Assistant Krisitna Belyea working with Alberta Securities Commission and Enactus (SAIT) on a project on Financial Literacy for Seniors
- Continue to work with Johnsons Inc. representative Shannon Patershuk regarding membership benefits, sponsorships and letters of agreement

## Questions? Comments?

### Concerns?

We want to hear from our members and readers.

## Regional Directors' Reports

## Opening Doors

by Yvonne Dickson

Which is it, I wonder? Is this the case of the chicken and the egg?

The image that is on the cover of this newsletter, which I chose to paint and share with you, is located in a beautiful small seaside town in New Brunswick. Doors as subjects to paint have held a certain charm for me and my painting pals for some time. We mounted a show on that theme and named it "Openings."

Thinking about doors, opportunities and openings brings me to the Alberta Council on Aging's current revision of the Senior Friendly™ Program. It revolves around you as a client, customer, patient or user of establishments in the community you live. Alberta Council on Aging trainers are able to provide the educational workshop for staff so they are empowered to provide excellent service to our senior population. Though focused on serving seniors, the final result benefits everyone in a community.

The Senior Friendly™ program was brought front and center to me a few weeks ago when I ran into our local grocery supermarket for a dozen eggs. As I quickly made my way to the checkout, I was not aware of a wet area on the floor in my path. "Quicker than a cat can wink its eye," I was on the floor but the eggs survived with-

out a crack. When I was on my feet again, I realized that I must cross over this liquid to reach a mat of safety.

While I was regaining my upright position and gathering my composure, I realized my supermarket needed the Senior Friendly™ Program. Two days later, I returned to meet the manager. I presented the Senior Friendly™ Program to him. He and I both understood that my mishap brought about a very positive opportunity for his store and staff to enhance their service to seniors and he agreed to endorse the program!

I applaud progressive management and service providers who recognize the value of their senior clientele. My local supermarket manager turned this experience which could have been negative into a "door of opportunity," which he is willing to lead his staff through, to enhance the shopping experience in his store, not only for seniors, but the general population.

Watch the next issue of the newsletter to see the Senior Friendly™ Program story unfold in Region 1, Grande Prairie and Area, which I serve as Regional Director.



The Regional Directors are enjoying a summer break. Diane Walker, Region 3 director advises:

"With all the small town fairs and special events, I am sure our members will be busy having some fun. This is also a time when bogus renovators offer their services. Do not be taken in!"

"Like a welcome summer rain, humor may suddenly cleanse and cool the earth, the air and you."

-Langston Hughes

From Johnson Inc.

## Love of Learning

by Shannon Patershuk

Giving a lesson on learning from life's challenges, Oprah Winfrey spoke to graduates as she received an honorary Doctor of Laws degree during Harvard University's 362nd Commencement. She advised graduates on what to do when they stumble, saying: "Learn from every mistake because every experience, encounter and particularly mistakes are there to teach you and force you



Shannon Patershuk and daughter Andrea Haley at Cape Breton University

into being more of who you are, and then figure out what is the right next move."

On a less ubiquitous yet very meaningful stage, the above picture shows me with my daughter Andrea Haley during a commencement exercise at Cape Breton University (CBU). As a mother-daughter team, we had enthusiastically signed up for a research-based MBA program specializing in Community Economic Development in the fall of 2009. The CBU MBA program in the Shannon School of Business was designed to serve the non-profit sector across Canada, with one of the largest cohorts hosted at Edmonton's Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT). Like

most MBA programs, a large benefit comes from learning from the experience of other students in diverse sectors—health care, public sector, credit unions and colleges to name a few. Little did we know that I was about to stumble.

An unexpected diagnosis changed our journey. In December 2009, I discovered I had breast cancer and learned firsthand how important our public health care system is when navigating a life threatening illness.

At first I thought it was a death sentence, as it had been for my mother many years ago. Fortunately, cancer research has made significant strides; more treatment options and multiple modalities are available—surgery, chemotherapy and radiation, integrated with exercise and nutrition counselling. The disease and treatments can impact not only the patient, but also the lives of those around her—family, friends and colleagues. There was more information and support from health care professionals and volunteers than I could have imagined. A nurse navigator was assigned to my case and psychosocial services were available to the whole family.

Seeking information is one of the top stress relievers for me during difficult challenges. Andrea signed me up for every information session available, such as "Look Good, Feel Good," a course offered by the Cross Cancer Institute. Thanks to this program, facing the public was a much smoother transition. Other students were kind and accepting of sudden changes in my appearance, including wigs and strategic makeup designed to make cancer patients feel better.

Our mother-daughter MBA team had another challenge—to keep going with their studies or quit and focus on cancer survival. We kept going, albeit at a slower pace which gave us a big net-



working advantage as we experienced not one but three cohorts of MBA students before graduating. The buddy system of pushing and pulling one another to complete research projects kept us on course. When the pace was overwhelming, adjustments were made. The accommodation of the CBU Director and professors placed health before deadlines.

Getting back to work was an important step in healing, as I was able to focus on more than just the cancer. My employer was totally supportive and fortunately had a disability plan in place for employees to reduce the financial stressors. I had joined Johnson Inc. in Edmonton in 2001 in a senior consulting role advising major retiree association clients for voluntary post-retirement benefit plans. In my current role as West Regional Manager, Retiree Program Relations, I am responsible for consulting and coordinating roles for clients as well as research and development for client communications.

In addition to my love of learning, a practical incentive to keep going was continued professional development required by the actuarial profession: at least 100 hours every two years. Shortly after graduating from the University of Manitoba's Bachelor of Commerce program with Honours, I qualified as an actuary while working at Great-West Life in Winnipeg. I am also a Fellow of the Society of Actuaries (FSA) and Canadian Institute

of Actuaries (FCIA). When the international Chartered Enterprise Risk Analyst (CERA) designation was first offered in 2008, I became one of the first western actuaries to hold the CERA designation.

Volunteering contributes to my healthy lifestyle; I am currently the Chair of the Canadian Institute of Actuaries Enterprise Risk Management Committee (ERMAC) and was recently quoted in a CIA e-bulletin: "I come from a traditional path, through group insurance and pensions. There is a big difference between that work and ERMAC, because ERM is all inclusive and deals with all risks. The complexity makes it challenging and thereby quite interesting. In addition, the range of expertise required brings us a diverse cast of volunteers and working with them is very rewarding. You might say there is a good risk-reward trade-off."

As a breast cancer survivor, I am proud to now hold an MBA as well as my actuarial designations FCIA, FSA, and CERA. I continue to enjoy my work designing retiree programs for Johnson Inc. Achieving my MBA is only the latest milestone in a career that involved managing risk at an early stage. However, it was the life-threatening illness that gave me greater insights into the risks faced by individuals and the supports needed for recovery. My love of learning, shared with my daughter Andrea, is my joy and was an integral part of my healing.

### **Wanted:**

Your ideas, photos and quotes for the next newsletter!



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Senior Friendly™

## Senior Friendly™: Language Matters and Attitude is Everything

by Donna Durand

The **Senior Friendly™ Program gives you a filter:** One of the goals of the Senior Friendly™ Program is to give you ears to hear the language and eyes to observe that which does not raise the profile of senior citizens nor garner respect and consideration. For instance, the term “Loved Ones.” We question, why is everyone who needs extra care and support referred to as a loved one? In no other age group do we attach this label. Family and/or friends will suffice as not all relationships are loving and not all people are loveable. And then there is “Caregivers:” At what point does a partner or spouse become a caregiver? How does a person who loses the status of being a partner or spouse feel when they hear their partner being referred to as a caregiver? Does this imply that now due to their disease or age, they can no longer care about the other?

### **Misinformation or myth busting**

From the newly released, “Let’s Talk About Aging: Aging Well in Alberta,” a report by the Chief Medical Officer of Health, Chapter 4 Challenges of Aging: Things that Hinder states: “Our kids respect us, and our grandkids, but some people are abused by their grandkids, and that’s sad. I think that’s because of how we raised them.”

According to the Senior Friendly™ Program and Elder Abuse Awareness, we would identify this comment as a myth. It has a certain tone of victim blaming to it. In this report, elder abuse is defined as “any action or inaction that jeopardizes the health or well-being of an older adult.” Elder Abuse must be approached in the context of several implications, not just historical family dynamics: mental health issues, addictions, poverty, and criminality. Action on elder abuse outlines supporting the safety, security and dignity of seniors. The strategy

builds on the Government of Alberta’s existing, ongoing efforts in preventing family violence and bullying and on the policy directions set out in the Aging Population Policy Framework.

A few months ago, while attending a meeting for seniors, I heard unsettling comments from the hosts. One said, “No one wants to be a senior and no one wants to live in long term care.” I, for one, want to be a senior, and having worked and volunteered in long term care I would say I definitely want to be cared for by professionals should my health fail to the degree where I need others to take care of my daily needs. Ideally, long-term care has a home like environment, with a professional and appropriately staffed clinical care team, and is an extension of community where family and friends are welcome.

I have worked in faith based care facilities that aimed to keep the residents needs and wants at the center of the care. Such facilities far outshine the family home when the stimulation may be low and personal care is at a minimum because it is so challenging to deliver. A frail elderly or unwell person struggling to care for a frail elderly or unwell spouse, with minimal support through Home Care does not look like quality of life in my estimation. I challenge the statement that “all people want to remain in their homes.” Keeping a person with advanced dementia or care needs in their family home is not always realistic, safe, secure or dignified for all parties involved. I would say “people want to remain in their communities, with appropriate support” is a more accurately expressed goal for the general public as we age.

I also heard “all seniors need medication to be well” when discussing proposed changes to Seniors Drug Program. Some medications cause

significant illness and even death in the older population. When we advocate for universal coverage of medications, we need also to advocate for proper diagnosis, treatment and ongoing assessment of medication and plans.

Senior Friendly™ Program identifies that language matters and attitude is everything.

This bench, right, is located in St. Albert. It is an example of a Senior Friendly™ fixture, as it is built to be stable, provide rest, with handles to aid in sitting and standing.



Tales from the Koffee Klatch

## The Bag Man: A Tale of How Seniors Can Become Invisible

By Colsen

Hey, how are ya? Was talkin to George yesterday. He was tellin me what happened when Dolly had her heart operation this past winter.

I guess they was at the new fangled heart center in the city. He said the ICU rooms was bigger than a Wal-Mart men's room. I am told the staff were great. They looked after Dolly real well. The problem was George.

When they got to the hospital at 5:30 in the morning to check in, the nurses grabbed Dolly and run her off to a prep room. There stood George, alone, nobody told him where to go or what was happening. He saw this room with people sitting in it and assumed it was the waiting room. He sat and pulled out his reader and started reading his newspaper. Later, a nurse came and asked who he was and then took him to the room where Dolly was.



The surgeon was there and discussed what would happen. Then the nurse handed George two plastic bags. She said, "We are taking Dolly up for her operation, just follow me." Away she went, pushing Dolly's bed, moving at a good clip. Poor George. He doesn't walk so fast anymore. But he managed to keep up.

The bags? They held Dolly's clothes. And her purse. They get upstairs and the nurse says, "You go through that door and wait," and pushes Dolly through another door. "You can't come through here."

So George sits in the waiting room for hours. The surgeon came and told him all was well, and left. George went to where they said he should go to see Dolly, but they were still working on her and he had to wait. Later, he was let in to the ICU. They said Dolly was in 9 and pointed.

**Continued on the next page**

Tales from the Koffee Klatch, continued from page 21

George found Dolly and put the bags he was still looking after into the cupboard in her room.

Dolly was in ICU for four days. Then the nurse told George they needed the room and Dolly was being moved to another ICU on a different floor.

The nurse pushed Dolly along on her bed and George followed, carrying the bags. They got to the ICU and the room was much smaller and held two people. All was good. Dolly was being cared for and George put the bags under the counter in the room. By now he had taken Dolly's purse back to the hotel.

Dolly spent two days in this ICU. They told George they were moving Dolly "up to the ward". Two nurses this time, pushing Dolly's bed. Here comes George, carrying two large plastic bags, following along.

At the ward, they put Dolly in a private room. George put the bags into the cupboard. All was good. The next day George went for lunch in the cafeteria. When he came back to the ward, he looked in the room and there was a nurse washing the bed. NO DOLLY. His heart almost stopped.

Where was she? The nurse said they had moved her across the ward to another room. George looked in the cupboard, took the bags and went looking for Dolly. Dolly told him to not take his coat off as this was just a holding place while they prepared a room for her. Soon a nurse came. By this time Dolly's daughter, son-in-law and granddaughter were with them. So there they went, nurse pushing Dolly, the daughter and her family and George bringing up the rear. Yep, carrying the two bags.

This time Dolly was in a semi-private room but alone. That night they moved another patient in. She didn't speak English and was very ill. There was a lot of goings on with husband and doctors. Later that afternoon a nurse told George they were moving Dolly "upstairs." Sure enough, there

they went, nurse pushing Dolly's bed, Dolly's son and granddaughter and George with the two bags. Upstairs to a new room. Bags in the cupboard and all is well.

Dolly had been in hospital 8 days now. George had lost count of the rooms but he still knew where the bags were to be found. The next morning the doctor said Dolly could go home. She got dressed and was ready in a flash. The nurse came with a wheelchair and was soon taking her downstairs where Dolly's son was picking them up. Down to the street door and Dolly walks to the car, George close behind with the bags.

Is there a reason to this story? Yes. Not once did any of the nurses check to see if George had any problems keeping up. The bag man was invisible to them, yet so important to Dolly. Senior Friendly™? You tell me.

Oh and the bags. One sits in their kitchen, a receptacle for recycle bags. The other one waits for the next trip.

See ya round, eh!

I wish to thank the readers for their feedback on the Tales. It is nice to know I have an audience. Thank you. The stories are all true. I have changed names and some minor details to protect the persons involved. Colsen

The Senior Friendly™ Program is designed to help communities, businesses and organizations recognize the needs of seniors in order to provide optimum service.

Contact us today to learn more about becoming Senior Friendly™.



Working to improve the **quality of life** for seniors

## Where We Have Been Defines Where We Are Going

by Kristina Belyea

On a sunny afternoon in May, Mary Engelmann and Wanda Cree visited the Alberta Council on Aging to discuss the development of seniors interests groups within the province over the last four decades, as well as about the issues facing seniors today.

Mary and Wanda began their work with seniors in the early 1970s after starting their careers as social workers dealing with children. They both then transferred to Senior's Bureau of the Alberta Government, working with the ACA back when it was still entirely staffed by volunteers. Over the years, these organizations worked extensively together. Mary and Wanda described how the ACA was developed as a response to a newly asked societal question in the late 1960s about seniors' issues. Both women admit that, when they started their work with seniors, neither had much of an understanding about the issues and needs of seniors, reflecting the dearth of information at that time.

Mary became the first coordinator of SAGE, (Seniors Association of Greater Edmonton,) while Wanda helped start the Senior Friendly™ Program that the ACA continues to run. They published together several times over the years, including a paper for the Senior Citizens Secretariat for the Alberta Government on the coordination of long-term care.

In discussing the challenges that seniors face, Mary and Wanda spoke of the difficulty of navigating through the convoluted health care system. Additionally, we talked about the increase in privatization of care facilities and the growing anxiety that for-profit facilities may compromise the quality of care in pursuit of financial gain.



As for the future, both women expressed the conviction that the role of the Alberta Council on Aging should be, as it has historically been, one of advising government on the needs and concerns of seniors. They confirmed that the Senior Friendly™ program is a good way to continue to educate the general public about the importance of being empathetic to the needs of seniors.

As we chatted over cheesecake and coffee, it was clear that Mary and Wanda possess a great deal of experience and knowledge in the area of advocacy.

Today Mary and Wanda continue to be concerned with seniors' issues, taking part in the Alberta Association on Gerontology. They are close with their families, and enjoy various hobbies: Wanda enjoys reading and walking, while Mary is taking piano lessons. In the meantime, the ACA continues to strive to represent seniors by continuing to educate others about the valuable contribution that seniors make to all communities.

"Summer afternoon—summer afternoon; to me those have always been the two most beautiful words in the English language."

-Henry James





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