



Edmonton Retired Teachers' Association Christmas Newsletter

December 2017

www.myerta.org



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CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON

Join us for our Christmas luncheon at the

Chateau Louis

11727 Kingsway Avenue

Date: December 6, 2017

Lunch: 11:45 a.m.

Menu: Roast turkey buffet

Cost: \$25.00 (includes GST and gratuity)

Entertainment: Music by the North Edmonton Seniors Association Choir—the Choralaires

Pre-luncheon music by Mitch Spratt

Door Prize: Everyone is eligible for a door prize.

Luncheon Registration Deadline

Please mark the **November 29th** deadline for luncheon registration on your calendar. If a member of the Telephone Committee has not called you by 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday, November 29, please contact **Pam Roy** at **780.473.5598** immediately.

Donations to the Alberta Retired Teachers Charitable Foundation are appreciated.



THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President:

Joan Harrison, 780.467.3885

Past President:

Sherry Robbins, 780.437.0566

Vice-President:

Lynn Arnold, 780.919.5848

Treasurer:

Mike Mort, 780.761.5027

Secretaries:

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Vi Oko, 780.459.8013

Membership Coordinator:

Cliff Otto, 780.476.9264

Webmaster:

Ray Roy, 780.473.5598

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Cathy Arbeau, 780.466.0938

Veronica Hellweg, 780.456.7640

Nadine Lung, 780.416.1312

Sheila MacKay, 780.466.8697

Ingrid Neitsch, 780.435.3221

Beth Robinson, 780.486.5230

Shirley Strembitsky, 780.988.9195

Carol Williamson, 780.436.9684

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

Climbing into a good book (a phrase that totally befuddled my five-year-old grandson) is a lovely way to relax on a cold winter night. One enticing aspect of reading is being absorbed into the lives of other people with the ability to extricate oneself simply by closing the cover.

Authors transport us into other worlds. Readers are immersed in places, exposed to events and deal with circumstances often foreign to their own life experiences. One is given the opportunity to reflect on life from the characters’ perspectives.

In novels, the philosophy of the author (positive or pessimistic) ripples as an underlying current. Louise Penny, a Canadian author who has overcome many challenges with the support and love of family and friends, flavours her writing with a gentle caring outlook on life.

Her stories take place in Montreal and in a little-known village called Three Pines that she says does not physically exist but is a place where we can all live. Her beloved, idyllic village is actually a state of mind. Inhabitants are not exempt from life’s difficulties, but they understand each other, accept one another, and find strength and peace in friendship and support.

She states that when we choose tolerance over hate, kindness over cruelty, [and] goodness over bullying; when we choose to be hopeful, [and] not cynical; then we live in Three Pines.

This Christmas and throughout the year, may you be blessed with the ability to live in Three Pines. It is a beautiful state of mind.

IMPORTANT LUNCHEON NEWS

Scent-free event: For the comfort and safety of members and guests who are dealing with allergies, your cooperation is requested in making this luncheon, and future Edmonton Retired Teachers’ Association (ERTA) functions, scent-free.



Registration deadline: Please mark **Wednesday, November 29** as the deadline for registration for the Christmas luncheon. Rather than implement a mail-in registration process to collect payment in advance, ERTA favours the honour system in which registrants pay upon arriving at the venue. Since pointing out ERTA’s payment obligations for meals booked, there has been improvement in the attendance rate of participants. Thank you to all.

CHRISTMAS ENTERTAINMENT

A request, in the fall newsletter, for volunteers to play music prior to the Christmas luncheon was answered by **Mitch Spratt**. A retired teacher and professional pianist, Mitch has generously offered to provide a festive atmosphere in the ballroom with lively Christmas music starting at 11:15 a.m. To enjoy samples of Mitch’s music, go online to pianomusicbymitch.com where information about Mitch and the service he offers can also be found.

This Christmas, ERTA is very pleased to welcome the Choralaires, the North Edmonton Seniors Association (NESA) choir. This thirty-to forty-member choir is directed by Sandi Ollenberger and accompanied by pianist, Vicki McClelland. They will present a number of seasonal pieces prior to leading a group Christmas carol sing-along.

Weekly practices to learn a Christmas repertoire in four-part harmony take place at the centre—formally the Northgate Lions Recreation Centre—beginning in September. Christmas merriment is shared with the community by singing at various events and parties as well as at nursing homes and lodges.

January practices focus on new music for a yearly concert held at McClure United Church near the end of April.

If you enjoy singing, please consider joining this group. New members are always welcome.



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Luncheon Registration Deadline | November 29, 2017 |
| Christmas Luncheon | December 6, 2017 |
| Board of Directors Meeting | February 14, 2018 |
| Greater Edmonton Teachers' Convention | March 1 & 2, 2018 |
| Spring Luncheon | March 21, 2018 |
| Retiree Brunch | April 7, 2018 |
| Mayfield Dinner Theatre | April 18, 2018 |
| Second Wind Conference | September 6, 2018 |

BOARD MEETING SUMMARY

On November 1, 2017, the Board of Directors discussed the following significant matters at the ERTA board meeting held at the Central Lions Seniors Recreation Centre:

- The method and criteria that will be used for awarding the Fitbits were determined (see ARTA Walking Challenge Results).
- The Christmas charity for 2017 was selected (see Christmas Charity).
- A \$500.00 donation to the ARTA University of Alberta Endowment Award was authorized.
- Reservations have been made for the spring theatrical production at the Mayfield Dinner Theatre (see Mayfield Dinner Theatre).

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

| | |
|---|------------|
| Current total membership..... | 490 |
| <i>Regular</i> | 369 |
| <i>Complimentary</i> | 101 |
| <i>Life</i> | 20 |
| <i>Renewals due as of June 30, 2017</i> | 45 |
| <i>Regular</i> | 23 |
| <i>Complimentary</i> | 22 |
| <i>Newsletter distribution</i> | |
| <i>Canada Post</i> | 141 |
| <i>Email</i> | 347 |
| <i>Not receiving by request</i> | 2 |

Cliff Otto

ARTA WALKING CHALLENGE RESULTS

It is hard to imagine anyone walking 1,813,700 steps in thirty days, but that feat was achieved by Esther Dyck from the Foothills branch. Calgary won the ‘most steps’ category with an incredible 32,319,603 tally. Branch participation went to the Okanagan group with 44% of their membership taking part in the challenge. Congratulations are extended to all who took part. Herculean results were not necessary—participation was the goal and every step counted.

To encourage even more people to use walking for physical health improvement, TW Insurance contributed three Fitbits to the ARTA Wellness Committee. Edmonton was fortunate to win one of them and will pass it on, by way of a draw at the Christmas luncheon, to a member who took part in the 2017 Walking Challenge.

In addition, at the November 1 board meeting, the decision was made to award a Fitbit to Karen Sanderson who recorded the most steps for the ERTA branch.

Thank you to all those members who joined in to make this activity successful.

ARTA AGM REPORT

- On October 3 and 4, 2017, Marilyn Bossert, Lorna McIlroy and Dolaine Koch were elected to the position of president, vice-president and treasurer, respectively at the ARTA Annual General Meeting (AGM) held at the Chateau Nova on the Yellowhead. Elections were also conducted for the vacant committee positions.
- The ARTA officers and chairs of the standing committees, the ARTA Benefit Trust Fund and the Alberta Retired Teachers Charitable Foundation reported to the board members and branch delegates present.
- The Communications Committee is thinking about using the WordPress platform in place of the Joomla content management system for branch websites because it is simpler to set up and operate and less costly to maintain. Outreach to those members in areas of Alberta and British Columbia without branches is being contemplated.
- The ARTA Retiree Benefits Plan now has an enrollment of over 17,000 members. Although the diabetes initiative was terminated, Cubic Health continues to assist the Health Benefits Committee with oversight of the benefit plan. The paramedical practitioner list was expanded to include medical care providers operating within Primary Care Networks and registered clinical counsellors. The benefit list was upgraded to include mobility scooters as well. Medical marijuana, however, is not covered by the ARTA plan. Premiums for emergency travel coverage will not increase this year. The Benefits Committee delayed the renewal date from September 1 to November 1 just in case the announcement of the new dental fee guide would have a positive effect on the dental plan.
- The revised roles and responsibilities of the current standing committees reflect MNP’s organization restructuring recommendations. The powers and functions of the Executive Committee were added to the ARTA Bylaws.

- The fourteen books appraised by the Pension and Financial Wellness Committee this year are available from the ATA Library at no cost to retired teachers.
- The altered Strategic Planning and Advocacy Committee reviewed and revised the ARTA Strategic Plan, planned a retreat and arranged orientations for new board and new committee members.
- Ten branches booked body composition clinics in 2017. The ARTA Walking Challenge will be expanded next year. The Wellness Committee continues to ensure that health-related articles appear in each issue of the ARTA magazine.
- A logo, a letterhead, a brochure, as well as a grant package have been developed, and an animated video is presently being prepared for the Alberta Retired Teachers Charitable Foundation. Partnerships have been initiated with the CNIB, the two Alzheimer societies in the province and Parkinson Alberta.
- ACER–CART, the national retired teachers' association, collaborates with like-minded groups to provide a voice for all seniors. The organization actively supported the lobby for a public drug plan organized by the Canadian Health Coalition.
- As of June 30, 2017, the market value of the reserves in the Education Sector Account of the ARTA Benefit Plan Trust Fund amounted to \$10,044,445.09, while the funds held in the Public Sector Account totalled \$3,564,151.52. The assets in the Emergency Travel Account were valued at \$1,883,429.03.
- Revenue for 2016–2017 was \$3,092,619 and expenses were \$2,422,528. Receipts for the upcoming fiscal year are projected to be \$3,127,467, while expenses are expected to total \$3,033,202.
- During the previous school year, the Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund (ATRF) paid out about \$818 million to 27,015 retired teachers. Beginning in September of 2016, the active teacher contribution rate was decreased from 13.46% to 12.68%. Currently, females make up 74% of the active teaching force.
- As ARTA transitioned into its new facilities this past year, the association refocused its strategic plan and the realigned committees adjusted to their mandates. The membership is being well served.

MAYFIELD DINNER THEATRE

Reservations have been made for the brunch presentation of the musical comedy, *All Shook Up*, on Wednesday, April 18, 2018, at the Mayfield Dinner Theatre.

This musical consists of over twenty Elvis Presley tunes woven into a story of mistaken identity, a love triangle and the power of rock 'n roll set in conservative middle America in 1955.

Since this show is appealing to a great number of theatregoers, tickets are already at a premium. Telephone Vi Oko at 780.459.8013 as soon as possible to ensure that the required number of tickets are purchased.

With the 15% discount accorded groups, seats in the Broadway section are \$71.40, which also includes GST; however, theatre management at the Mayfield is assessing groups an additional \$5.25 gratuity per ticket this season.

Forward your cheque for **\$76.65**, made payable to the Edmonton Retired Teachers' Association, to Vi Oko at 20 Glenhaven Crescent, St. Albert, Alberta T8N 1A5 if you do not plan to attend the Christmas luncheon in December. Seats will be assigned on a first-come, first-reserved basis upon receipt of payment.

FACULTY CLUB

The fall brunch at the Faculty Club was enjoyed by forty-seven people—a record number. All of those who had signed up for this event actually attended! The fare was outstanding with a wide selection of menu items from which to choose. Placement in the Saskatchewan Room enhanced the ability to visit as evidenced by the buzz of lively conversation heard throughout the space. It's no wonder that the brunches are becoming ever more popular!

The next Faculty Club brunch is being arranged for April 7, 2018. A sign-up sheet will be made available at the upcoming Christmas luncheon as well as at the luncheon in March. Alternatively, those wishing to attend can register by emailing Shirley Strembitsky at svstrem@shaw.ca or by calling her at 780.988.9195. Either Shirley or a member of the board will give you a courtesy call to remind you of the event a week prior to the brunch.

ARTA ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT

June 2018

The Foothills Retired Teachers' Association is hosting the 2018 ARTA Annual Golf Tournament at the Highwood Golf and Country Club in High River on Thursday, June 21.

Golfers of all skill levels are encouraged to sign up for a great day of golf with great prizes, great food, great entertainment and a great opportunity to renew old friendships and make new ones.

Non-golfers will be offered several art-related or tour options in which to participate while waiting for a spouse or companion to complete eighteen holes of golf.

Registration details will be posted on the ARTA website, arta.net, in the new year.



June 2019

Could the ARTA Annual Golf Tournament be held in Edmonton? The answer to that question is a resounding "YES."

John Renfree has generously offered to work on a committee to ensure that an ERTA-sponsored golf tournament becomes a reality.

Many of you know John. He is a long-time ERTA member who has attended many luncheons over the years. John has also enjoyed participating in a number of annual golf tournaments hosted by other Alberta branches. John's willingness to be on an organizing committee to plan this event is very much appreciated.

But he needs some help. Several components are involved in arranging an undertaking of this magnitude beyond simply establishing a date and location. Five or six volunteers are required to assist with organizing the event.

If you are willing to volunteer your time and your skills to support this endeavour, please contact John Renfree at renfree!@telus.net or call him at 780.489.8270. You do not need to be a golfer to assist.

CHRISTMAS CHARITY

Alberta Retired Teachers Charitable Foundation

Before Christmas each year, the ERTA Board of Directors selects a charity which the membership may wish to support with a financial contribution. This year, the board members have chosen the Alberta Retired Teachers Charitable Foundation. Remember to provide your full name and address so that the foundation is able to issue a receipt for income tax purposes.

On November 17, 2010, the ARTA Board of Directors mandated an ad hoc committee to do the preliminary work required for the creation of a charitable foundation, the vision of a number of forward-looking ARTA members, to help Alberta seniors access appropriate housing and health services along with second language education programs that they may not be able to otherwise afford.

The foundation was incorporated as a non-profit society on June 22, 2012, was granted charitable status on May 25, 2015, and elected its first full-fledged Board of Directors November 25, 2015.

The foundation is fully operational and is able to solicit tax-deductible donations.

Recently the foundation entered into partnership with three health-related organizations to provide financial support for program initiatives.

Contributions by cheque, made payable to the Alberta Retired Teachers Charitable Foundation (ARTCF), can be mailed to the ARTCF office at 11835 149 Street, Edmonton, Alberta T5L 2J1. Online donations can be made through PayPal by going to artcf.ca/give. Donations can also be made in honour of a loved one. Receipts will be issued in mid-December of each year.

Visit the website, www.artcf.ca, to find out more about the charitable foundation.



*I believe, as we grow older,
our Christmas list gets smaller
and the things we really want
can't be bought.*

TRAVEL OPPORTUNITY

Are you looking for a unique and reasonable travel opportunity? SNA Tours—a Vancouver-based travel company that has led successful excursions for the Calgary Retired Teachers' Association over the past five years, is offering two travel adventures at incredible prices.



Included in the nine-day tour of northeast China for \$999 is airfare and accommodations along with seven breakfasts, four lunches, two dinners and scheduled tours. Additional tour options are also available.

The fourteen-day tour for \$1,699 includes the nine-day itinerary plus a Yangtze River cruise. The price includes airfare and accommodations, twelve breakfasts, seven lunches, six dinners and scheduled tours as well as the cruise up the Yangtze River. The trip can include additional tour options.

The price for both trips is based on a Calgary departure and double occupancy. Both tours depart on March 29, 2018.

If either of these travel opportunities interest you, visit www.calgaryretiredteachers.org for complete itineraries and registration instructions.

THE IMPACT OF WAR ON TEACHING

With the outbreak of hostilities in World War 1, teaching conditions and salaries in the province became reprehensible as salaries were arbitrarily cut and term contracts were immediately created. When teachers left their classrooms to enlist in the armed forces, their replacements frequently lacked training and qualifications.

Even in the face of these deplorable conditions, the idea of collective action on the part of teachers took time to evolve. Persuading educators of the merits of joining the fledgling Alberta Teachers' Alliance (formation resolution passed April 1917)

took two full years. By 1919, half of the teaching force of 4,000 had joined. Membership increased as teachers began to organize: Locals sprang up throughout Alberta.

Following the signing of the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, Albertans looked forward to a peaceful and prosperous future only to be engulfed in war once again two decades later.

The call to military service soon created teacher shortages; however, this time the Department of Education refrained from filling those vacancies with inexperienced and unqualified individuals. Teachers now had a collective voice.

The Alliance actively supported the war effort, all the while safeguarding its hard-won professional status. The organization urged school boards to augment teachers' military pay and to ensure the security of their positions while on active duty.

Women often filled the void in the classrooms. When the war ended, many veterans availed themselves of the opportunity of a free university education to upgrade their qualifications.



Christmas Gift

*The gifts I'd leave beneath your tree,
Aren't those that you can touch or see;
Not wrapped in Christmas tissue gay
But gifts to bless you every day.*

*The gift of friendship, warm and true,
Is one that I would leave for you.
Good health and happiness and cheer
To keep you smiling through the year.*

*The gift of peace that comes from God,
With prayer to guide each path you trod.
And when your heart has lost its song
The gift of hope to cheer you on.
These are the gifts I'd leave for you.*

~By Maureen