

ACA News

Alberta Council on Aging

An Independent Non-Profit Charitable Organization Since 1967

Vol. 45 No. 4

Winter 2012/13



**It's time to renew
your membership
see page 23**

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>>> Governance

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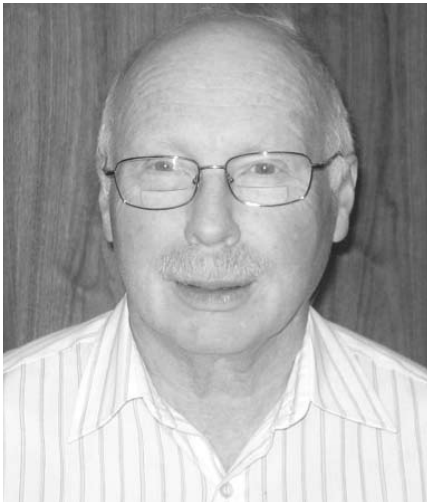
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1-888-423-9666
or 780-423-7781

Save the date:

Annual General Meeting,
June 11, 2013, Daysland

>>> President's Report

Grey Matters, politicians and projects



Gary Pool

Alberta Council on Aging (ACA) has been involved in three activities co-ordinated with other Seniors serving organizations which I will talk about in this issue. These three activities are: the Grey Matters Conference held in Edmonton in September, a meeting between the Seniors Task Force (co-ordinated through Public Interest Alberta) and Fred Horne, Minister of Health and Wellness and George VanderBurg, Associate Minister of Seniors, held in early October and a pilot project on providing "Integrated Services for Seniors."

Grey Matters conference successful

ACA was one of the co-sponsors of this conference held in Edmonton on Sept. 13 and 14. In addition to being a co-sponsor we also ran a session on Senior Friendly™, one of our programs developed between 15 and 20 years ago. This session was

well attended and provided an update of our plans on Senior Friendly™ and some insights on the relationship between Senior Friendly™ and the Age Friendly communities initiative (a World Health Organization initiative). Following this session, we are seeing a renewed interest by groups and communities in the Senior Friendly™ tool. Reinvigorating Senior Friendly™ is one of our major goals for 2012-13.

Meeting with Ministers Fred Horne and George VanderBurg

We have been a participant in the "Seniors Task Force (STF)" an effort co-ordinated by Public Interest Alberta. About 15 other Seniors groups and Seniors serving organizations are also members of this task force.

On Oct. 5, we met as a group with Ministers Fred Horne and George VanderBurg. The Seniors Task Force raised five issues that were supported by all participants.

The five issues were:

- 1) The shortage of long-term care spaces in Alberta;
- 2) The concept of an Independent Seniors Advocate;
- 3) Adequate staffing levels in Seniors' care facilities;
- 4) The need for more accessible and affordable Home Care; and
- 5) The future direction of Seniors' care in Alberta.

There was discussion on the individual issues, for clarification. We do expect some follow-up and potentially future meetings although nothing specific is in place yet.

Planning for Integrated Services

In the last newsletter I referred to the title "Supporting George and Betty: An Integrated Management Strategy for Seniors Supports, Housing and Care." The funding has now been received from Alberta Health for Phase 1 of this project.

Phase I is Planning for Integrated Services for Alberta. A request for Expressions of Interest was sent out in early October. Many high quality replies were received and as of early November three pilot sites have been chosen. The groups chosen are: The Way In Network Calgary, Kneehill County (southeast of Red Deer) and a partnership between Edson, Hinton, Evansburg and Yellowhead County. A kickoff meeting with the three successful groups is planned for later in November. Phase 1 is expected to be completed in the second quarter of 2013.

New website ready

I am pleased to announce the new website for Alberta Council on Aging will be going live on Dec. 1. I will be assisting with the upcoming casino (Feb. 12-13) and look forward to hearing from others who would like to help as well. The farther reaching goal of planning the 50th Anniversary of ACA is beginning to take shape. This is also a project you may wish to join in on.

Wishing you a very Merry Christmas and health and happiness in the new year.

Gary Pool

>>> Executive Director's Report

Winter potluck issue offers feast of ideas

When we thought about a theme for this newsletter, it seemed our submissions and interests were all over the map. So... if we were at the autumn Thanksgiving table we would call this a cornucopia newsletter. For many of us, though, the white fluff we frolic in, begrudge, or simply run away from brings us to a new season. And in the darkest, coldest night, we take refuge in the kindness of strangers and the warm embraces of family and friends in the celebrations of the season.

This brings us to the theme then... the Christmas potluck winter issue. If ideas were food, there are many to digest with this issue.

The Alberta Council on Aging serves Seniors, and works to improve the quality of life for Seniors in Alberta and across Canada regardless of political, economic, social, or cultural persuasion. Representation for this group can be very challenging in that the best effort to improve the quality of life for Seniors will come through a unified voice.

As members, directors, and employees, how in the world do we come to agreement, especially when our ideologies are in opposition, or we ourselves are conflicted as to what is "right."

One way we will get there is by opening the door to conversations, some that are very difficult to have. Elder abuse, poverty, ageism, fraud, quality of care, public health care versus privatized health care, ero-

sion of public health, erosion of the middle class are all equally important issues. We need to get the power issues on the table.

In the Christmas potluck winter issue we feature our regional directors as usual as well as several other well respected authors, all whom are passionate about quality of life for seniors. From Dolores Ewan, a Saskatchewan author in her eighties, committed to life-long learning, to Noel Somerville, chair of the Public Interest Alberta Seniors Task Force to Connie-Marie Riedlhuber, a Life Designer and a director of bankruptcy trustees, we welcome the perspectives that will help us to educate ourselves on the topics at hand and perhaps nudge the Alberta Council on Aging's thousands of members to the direction of "one voice."

Recently I read an article by an editor of an advocacy magazine. It centred on the topic of bullying. The author was challenging the readers to make sure they speak out about bullying. The remarkable thing was that she was witnessing her young grandson being bullied by his coach and said nothing. She surmised that when it was sign-up time, and her grandson decided not to take the class, that was his statement. We need to speak out, directly and firmly. Awareness and education are the precursors to change for the better.

In the late '90s, the Alberta Council on Aging developed a brilliant program — Senior Friendly™. My task has been to revise and streamline the



Donna Durand

training program. As I took careful steps toward this, I marvelled at how significant it is in terms of the challenges people face as we age. I began to see the program as a type of filter for responding to the array of challenges.

We believe the Senior Friendly™ program will help educate government, Seniors and the general public on how to go about honouring the oldest members of our society, thereby honouring all.

Just as a great big box under the Christmas tree may contain a tiny set of precious earrings or tie clip, the Senior Friendly™ program has had many edits, loads of support materials and business plans, contains a significant treasure... we do not hurt that which we love.

As for the Alberta Council on Aging, I would think what we might want for Christmas is for this same nugget of well-being to be found in all policies related to Seniors.

May we age well. Have a wonderful season of celebration,

Donna

It is time to renew your membership with the Alberta Council on Aging

Give the Gift of Membership: Consider an Alberta Council on Aging gift membership for the upcoming Holiday Season and enter to WIN! *

Refer a Family Member or a Friend: You and your friend or family member will be entered in a draw to win a unique gift tailored just to you!

* Your membership must be valid for 2012 to enter. The person you referred must join before Jan. 15, 2013. The draw will take place on Jan. 18, 2013.



Renewal is easy: Simply call our office or send us a cheque in the mail. You may also fax the application form, which can either be found in this newsletter or be downloaded from our website: www.acaging.ca

Membership fees

Household membership: \$22

Life membership: \$250

Organizational membership: \$60

Corporate membership: \$200

Membership with the Alberta Council on Aging runs from Jan. 1 to Dec..31 each year.

Why join Alberta Council on Aging? Since 1967, Alberta Council on Aging has been working to improve the quality of life for Seniors by educating government, Seniors and the general public. The Alberta Council on Aging is a respected, provincewide non-profit organization, often invited to respond to current issues affecting Seniors. The Alberta Council on Aging promotes solutions by offering programs such as Senior Friendly™, Elder Abuse Awareness and Fraud Prevention. In our organization, every voice counts.

Help us represent you. Sign up and encourage others to do so.

Please see the renewal form on Page 23

This is a team. We're trying to go to the moon. If you can't put someone up, please don't pull them down.

— Kobi Yamada

Either we're pulling together or we're pulling apart. There's really no in-between.

— NASA motto

Keys to happiness

Write poetry

Eat good food

Find and keep one or two good friends

Spend some time with family

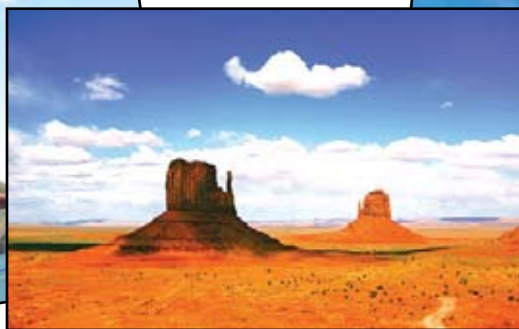
Exercise in a fun way

Laugh and cry

Believe in something greater than yourself

Know that you are unique and so is the next guy

— Jesse Anderson, 28



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Wherever you escape to this winter, get emergency medical travel coverage you can count on from Alberta Blue Cross. Enjoy a stress-free vacation knowing that you have protection against the high cost of unexpected illness, accident or injury.

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>>> At the Wheel

Let's talk about driving...

Broaching the subject of changes to ability involves sensitivity

By Donna Durand

Rather than saying a driver is at risk because he or she is older, which in itself is not a true statement, we would say a person is “medically at risk.” This way the emphasis is going to be on the behaviour, the disease and not the person.

When broaching the subject about someone else's driving ability, perhaps it would be wise to have a discussion about the medical condition and how it impacts on the ability to drive well. Please do have this discussion in private. When discussion is in order, do not push your timelines ... wait ... there will always be a coachable teachable moment.

Have this conversation over time. Do not think all will be accomplished in one hour on any given day.

Focus on accomplishment in the past, yet work to bring the conversation to the present day situation.

Don't people want to end our career on a high note? . Begin to discuss alternate means of transportation. If they are limited, a more sophisticated plan may need to be developed. For instance, people who say they will help, will. Create a calendar of events and beside the event place the name of the proposed helper/driver.

Check in ... how is the person feeling? What are their plans? Suggestions?

Recognize that if a person is having challenges with their short term memory, they may not recall the conversation. Always demonstrate respect for the person.

Here is a conversation opener ... “I have always appreciated you are a straight shooter. Can I be straight with you?”

What about planning ahead as you do with your estate, will and personal directive? You can draw up a document today that gives your personal agent the right to revoke driving privileges if and when the time comes.



Visit soon!

We have a new website:

www.acaging.ca

>>> Regional Reports

REGION 1: Northeast

New \$160M health complex benefit to High Prairie community

Winter has arrived early, but with it has come several announcements from our government regarding health care in this zone. Wayne Drysdale, Minister of Infrastructure, revealed plans for a new larger High Prairie Health Complex. This facility will be 16,000 square metres, and is planned to cost \$160 million, a 78 per cent increase from the original plan and budget.

The new complex will include 30 acute care beds, 67 continuing care beds, renal dialysis and chemotherapy services as the need is demonstrated. As well, the complex will include an emergency department, acute care, outpatient services, in patient surgery and day surgery, medical clinics and primary care services.

Aboriginal health services, obstetrics, addiction and mental health, home care, public health including chronic disease, child development, health promotion, diagnostic imaging and laboratory services are also part of the plans. These services will be valued by all sectors of the population, but especially Seniors, as they will be able to have their health care needs met in their own community.

Respectfully submitted,
Yvonne Dickson, Director Region 1

REGION 3: West Central

Tips to avoid fraud

Members of Region 3 are encouraged to let Alberta Council on Aging know how your centres are doing, what you do to raise funds, and what issues surrounding Seniors are of concern to your groups. Also, if you have any questions or comments on our programs, please let us know. If you would like to write a letter or story for the newsletter, please send them to the ACA office.

Here are some tips on keeping ahead of fraud artists.

- Never buy anything over the phone, unless you initiate the call.
- Never make a buying decision based on emotions. Don't let a salesperson convince you buy because "it's for the kids."

- Never make a decision to buy at the time of the sales pitch. Allow some time to think about it before you decide.

- Before making a charitable donation, find out how much of the money actually goes to the charity. Ask for advice from a friend or relative, if you are unsure, before you decide what to do.

- If in doubt, check it out. Remember, it is OK to say NO. Just say NO!

As it is everyone's busy season, I wish everyone a happy, safe and healthy holiday season.

Respectfully submitted,
Diane Walker, Director Region 3

REGION 5: Central Alberta

Fall season a time of many projects

After assisting with the Seniors' Week pancake breakfast in early June, we had a quiet summer and then added an extra meeting in September to have a good start in the fall.

At that meeting we had a power point presentation from Roy Koshy, Manager for Seniors in the Central Zone of Alberta Health Services, placement officer Jodi Barrett and Marie Rusk of Red Deer Home Care. The topic centred on home care in our area. There was a concern raised about how the services were being evaluated and it seems this issue requires further study.

At our October annual general meeting, the new Board was nominated and positions were finalized at the Board meeting of Nov. 6. Our President is Ron Rose, Vice President is Doug Janssen, Secretary is Fran Lees and Treasurer is Bev Hanes. Past President will be Viggo Nielsen. Other Board Directors are: Michael O'Hanlon (on a leave of absence), Shirley Thomas, Glenna Thompson, Jim Saltvold, Margaret Day and Margie Lunt. A sincere welcome goes to Monica Morrison who has joined the Board for a two-year term.

Our program following the AGM included a presentation on Decluttering Your House by Heather Christensen and a presentation by Dawna Morey on the Alberta Generations Project. This involves pairing Seniors who can use assistance or company in their homes with students of the Red Deer College who will share their home during the school term.

>>> Regional Reports

At our Nov. 6 Board meeting, Sam Denhaan provided a review of the PIA's Senior Task Force meeting with Ministers Fred Horne and George VanderBurg on Oct. 3. Prior to the meeting, it was agreed by the task force to limit the discussion to the following priorities: the shortage of long-term care spaces in Alberta, the concept of having an independent Seniors Advocate answerable to the Legislature, adequate staffing levels in Seniors' care facilities, the need for more accessible and affordable home care and finally the future direction of Seniors' care in Alberta. These continue to be areas of concern for our members throughout the province.

We did not have enough time to discuss all items on our agenda at the Nov. 6 meeting but will be meeting again soon to determine our focus for the coming year.

Respectfully submitted,
Bev Hanes, Director Region 5

REGION 6: Calgary Area

Former Director remembered

Region 6 regrets the loss of one of the greatest supporters of Alberta Council on Aging. Noreen Mahoney passed away Nov. 2, 2012. Noreen had been president of Region 6, providing leadership for many years. She supported the Alberta Council on Aging during some of its most difficult days by suggesting a Life Membership program as a way of providing finances to help maintain Alberta Council on Aging's existence. Her contribution of time and wisdom is much appreciated by the Alberta Council on Aging provincially and locally.

Respectfully submitted,
Frank Hoebarth, Director Region 6

REGION 7: Southwest

Lethbridge bus service improves

Alberta Council on Aging information handbook on Elder Abuse has been distributed to the Senior Centres in Lethbridge. A presentation on Elder Abuse was offered to the City of Lethbridge staff. Go Friendly Transportation Services, out of the Norwood Senior Centre is running a pilot project with Lethbridge City

transportation. They have added 2 buses with the hopes of making the buses more timely and user friendly.

Respectfully submitted,
Murray Campbell, Director Region 7

REGION 9: East Central

On the road with ACA message

I attended the Annual General Meeting in Grande Prairie as reported in the last issue. It was my first annual meeting and I learned many things. I learned so much that I have talked to the Region 9 executive and we are making a bid for the 2013 Annual General Meeting to be held in Daysland.

As summer was winding down, I finally sent a letter to all the Senior centres in the Region 9 area. In this letter, I introduced myself and invited the centres to invite me to speak to them about Alberta Council on Aging.

I have had 6 responses to date and have visited 5. The response has been good, the largest group being 40. A questionnaire on Seniors' concerns was distributed at all meetings in the Region. The collated data has been sent in for inclusion in our "Talking Points" document the board of directors is developing.

The Region held its semi-annual meeting in Willingdon on Oct. 16th. At the business meeting it was decided to disband the Regions chapters as being of no value.

Volunteers are being sought for the ACA Casino nights in Edmonton at the Yellowhead Casino for Feb. 12-13, 2013. We have three volunteers so far, but need more.

In the afternoon, Donna Durand and I launched into an ACA Senior Friendly™ presentation. The afternoon was filled with laughs, chuckles and fun.

Contact has been arranged to talk to the Downtown Business Association of Wainwright regarding Senior Friendly™.

I have also been asked to contact one of the Wainwright Councillors regarding the Senior Friendly™.

I would love to hear from more Senior Centres in the region. Your voice is important to the Alberta Council on Aging and I will ensure you are heard.

Respectfully submitted,
Frederick Olsen, Director Region 9

>>> Fraud alert

Tips for computer security

By Jeff Mayer

1. Do not visit shady looking web sites.
2. Do not click on links in pop-up windows. Even if they tell you that your computer is infected or has a problem that you must fix immediately! It's a scam.

3. Do not click on links in emails. If you really wish to visit the site shown, type it in the address bar of your web browser by hand.

4. Do not respond to spam (junk email) — just delete it. If you respond, then you are telling the spammer that he has reached a valid email address.

5. Do not respond to or click on links in emails that look exactly like email from your bank, credit card company, retail stores, insurance companies, etc. This is called phishing. Phishing is the act of sending an email to a user falsely claiming to be a legitimate enterprise.

6. Do not open attachments in emails, even from friends. Certain viruses can access someone's address book and copy the email addresses found there.

Then they can send you email that looks exactly

like it came from your Aunt Tilly using a technique called address spoofing.

7. Do not use your home or primary email address to fill out forms or subscribe to services on the Internet. Get a free email account from Google or Yahoo for these purposes.

8. Shop online from reputable companies only. It's safe to use your credit card to pay for purchases online at any store as long as when you check out, you see a little gold lock in the lower right corner of your browser. This means that the transaction is secure. If you don't see this lock do not continue with the purchase! The lock is not just a picture. Click on it to see details of the site's security.

9. Do not give out personal information such as bank account numbers or credit card numbers, unless you're making a secure purchase.

10. Do not respond to emails from foreign governments (such as Nigeria) asking you to help them recover millions of dollars. The list of unfortunate souls who have lost their life savings to this scam is very long.

Thank you is in order....

* Larry, for helpfulness with the ongoing project of sorting out the office

* Murray, for sharing your photos

* Delores, for sharing your poetry

* Board of Directors, for your time and commitment to Alberta Council on Aging

* Betty, Kathie and Beth
for your huge contribution to the
Senior Friendly™ program



In appreciation of service

By Gary Pool

Over the past several months, members who have been active in the ongoing management of the Alberta Council on Aging have stepped down from their roles. I would like to take this opportunity to thank each of them personally and on behalf of the Board for their efforts at the provincial level and all the work they have done for their individual regions. The individuals are Edith Read of Region 2, Norm Bezanson of Region 4 and Beth Turner of Region 8.

Edith Read, Region 2

Edith was an active executive member of Region 2 (Northeast Alberta) as well as representing that area as a director on the Provincial Group. She chaired the Health Committee of ACA for a period and was an active member of the Policy Advisory Committee. In addition she provided a liaison between the ACA and ARTA (Alberta Retired Teachers Association)

Edith served in the positions of President, Vice-President and Secretary. During her tenure, Region 2 was successful in acquiring a casino date that raised sufficient funds to allow increased activity in the area. The executive used these funds to attend meetings in about 10 different centres ranging from Fort McMurray to Athabasca to Elk Point. Each centre raised some unique issues and there were also a number of common issues raised.

One of the common issues was the implementation of the "21-Day Menu" by Alberta Health. This was a major

concern in rural areas across the province until the recent announcement that publicly owned long-term care centres would return to on-site preparation of food. Alberta Council on Aging was one of many groups that raised this issue with legislators prior to that announcement.

Edith was the prime and most vocal ACA spokesperson during this outcry. When a local radio station or newspaper needed information we turned to Edith to respond to media.

Norm Bezanson, Region 4

Norm was a pillar of strength in the Edmonton Region (Region 4) and for the ACA office over a period of about 20 years. He provided a variety of support for the main office including help in recruiting volunteers for various projects, as a worker on casinos, offering ideas and support on fundraising strategies, and assisting with ACA booths at various functions. He was especially valuable when minor emergencies occurred. During 2010 and 2011 when the ACA office experienced some turmoil Norm was a source of strength and ran the office for short periods of time.

Beth Turner, Region 8

Beth was the ACA Director of Region 8 (Medicine Hat) for 3 years. During this period she was a Board member and active in her local area on Elder Abuse education and Senior Friendly™ activities. She was a part of the Senior Friendly™ steering committee which helped us revitalize the program.

2017 – 50 years of Alberta Council on Aging

In 2017, the Alberta Council on Aging will be celebrating its 50th Anniversary.

Today, we are asking our members for their input and help.

Do you have stories about ACA's early years?

Were you a member of the board or do you have stories about past events and meetings?

Do you have pictures from early events you would like to share?

Do you have copies of old newsletters prior to 1984?

We are trying to gather as much information as early as possible and would appreciate your help.

Please give us a call, email, fax or write to us with your stories.

Thank you.

Welcoming a new Senior Friendly™ attitude

Why does a business seek Senior Friendly™ designation?

This program helps businesses recognize the myths about Seniors and to provide services in a way that address the needs of our aging population.

Components of the process will include: Senior Friendly™ training, checklist, action plan and designation.



Why is it important to become Senior Friendly™?

The Future Senior Population: Today, 14% of Canadians are Seniors (over 65 years of age). By 2021, this number will reach 22%.

Benefits for businesses

- Staff trained to communicate effectively and appropriately
- Staff help create and maintain safe and accessible premises, sidewalks and parking lots
- Staff alert to Seniors' specific needs
- Staff able to identify and respond to scams directed at Seniors
- Staff rewarded by more satisfied customers



Participants at the Senior Friendly™ workshop at the Golden Circle, Red Deer

Benefits for communities

- Safe and secure environments
- Accessible facilities and businesses
- Services and programs that reflect the needs of all citizens
- Socialization and recreational opportunities for all people
- Services that allow Seniors to remain in their communities and attract new citizens as well

Senior Friendly™ Business Quick Guide

A senior friendly, age-friendly business is a people friendly business

Environment – Outside and In

- ✓ Accessible location
- ✓ Parking close to building
- ✓ Safe sidewalks with level, proper grade
- ✓ Barrier free outside entrance and interior
- ✓ Available seating: sturdy chair/bench with arms- offer a rest stop

- ✓ Door opens easily
- ✓ Safe non slip, no glare floor
- ✓ Accessible, easy to find washroom with convenient fixtures and reduced hot water temperature
- ✓ Acoustically absorbent with minimal background noise or echo
- ✓ Proper lighting: reduce shadows
- ✓ Generous signage/large font/dark print on light background
- ✓ Easy to use telephones
- ✓ Offer services during the day
- ✓ Have product/objects within reach

Server has Senior Friendly™ approach

By Donna Durand

A few weeks ago, three of us decided to have brunch after church. In the group was one of my friends: a brilliant author in her eighties who has a few dietary challenges.

And she has some challenges hearing. And she has slowed down a bit when making decisions, such as how to have her eggs, you know, the important decisions when ordering brunch.

Kyle, our server, greeted us like long lost friends. We had never met before so this wasn't the case. He wasn't phony about the greeting, he was warm and sincere. Welcoming. "Here you are and I am going to take care of you."



He helped my indecisive friend by listening, smiling, agreeing with her each time she changed her mind. When we were leaving she asked for a banana.

"But of course," and Kyle went and got a banana, handed it to my friend like a bouquet of flowers and acted as if this was the most usual request upon parting from a meal.

After I praised Kyle for being Senior Friendly™ (and for being the No. 1 server I have ever encountered, especially in the presence of a potentially rather difficult customer), I asked, why do you to serve in the way you do?



Kyle Macpherson at Cora's
Breakfast and Lunch in Sherwood Park

Kyle seemed pleased to be asked and shared a bit of his story. He told us it was his grandmother who made him aware of others who have challenges. He learned how to be of help.

We wish Kyle much success in his life.

Already, he has made a difference in the lives of others!

- ✓ Familiarize yourself with assistive devices such as grip pens, walkers, hearing aids
- ✓ Functional sprinklers, smoke, gas detectors

Communication is Key

- ✓ Be welcoming. Have an ambassador on hand to help, take articles to vehicle or bus, call a taxi
- ✓ Speak normally and clearly using a calm voice
- ✓ Attitude is everything: it is better to be kind than right!
- ✓ Give clear and accurate directions.
- ✓ Let low vision customers know when you

leave

- ✓ Count change back on purchase

Product

- ✓ Reduce packaging when possible
- ✓ Food is fresh and safe dated
- ✓ Clear instruction for storage and preparation
- ✓ Offer useable product that makes life easier
- ✓ Be consistent in placement of items
- ✓ Find out what your customers want: invite feedback
- ✓ **Make things easy to see, hear, and understand.**

>>> ACA Perspective

Talking points on vital issues strengthen 'one voice'

In order to strengthen the “one voice” of Alberta Council on Aging (ACA), the Board of Directors recently voted on accepting the following as guidelines for discussion. Many thanks to Frank Hoebarth, Director of Region 6 for compilation of the information.

Housing:

- Seniors desire to reside in a place appropriate to their circumstances
- in order to maintain themselves in appropriate circumstances, community supports and health services must be available to all Seniors
- living environments such as outdoor spaces and buildings must support Seniors to maintain themselves in the community

Financial:

- Seniors need to have adequate financial resources to meet their needs
- affordability of housing, transportation, health and ability to maintain oneself in the community are major concern for Seniors
- current supports for Seniors are often based on a means tests which looks at income but fails to

consider other expenses that may be incurred

- current means tests often find a basis in Statistics Canada general review of national costs of living at times adjusted for Alberta. Generally, the adjustments are used for all Albertans rather than specified on an individual or local community level. ACA recommends that needs testing be used to complement current means tests and be related to individual needs

Continuing Care:

- continuing care services for Albertans often impose significant costs for Seniors. ACA supports efforts to make continuing care services that are clearly and consistently defined and affordable for all Seniors

Transportation:

- an equal access to services, especially in the case of health and special needs, often require Seniors in rural areas to travel to receive services. ACA recommends that the provincial government undertake a review as how transportation in both rural and urban areas can be improved

Congratulations

.....to Alberta Council on Aging past president Sid Wallace on the honour of receiving the Jubilee Medal during this jubilee year in the reign of Queen Elizabeth II.

Your views matter

Send your comments and letters to:

ACA News

Box 9 — 11808 St. Albert Trail,
Edmonton AB, T5L 4G4.

Fax: (780) 425-9246

info@acaging.ca

>>> In celebration of Seniors



With more Albertans living longer, there are a growing number of families with more than one generation of Seniors, such as Annis Kerr and her daughter Linda Prior of Red Deer. They typify the span of years of being a Senior from the young Senior to the older Senior, and likely they have different needs and wants. A long and healthy Senior life may incorporate a third of our lifetime.

Words to age (well) by

You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream.
— C.S. Lewis

Grow old along with me, the best is yet to be.
— Robert Browning

A comfortable old age is the reward of a well-spent youth. Instead of its bringing sad and melancholy prospects of decay, it would give us hopes of eternal youth in a better world.
— Lydia M. Child

People are always asking me when I'm going to retire. Why should I? I've got it two ways - I'm still making movies, and I'm a senior citizen, so I can see myself at half price.
— George F. Burns

Sure I'm for helping the elderly. I'm going to be old myself someday.
— Lilian Carter

To be seventy years young is sometimes far more cheerful and hopeful than to be forty years old.
— Oliver Wendell Holmes

>>> Finances

Ways to avoid being squeezed by debt

A growing number of Seniors approaching retirement age are still in debt. Changes in their income and unsteady financial markets leave some Seniors overwhelmed and unable to manage financially.

The financial stress that many Seniors or near-Seniors face is evidenced by alarming insolvency statistics, according to the Current State of Family Finances, published by the Vanier Institute of the Family, a respected Ottawa-based research organization.

The total number of Canadian personal insolvencies (bankruptcies and proposals) fell by 11 per cent in 2010. The bad news was that the number of insolvencies for those aged 55 to 64 fell by only four per cent; worse yet, for Canadians 65 years and older, insolvencies actually increased by six per cent.

In fact, the insolvency rate for all Canadians over 55 has been on a fairly consistent upward trend over the last 20 years. From 1990 to 2010, the rate for those aged 55 to 64 jumped by almost 600 per cent, while Seniors aged 65 and over were more than 17 times more likely to become insolvent in 2010 than they were in 1990.

Unfortunately, many Seniors make their situations worse than they have to be. For example, since 2008, RRSPs and RRIFs (Registered Retirement Savings Plans and Registered Retirement Income Funds) have been exempt from bankruptcy proceedings under federal law.

However, many Seniors are not aware of the new rules, and by the time they finally meet a trustee to look at the options of proposals or bankruptcy, they have already cashed out their RRSPs and RRIFs in an attempt to pay their debts.

The protection of these registered funds was enacted by the government to allow the individual and their spouse the financial means to care for themselves in retirement.

The loss of a life partner is often the event that leads Seniors into financial difficulties. Their income is usually reduced, even though fixed monthly costs such as rent and utilities remain the same. Husbands and wives tend to leave paying the bills to one or the other, so over time the habit of one spouse taking care of everything leads

to the other lacking the desire or knowledge to manage the household finances.

The financial stress that many families face when their aging parents are unable to meet their financial obligations is also a concern. In my own family, we chose to keep my parents in their own home when my mother required 24-hour care and there were costs associated with that care.

Keeping my parents in their home resulted in increased costs due to personal care and general services: i.e. lawn upkeep, snow removal and maintenance costs. They were on low fixed incomes, so a lot of the extra help they needed we provided or paid for directly. Many families cannot provide that financial assistance or daily assistance, especially when they do not live in the same area.

If Seniors don't understand their financial responsibilities, then families need to learn about them, ask questions, and identify someone in the family or someone with financial knowledge and experience that family members can trust. So much information today comes via the Internet and automated phone systems that Seniors cannot begin to cope with or manage.

When Seniors are faced with debt problems they cannot manage, it is not always because they have failed to make good decisions financially; often they did not understand what was offered.

As we grow older we may experience financial difficulties. Seniors can make their life easier by knowing where they are financially and gaining family support when they need to. It is also important that families talk openly about financial needs and living arrangements. A little bit of help from family can go a long way to ensuring financial health and an improved quality of life.

Connie-Marie Riedlhuber is a Life Designer and Director of Support Services for Bromwich & Smith Inc., Proposal Administrators, Trustees in Bankruptcy



>>> Tips

Insuring a vacant home

Most people know to check with their insurance provider if they're going away on extended vacation. But what about when you're vacating a property with no plans to return, such as when you're moving to another home? Many people are unaware that vacant properties are insured much differently than occupied ones.

So what exactly is vacancy and how does it affect your insurance coverage?

Many insurance policies in Canada define vacancy as the circumstance where the occupants of a home have moved out with no intention of returning and no new occupant has taken up residence. It is important to note that this holds true regardless of whether there are still furnishings in the dwelling.

In the case of a newly constructed house, it would be deemed vacant if no occupant has yet taken up residence. The term "vacant" in an insurance policy does not apply to a home that is unoccupied while the owners are away on a vacation or business trip.

For periods up to 30 days:

As soon as a home is vacant, certain coverages (if currently part of the policy) are removed. These typically include:

- Water
- Vandalism or malicious acts
- Glass breakage
- Fuel escape
- Sewer back-up

After 30 days:

Once a home has been vacant for more than 30 consecutive days, there is no coverage for any damage unless a vacancy permit is granted. A vacancy permit acknowledges that the insurer is aware that the home is vacant and is willing to extend the standard 30-day vacancy limitation. When a vacancy permit is provided, there are usually additional reductions in coverage after 30 days, such as theft and guaranteed replacement cost, but basic coverages for such things as fire, lightning, explosion and wind continue.

Protect your vacant property:

Vacant houses make easy targets for burglars and vandals, and are also more at risk of water and fire damage. Take precautions to eliminate or reduce such risks.

- Consider a house sitter or renter who can occupy the home until it can be sold.
- Consider installing a monitored alarm system.
- Ensure that lawns are mowed in the summer, and that driveways and sidewalks are cleared in the winter.

It is always a good idea to check with your insurer and inform them of any changes that may affect your policy. That way, you can continue to have the peace of mind that your property is suitably insured in any situation.



Testing for radon in the home reduces health risk

OTTAWA / Recent research by Health Canada estimates that 16 per cent of lung cancer deaths among Canadians are attributable to indoor radon exposure, making radon gas the second leading cause of lung cancer after tobacco smoking. The good news is that it is easy to reduce the risk.

"November is Lung Cancer Awareness Month and an opportunity to raise awareness of this significant, but relatively unknown, health risk," said the Leona Aglukkaq, Minister of Health.

"Health Canada is encouraging all Canadians to conduct a simple test to measure radon levels in their home and to take steps to reduce exposure."

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas in the ground that can't be seen, smelled or tasted. It can get into the home undetected through cracks in the foundation or gaps around pipes.

For more information, go to Health Canada's website.

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/index-eng.php>

>>> Inspiration

AND IF then
i flare like phoenix blazing
in rebirth like once before sphering in a star
i flamed all silent night. burned and with
blood dust made seed in pregnant oceans of here time
flowing into sea rising from infinity.

then will my essence take a form
once more.

sometimes upon the lip of greening
grass
or in feathered throat of bird
lilting life
or silvered fins of fish flashing
in a stream
or gentle forest doe nourishing

her young
or embryo of child
unfurling in a womb.

matter is not lost
but only grows rechanged .

even if i lie quiet as a stone
some day i shall refire
as diamond blaze beyond
our milky way
cometing in light spinning a thread
between galaxies far and

back
to touch this planet jewel



this matter of my heart.

and burn in cyclical exchange
and change
and change
and change

excepting for my core.

excepting for my core
my essence shall remain
at one
with love and life.

then as now
I AM.

By dolores ewen

Merry Christmas
and a very Happy New Year

Alberta Council on Aging Board of Directors and Staff



>>> Trailblazers

Sharing your stories

By Susan Quinlan

Having reported for a newspaper for the past several years, I've had the pleasure of meeting a number of interesting Seniors who in one way or another have blazed interesting paths to benefit their communities, or the larger region in which they live.

There was Edgar Corbiere of St. Paul, who founded Haying in the 30's. Everyone attending that annual event finds himself either helping out with a horse powered threshing operation or observing demonstrations of old-fashioned ice cream making through to sheep shearing with actual shears. There's even a traditional hoedown held during the three-day event. But the overall goal of Haying in the 30's is raising money for those fighting cancer, and every last dime goes directly to that cause.

There's also Bill Dunn's story to tell. A retired rancher with a penchant for western history, Bill was passed the wagon wheel, so to speak, and now spends his time erecting these markers along the historic Macleod Trail. Yes, it's just like Calgary's namesake which we've likely all driven down, but it turns out the original Macleod Trail was one that the bull trains used a century ago, bringing supplies north from Fort Benton, Montana, to this province's earliest residents. Thanks to Bill's efforts and those of the volunteers that assist him, 17 wagon wheel markers have now been placed along the original trail..



Bill Dunn, a retired rancher, displays one of the wagon wheels marking the original Macleod Trail outside of Stavely.

So I know about Edgar and Bill, but I'm certain there are many other trailblazers out there. I'd like to speak to everyone from the Senior who regularly participates in the Alberta Senior Games through to groups like the Spring Point Community Society, who raised funds from fellow farmers in their region to send to rural folk who experienced losses during the Slave Lake fire. Turns out those up north helped the Spring Point Community Society, when the latter group experienced terrific losses from grass fires in the late 1990s.

There are others as well with stories to tell ... like an elderly gent in his '90s, and his daughter, a widow

in her '60s, who spend their days knitting lap blankets they then donate to their local hospital. I've been to their home, and it's often potatoes for lunch and the same for supper, yet they find the money for yarn and have no intention of calling it quits.

These Seniors are all contributing to their communities, through individual accomplishments and group efforts, and those are the stories I'm looking for. My goal is to shine a light on Seniors' ongoing contributions, perhaps showing the rest of us the value they place on community and the importance of keeping community spirit alive.

If you are a Senior or know a Senior with a story to tell, get in touch with me by phone, e-mail or snail mail. My plan is to gather these stories and publish them in a single collection, made available to museums, tourist information kiosks, Seniors' centres, etc. throughout Alberta for a nominal fee.

I'd like to hear from those interested before the end of January 2013.

To cast the widest net possible, I'd appreciate your sharing this article with others. Perhaps you wouldn't mind photocopying it and placing it on the bulletin board at your local Seniors' centre, church or grocery store.

Hope to hear from you soon!

Susan Quinlan

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What's the fix for Seniors' care?

People close to the Seniors' care system know that it isn't working very well. The chronic shortage of long-term (nursing home) care beds has not been addressed. Home care is scarce, hard to access, and often not reliable. Care facilities are frequently under-staffed and staffed by people who don't have the qualifications they require. Yes, there are exceptions to these conditions, but many of these are in facilities that few of us could ever afford.

Those of us who spend our time trying to deal with the problems that arise in care facilities soon discover how difficult it is to get corrective action on such situations. One of the few effective ways of dealing with such situations is to go public, get the media involved and generate enough pressure so that someone in authority feels compelled to act.

But we also realize that what we are dealing with here are really two quite different sets of problems. There are structural problems with how the system is organized; these can only be addressed by "top-down" intervention and probably involve a high cost. There are also operational problems that could be more effectively addressed through "bottom-up" approaches.

Bottom-up solutions

The government of Alberta devised one of the prime examples of the "bottom-up" approach about 25 years ago. Realizing that schools were not being sufficiently responsive to the needs of parents, it required all schools to form school councils in which the school's administration and teaching staff were in the minority, and the majority of the council was made up of parents and community representatives.

While final decisions remained with the school's administrations, school councils were able to review and recommend on the school's budget and other areas of school policy, and that did make schools more accountable. A recent example of the effectiveness of school councils emerged with the challenging of the no-zero policy at an Edmonton high school. Ultimately, a provincial organization of school councils was formed that can now influence government policy.

That same mechanism could well be effective in making Seniors' care facilities more responsive to the needs of patients and their families. Patient/Family Councils

could review and recommend how the facility utilizes its resources, and could use the "bottom-up" approach to deal with disputes that arise between patients and facility operators.

Top-down solutions

The government has also developed a different mechanism designed to protect vulnerable individuals with the Child and Youth Advocate whose office became effective on April 1, 2012. The Office of the Child and Youth Advocate is an external, independent advocacy system in which the Advocate reports directly to the legislature.

Seniors in care are equally vulnerable and are part of a complex system that involves as many as 19 government departments, numerous municipal agencies, non-government organizations, as well as public, voluntary and private facility operators.

The appointment of an Independent Seniors Advocate with authority to report to the legislature rather than any ministry could have a huge impact on addressing many of the problems in the Seniors care system. It could inventory all of the services available, establish what is and is not working, recommend on ways of improving the system and resolve disputes that cannot be resolved at the patient/family council level.

The Minister of Seniors has indicated that he does intend to appoint a Seniors' Advocate, but is clearly thinking of someone who would report only to his ministry, not to the legislature.

One of the major difficulties with all publicly administered systems is that it is in the government's interest, no matter how much it seeks to be open and transparent, to claim that things are working well.

That is why PIA's Seniors Task Force has been advocating for meaningful Patient/Family Councils in all publicly supported or subsidized Seniors care facilities and the appointment of an Independent Seniors Advocate. We believe these could do much to improve Alberta's Seniors care system.

Noel Somerville, Chair,
Seniors Task Force
Public Interest Alberta

Editor's note: President Gary Pool serves on this committee

>>> On the National Front

Ottawa backs health accord

OTTAWA / On September 25, the Government of Canada tabled its response to the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology report *Time for Transformative Change: A Review of the 2004 Health Accord*.

The government's response is grounded in the following core values:

- a steadfast commitment to Canada's universal, publicly funded health care system;
- the recognition that provincial and territorial governments hold primary responsibility for the delivery of care; and
- the firm belief that Canadians can and should play an active role in their own health.

The response outlines the significant federal actions being taken to strengthen Canada's health care system and improve the health of Canadians.

Budget 2012 placed health transfers to provinces and territories on a sustainable long-term track, reaching at least \$40 billion by 2020-21.

The federal government is the single largest investor in health innovation in Canada, supporting over 10,000 health research projects. Targeted investments are also being made in key national initiatives that contribute to improved health system performance, measurement and the sharing of best practices across the country.

In responding to the report, the Government notes the significant innovations occurring across the country to make health services more integrated, responsive to patients and their families, and to ensure the system is sustainable. "As the Senate Committee's report makes clear, real change in health care requires individuals and organizations at every level to do their part. We are pleased to have played a role in many of the improvements already taking place across the country," noted Health Minister Leona Aglukkaq. "Our Government will continue to work collaboratively with its partners, and all Canadians, to make Canada's health care system the best it can be."

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>>> Tales from the Koffee Klatch

The Eyes Have It

This isn't a horror story, but shows how the system isn't always Senior Friendly™



By Colsen

The stories in this series are all true, but I have changed names and some minor details to protect the people involved.

Cataract surgery is a pretty normal thing for Seniors. It is really a simple operation for us, but some of the attendant medical and administrative staff seem to forget with whom they are dealing.

This tale takes place in mid-winter. Dora had one eye done earlier and she knew the procedure, so was not at all anxious this time.

However, it started to snow the night before she was scheduled for

her second eye.

Early in the morning, Dora and Dennis turned on the TV to check the weather. It wasn't snowing at their place, but the roads were snow covered. A check with RCMP showed the highway was in bad condition. They advised not driving "unless absolutely necessary."

So Dora phoned the doctor's office. She explained what was happening, and that she wouldn't be there for her surgery. The administrative lady on the other end got very huffy. She told Dora she had to come in, even if she was late. She also said that if she failed to show up, it would be "months" before the second eye could be done.

Dora was distraught. She hung up and told Dennis they had to go in to the city. That is a two-hour drive in good weather.

Dennis refused. He phoned the office and talked to the administrator. She started with the same line. It had to be today or it would be forever before Dora got another appointment. Dennis politely told her that it wasn't going to happen. The RCMP advised not travelling that highway. The lady persisted.

Dennis got angry.

"Look," he said. "This is our lives you are talking about. You have no authority or business ordering us to drive on roads in such bad winter condition."

"The devil take the hindmost, and please reschedule Dora." And he hung up.

There were several severe accidents in the city that day. One even caused a power outage in the area where the hospital is located.

So when did Dora get her second eye done? Three weeks later.

But the circumstances of having a recheck the next day is almost as bad. It points to these administrative people not looking at the files.

Dora had her surgery and as she was leaving the hospital they gave her a paper with her checkup appointment the next morning for 6:30 a.m. She asked another patient, who lived in the city, what time her appointment was ... 10 a.m.!

Sure makes sense. Have the rural patient stay in the city overnight to have a 15-minute checkup early in the morning, then drive home. Makes you wonder, doesn't it.

Humph.. Somebody needs some Senior Friendly™ training!

See ya round, eh.

Age is an issue of mind over matter. If you don't mind, it doesn't matter.

— Mark Twain

This new year: happiness — choice or chance?

By Mayo Clinic staff

Do you know how to be happy? Or are you waiting for happiness to find you?

Studies show that only 10 per cent or so of the variation in people's reports of happiness can be explained by differences in their circumstances. It appears that the bulk of what determines happiness is due to personality and — more importantly — thoughts and behaviours that can be changed.

So, yes, you can learn how to be happy — or at least happier.

Although you may have thought, as many people do, that happiness comes from being born rich or beautiful or living a stress-free life, the reality is that people who have wealth, beauty or less stress are not happier on average than those of who don't enjoy those blessings.

People who are happy seem to intuitively know that their happiness is the sum of their life choices, and their lives are built on the following pillars:

- Devoting time to family and friends
- Appreciating what they have
- Maintaining an optimistic outlook
- Feeling a sense of purpose
- Living in the moment

If you have been looking for happiness, the good news is that your choices, thoughts and actions can influence your level of happiness. It's not as easy as flipping a switch, but you can turn up your happiness level.

Surround yourself with happy people. Being around people who are content buoys your own mood. And by being happy yourself, you give something back to those around you.

Friends and family help you celebrate life's successes and support you in difficult times.

Build up your emotional account with kind words and actions. Be careful and gracious with critique. Let people know that you appreciate what they do for you or even just that you're glad they're part of your life.

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