

# NEWSLETTER

## PROVINCIAL PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

*Jim Kavanaugh spoke on many of the important issues facing retired teachers during the Annual General Meeting held in Halifax on May 29. Here are some of the highlights.*

The most critical issue is the underfunded pension plan. Although investments made over 300 million dollars in returns this year, these positive results were “lost” when actuaries recommended a change in mortality assumptions. Previously, these had been based on American statistics. It turns out that retired NS teachers are living longer than their counterparts south of the border. (There are twenty-four retired NS teachers who are over 100!) This means we will be collecting pensions for more years and therefore more money will be needed in the pension fund. On a positive note, though not a big one, teachers are working longer and contributing to the pension fund during their extra teaching years and not withdrawing money from it. The NSTU and the Province of NS have yet to address the problems with the pension fund and they have yet to acknowledge that our organization should be included in the discussions.

Because so many of us retired at a relatively young age, we are facing around thirty years of retirement - almost as long as our teaching careers. It is important to plan for these years so we can remain productive and active. The executive is assessing a new program called **Conscious Aging** and is considering offering a pilot workshop in the Halifax area. If successful, it may be held in the other six RTO regions.

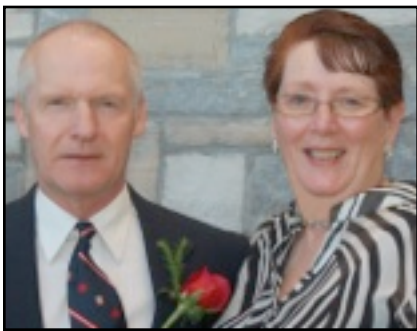


**Jim Kavanaugh**

The recently introduced CAREpath Navigation System has already proved successful. If you, your spouse, or dependent children suspect or have been diagnosed with cancer, call 1-866-833-5956. This service does not replace the health services of doctors, but does provide you with support so that appointments and treatments can be efficiently arranged and test results are not delayed between departments. It alleviates much of the stress associated with the bureaucracy of the medical system.

The RTO is one of the seniors' organizations belonging to the Group of IX Seniors Advisory Council of NS which meets regularly with the Minister of Health and Wellness to discuss concerns, share information, and promote improvements for the welfare of seniors. The hot-button issue at the moment is providing the shingles vaccine without the \$200 charge. We are also members of the Canadian Association of Retired Teachers - ACER/CART. Their national AGM is in Ottawa June 5 - 7. This will be followed by an October meeting hosted by us in Halifax for the representatives from Quebec and the Atlantic Provinces. Pensions, prescription drug costs and availability, health care, and taxes are some of the items on the agendas. Reports will be included in the provincial newsletters.

**When Wendy retired two years ago, she planned on starting a TOPS chapter in Middleton. Here is an update on her venture.**



Howard Selig & Wendy Rodda

The ideal body weight has been a life-long target of mine. I was once there for a few years and then my thyroid died and grew a tumour. I depended on this one organization - TOPS - to help me lose the weight I had gained as a result. TOPS means “Take Off Pounds Sensibly”. It’s a non-profit group that uses encouragement and praise from fellow members for weight loss. Morning weigh-ins were a personal priority, so our new chapter meets at the Middleton Anglican Church every Friday at 8 a.m. We have a whole week to eat correctly and look forward to seeing a loss on Friday - a good dream, but reality does mean that maybe there will be gains along the way. All of our members have lost weight since we started. New members are always welcome and will be met with smiles and total understanding of their weight-loss struggle.

My husband Howard - the Valley Flax man - has been a chef for over 30 years and a certified dietician since 1995. At the end of May, he was inducted to the prestigious Honour Society of the Canadian Culinary Federation in recognition of foresight, dedication, and contributions made to the Federation, and his lifetime passion and service to the culinary profession. Howard was the only Nova Scotian to be inducted this year. Needless to say, his food expertise has been an asset to the success of our group.

**Shingles - Not the ones on your roof!**

The virus that caused your case of chicken-pox still lurks in your body, in-active, near your spinal cord and brain. As you grow older, the immune system weakens and the virus can reactivate causing shingles. Feeling feverish? Having a temperature? Developing a rash on one side of your torso or your face, an itchy rash that develops into blisters which erupt, then crust before fading away? That’s shingles. It is an agonizing, distressing disease that lasts from two to four weeks.

There is a shingles vaccine but it is not 100% effective, only 50 - 70%. However, it may moderate the symptoms if you get the disease. The vaccine is recommended for those who are over 60, with a doctor’s approval. At this time it is not covered by drug plans anywhere in Canada, but some provinces are taking a serious look at it. Initial studies have shown that it is cheaper to provide the vaccine free than to provide medical treatment for the disease.

It is unfair and unacceptable if only those who can afford the \$200 drug can get it. With the likelihood that more cases will be reported as the number of seniors increases, the vaccine will become free or at least cheaper, but how soon will that be? Until then, you must decide whether it is worth paying for now.

**Many hands...**

On Wednesday, June 25, our own local AGM will be held. (See last page for details.) One of the items on the agenda is electing an executive. Our Provincial RTO has recommended changes about its responsibilities which will be discussed. Right now the executive is mostly male from the eastern end of the county. They are dedicated members and should be commended for their work. However, if you would like to be part of the recommended changes and create a more representative executive, please offer yourself or nominate others who would be willing to accept. More importantly, don’t be on the executive! VOLUNTEER to help make our RTO more engaging and active by suggesting venues for meetings and guest speakers, recommending activities we might enjoy together and helping organize them, providing transportation to our functions, writing for the newsletter, and keeping us informed about our fellow members. Many hands make light work and your “hands” would be most appreciated.



## Writers All

Our organization is filled with talented people many of whom are gifted writers. In May, David Whitman launched his most recent book **Stephen McNeil - A Story of a Nova Scotian Family**. This book, like previous ones, has an Annapolis County connection. Dave has written about the abandoned community of Roxbury, the early Lawrencetown schools, the local Volunteer Fire Department, how the Annapolis Valley Exhibition developed into the major event it has become, and the rich sports history leading up to Lawrencetown's quest for the title of Hockeyville. His books are a rich resource for anyone who is curious about local history and also a wonderful legacy for those who come after us.

Dave is not the only writer in the family. Paulette, his wife, has written books about her own personal history and now writes poetry about her present-day life experiences. A book of local photographs giving a complete "picture" of life in their community was one of their joint efforts.

Together they started a publishing company, Bailey Chase Books. Besides their own books, they have published those written by friends and fellow retired teachers. Jane Baskwill's book **Together in Time** uses Roxbury as its setting. Susan Saunders' **Aimee** tells the story of a young Acadian girl during the time of the expulsion. These books with their local context fit well in the Bailey Chase Books catalogue.

Retiring from the classroom has given former teacher Don Aker more time to write, and he's currently working on his 19th book, a mystery thriller to be published by Harper Collins later this year. Because many of his novels are recommended for classroom study, he is frequently invited to speak at schools and libraries across Canada. In May he took part in another two-week author tour in Toronto and Ottawa. "Because I write primarily for the young adult market," says Don, "presenting to teens is immensely helpful since I get to hear their voices again. Listening to their comments and observing their interactions informs my writing and helps me create realistic characters and situations, something I always relied on my students for in the past." Don has also been busy conducting PD sessions for language arts teachers across NS as part of a recent literature initiative spearheaded by the Department of Education. "I expected retirement to be a lot more restful than it is," Don says, "but I've really enjoyed the opportunity to meet so many different people. And I'm racking up a whack of frequent flyer points."



Steve & Jane Baskwill,  
David Whitman



Paulette Whitman



Susan Saunders



Don Aker



### **Bill Hirtle and His Garden**

In one of the recent Herald - Annapolis Valley issues, Bill Hirtle was featured for his beautiful gardens on the banks of the river at his home just outside of Bridgetown. Lynn Moar's wonderful article gives details of how it all started as well as some of Bill's reflections about his teaching career. Just google "Like Heaven in Here" for the complete article and photos.

### **FYI - Threatened Hummingbirds**

They're back, but not all because ignorant do-gooders accidentally killed them! Many people put feeders out for these entertaining little birds, but some don't realize certain precautions must be taken. That solution of water and sugar (ratio 4 : 1) can easily become a breeding ground for bacteria in the warm weather. The contaminated liquid leads to swollen tongue disease preventing the bird from feeding. It dies horribly of starvation. Feeders must be thoroughly cleaned and filled with a fresh solution **every three to four days!!!** Glass containers are recommended because they can be sterilized more efficiently.



### **EXCELLENT PRESENTATION**

Paul Sarty's presentation on Travel Insurance in April had lots of good information and advice. One of the major concerns while travelling is that "pre-condition" which can make a policy null and void. This pre-condition is no longer based on one year before travel, but 6 months. The other recommendation he made was to call Johnson's before you leave to ensure you have no pre-condition that could disqualify you. They will also give names of acceptable hospitals and doctors at your travel destination if medical attention is needed. (1-800-453-9543) NEVER take out your credit card. If you become sick, immediately call Johnson's and they will deal with the situation and advise you what to do. By the way, avoid risky behaviour. Accidents from bungee jumping, sky diving, etc., - not covered.



### **Annual General Meeting - Annapolis County Branch**

**Wednesday, June 25, 2014**

**11:30 a.m.**

**End-of-the Line Pub  
Bridgetown**

**Guest Speaker - Bill Wagstaff, provincial representative RTO**

**The meeting and lunch will be held in the private room where we have met before, and as before, we will pre-order our lunches so that everyone can eat at the same time. Your lunch choices are all \$12 plus tax and 15% gratuity They include:**

- 1. Chowder**
- 2. Chicken Caesar Wrap + fries and coleslaw**
- 3. Haddie bits + fries and coleslaw**
- 4. Vegetarian - stir fry, teriyaki or curry**

**All meals include dessert - orange cake and cream**

**Please email or call Vicky at 765-6647 or call Bill Butler 532-2841 with your choice by Wednesday, June 18**