

North Island Retired Teachers' Association Fall Newsletter - September 2016

Welcome to a new school year.... Wait a minute! We are retired! We have spent many years accumulating a tremendous wealth of teaching resources and experiences. It gives me a whole new perspective on "The Hell with the Bell!" I never liked that phrase but I understand the import behind it. I like the idea of toasting the new year with champagne, in the direction of your former school, and wishing all of the people involved a

positive and productive school year. May they learn to their hearts content and come away from the year with a new desire to affect their own education and have a clearer idea of what they want to do with their lives.

After teaching for a major portion of my working life, it was not a simple transition into retirement. Teaching so long puts you into a "teacher mode", if you will. That means you are a teacher twenty-four hours a day. You are a teacher when you shop for groceries and run into parents or students. Some parents want an interview in aisle four of a local store. You, politely, move on.

You are a teacher on a charter flight to Hawaii when a tap on the shoulder,

followed by a comment "Is that you?" instantly vaporizes the "getting away from it all" theme of the trip.

You are a teacher when you get a "hello" while walking down Granville Street in Vancouver.

You are a teacher when a parent comes back from a teeth cleaning and the receptionist, a former student, says "Mr. Murray! I thought he was dead! Please say hello!"

Teaching is a twenty-four hour a day occupation.

In my own experience (37 years of teaching) I have been members of innumerable committees, led Christmas concerts, innumerable presentations,

parent-teacher conferences, over thirty three hundred report cards (carefully worded of course), Students Council meetings, Professional Development Workshops both as a participant and as a presenter, endless staff meetings and enjoyed new Student Teachers who I have helped to integrate into the work force.

I recently met a former student who I, honestly, did not remember. The last time I saw him, he was a lot shorter and a lot younger. This tall man was in front of me asking if I remembered him. Well, I didn't. So, after several leading questions, I finally remembered him and I thanked him. He looked quizzically at me for a moment and then I explained that it was the students that kept me active as a

teacher. It was the students who kept me alive professionally and it was the students who gave me the rewards, every day, for being there and showing me that they had learned something that would help them to navigate their lives in a positive and constructive fashion.

That is what teaching is all about. I had a collection of young people who looked to me to provide the building blocks, the construction of events that would help them to live a productive life.

It is also a tremendously important job. I had a group of kids in front of me that I saw more hours every day than many of their parents did. I could never understand the stresses that two parents, both on different working shifts, had to

deal with just to make ends meet so that they could pay the mortgage and keep food on the table.

I would be there in the morning and had constructed a "kitchen" in the classroom. I had a microwave, a small fridge (gleaned from Scholastic Book points) and a pannini press which I would use to cook sandwiches for the kids who wanted them at lunchtime. I was also sure to get the kids, who had not eaten breakfast, down to the "Breakfast Club" so they were more ready to tackle a new day. It was alright to eat in class and have a water bottle ready for a sip. I had coffee on my desk so I would explain that, as long as it didn't get in the way, they could do the same. Over the years I never had a

problem with food or drinks getting in the way. These are tasks that have fallen to teachers in recent years. A teacher has the legal position of being "In loco parentis". You are the parent in the classroom. Any conscientious parent would, given the resources, supply their kids with food, water and comfortable surroundings. This is the wish of all parents.

So, it seemed to me, to be a natural progression to supply these items in the classroom. A student who is hungry does not learn as well as one who has been fed. A student who has a burning problem in mind cannot learn unless that problem has been dealt with. A student who has a cold is not going to test as well as if they

had been healthy, had a good night's sleep and was dressed comfortably.

I was sure to have creative games, mind boggling puzzles (from which you got prizes if you solved them) and endless snacks, free pencils, erasers (all personally supplied) and games galore. There was one administrator who said to me "I am giving you two hundred dollars for classroom supplies. I was thrilled. After submitting a receipt for a chocolate cake, he said that he had to, regrettably, take back the money. One of us didn't get the motivation behind teaching that class. Many teachers supply thousands of dollars from their own pockets every year to provide that motivation and rewards for a good job. What other profession do you know of that

requires the workers to supply their own materials so the job can be completed? It is a natural process that all kids understand and applaud. The trick is to get the funding to provide these "natural" resources in our classrooms.

There was a memorable student who showed up late one day. He arrived about ten o'clock, with his little sister in tow. He had spaghetti sauce stains on his T-shirt from dinner the night before. I greeted him and asked why he was late. His answer is permanently burned into my memory. He said to me "My parents were up late partying. We slept in but I got my sister up and we walked to school." (He had missed the bus) I got down on my knees and I hugged him. I took him to the principal

and he shared his story. I told him that he had made a decision to take control of his own education. He knew where he wanted to be. He smiled because he knew that I really cared.

There was a "Wall of Fame" where pictures of the class were displayed carrying out a multitude of activities throughout the year. The kids liked to see their pictures displayed. It gave meaning to their lives and a reward for doing a good job.

Even the quiet kids were on that Wall of Fame. Each one of them had something to contribute. Each one of them had self-worth and deserved a spot on that wall. Each one of them left a legacy for the next group.

There was one time when a student yelled "That's my dad!" They had recognized their dad on the Wall of Fame. I had taught their dad in my grade five class years ago. I have many years of "Wall of Fame" montages. My intent is to donate them to the local museum as a display.

As I left my teaching profession, I had a parent come up to me and ask "What are you going to do now?" I listed several possibilities but he said to me "You aren't finished yet. Teaching is in your blood. My son still talks about you. He is 28 years old and he still talks about the things he did in your class."

This made me pause and reflect. I am very sure that there are many teachers out there who have had similar experiences.

Teaching is one of those chosen professions that gives you these tremendous rewards. People pull you aside and tell you what your teaching has meant to their children. You hear from someone you taught twenty years ago and you get a thank you.

In these days, where there is a dramatic change to the school curriculums, where there is a new "top down" method of administration occurring in our public school systems, teachers need to remember the reasons that they got involved in our profession.

They need to remember the basic goals that they had in mind when they decided they wanted to teach.

In these days when more teachers are questioning their professional choices,

where more teachers are deciding to opt for another job, they need to reflect on their successes and remember the kids who have taken the time to say to them "You made a difference in my life".

Each one of those comments is a reason to go on. Each one of those heartfelt comments is a reason to hold your course, to reflect on your goals, and to resist changes that you do not agree with.

You are a teacher. It is the most important job on the planet. Everyone remembers a teacher that made a difference. Everyone remembers a teacher who affected their lives and gave them the choice to go on and do what they wanted to do with their lives.

You are that teacher. You are the one who can make the difference. You are the one who can help them make that happen.

For those of you who have retired, I thank you from the bottom of my heart. For the work that you have done, the lives that you have changed, I thank you. You have made that difference. It will never be forgotten. You leave a legacy behind you that will continue on and on. Hellen Keller had this gift. Mahatma Ghandi had this gift.

Nelson Mandela lived in prison for twenty years before he was released and spread this gift. He had that within him. He was a teacher.

Rosa Parks, who said on a bus one day "I am tired and I will not give up my seat on this bus". Rosa Parks changed history that day. She created a movement that day that released black people from segregation in the United States. She was a teacher.

You are a teacher. Go on and make that choice worthwhile.

Thanks to Melissa Armstrong for
her presentation

Many thanks to Melissa Armstrong, an occupational therapist from Port Hardy Hospital, who gave a presentation at our May meeting. She had lots of good information about keeping yourself in shape, as a senior, and was very well received. 😊😊😊

Senior Center Staffing Issues

BC Seniors' Advisor recommends that all Senior Citizen facilities in the province take a close look at staffing levels. There have been over a hundred incidents where members of senior center housing have been attacked, or have been abused in some way, by other members.

The staffing levels have come up in many discussions of funding these centers and, at present, are inadequate in many cases. There are too few workers who are required to extend their services to a growing population of seniors who require constant care.

If you are considering being a resident at a Senior Care or are involved with a family member who is presently living in a Senior Care facility, please contact senior groups in the area or go into the place you are considering and talk to the members there.

Active chapters in the province

There are many different organizations in our province that have "get away" activities. Langley (CARP 19) has an active tour program that takes trips to interesting places on a regular basis. Victoria has a similar group that provides art appreciation, Butchart Gardens tours

and other active sessions that get you out of the house and involved with other seniors.

Whether it is the RTA, CARP or any other seniors organization, you can always drop in to check things out or, simply, become a member and receive the advertisements where you make your own choices.

Find a group that you are interested in and go to a meeting, or join one activity to get a feel for the organization.

The key is that there are choices out there. Retirement does not mean a slow decline into obscurity. Retirement is a change-point in your life where you have different directions in which to grow. Take

the time to make a choice. Let others know how it goes.

Rejoice in your retirement. You earned it.

Did you know that, for those of you that use extra-virgin olive oil, it goes through a seven step process that involves washing it in sodium hydroxide? This produces the clear oil that we all like to buy. Food for thought.

Genetically Modified Food Labels

The state of Vermont has just enacted legislation that requires food producers to put the genetically modified ingredients on the product labels. This has been hard fought in the courts for

years in the USA but has been standard practise in European countries for a long time.

How does this affect you? It has been known for a long time that additives, chemicals and processing techniques change the food that you eat. Knowing the process and any GMO's that have been used in the production of that food will give you a better choice in selecting food that is right for you. Chemicals that are being used to produce this food can also react with prescription medication, a direct influence on our retired members.

Some companies are electing to change all of their product packages across the USA as it is too expensive to do it for just one state. This is a beneficial "fallout" for consumers.

Following, is a photo of a Kraft Mac and Cheese Dinner with the GMO label. The GMO is only part of the problem. Consumers are not being told what is in their food. You need to know the ingredients so that you may make a decision as to whether you are going to buy that food or not. For you RTA members who have grandchildren with ADD or ADHD, please take note.

WARNING

Kraft Mac & Cheese Contains GMO Wheat

KRAFT MACARONI CHEESE 200G
(MACARONI IN A CHEESE SAUCE MIX)

NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION PER 100G
ENERGY kJ - 1548.3, ENERGY Kcal - 371.4, PROTEIN - 14.3G, CARBOHYDRATES - 67.1G,
of which sugars - 8.6G, FAT - 5.0G, of which saturates - 2.1G, FIBRE - 1.4G, SALT - 2.0G

INGREDIENTS:
ENRICHED MACARONI PASTA SHELL (97.25%): Unbleached Wheat Flour, Niacin,
Ferrous Sulfate, Vitamin B1 & Vitamin B2
CHEESE SAUCE MIX (2.75%): Whey Powder, Milk Fat, Milk Protein Concentrate,
Sodium Tripolyphosphate, Citric Acid, Lactic Acid, Sodium Phosphate,
Calcium Phosphate, Artificial Colours - Tartrazine (E102) & Sunset Yellow (E110)

ALLERGEN INFORMATION:
Contains Gluten from Wheat Contains Milk (Dairy Products)
** THIS PRODUCT MAY HAVE ADVERSE EFFECT ON ACTIVITY AND ATTENTION IN CHILDREN **

GMO DECLARATION: Made from genetically modified wheat (May contain GMO)

IMPORTED AND DISTRIBUTED IN UK BY: **INNOVATIVE BITES LTD**, 87, Whitby Road, Slough, SL1 3DR

BEST BEFORE
17 DEC 2013

Servings Per Container about 3
Serves about 1 cup

Vitamin C 0%
Calcium 15%

Warning #1 (points to Allergen Information)

Warning #2 (points to GMO Declaration)

**This product was imported by the UK
from the US and contains GMO Wheat.**

*Federal Transfer Payments being
Reduced*

*Presently in negotiations, the
provincial and Federal governments*

are letting us know that the transfer payments for medical care are being reduced from 6% to 3% soon.

So what does that mean for you? The transfer payments provide a base on which our medical system draws the money to pay the bills. Reducing it to 3% means that the base is shakier than it was and additional monies, to support the program, will have to come from somewhere else.....

Websites I might like to
visit

www.seniorsjokes.com

www.gmolabels.com

www.Saveonfoods.com

www.realcanadiansuperstore.ca

www.costco.ca

bbc.com/foodchain

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Secretary – This position is presently vacant and I thank our members, in advance, who are filling in.

Are you remembering to ask for Senior's discounts when you go into retail establishments?



Got some prescriptions refilled at Costco Nanaimo recently. I have no membership but you just mention your purpose at the door and they let you in. Wandered about while I was waiting and snacked my way through lunch. Every aisle had samples.... Unexpected benefits of being a senior.



New Products for Seniors

On a recent trip to Campbell River I chose to go through the product selections at the Canadian Super Store.

I was interested in finding low sodium, sugarless, organic products that would be good for our members.

To my amazement, there is a new section totally devoted to this end. I found no-sodium vegetarian, and beef bullion cubes. I found broth to everyone's liking. There are many products that meet our needs and I was quite satisfied with the selection.

My only shortfall was sugarless chocolate. My favourite is 90% dark sugarless chocolate. It was non-existent at this store.

However, I have to give the Superstore a great rating as they have taken the

time to organize an extensive section.
Take time to go and look.

Senior's Sections in the Grocery Stores

Many stores are now creating sections for seniors. These are products that are salt-reduced, sugarless etc. The products are also being wrapped in smaller sizes that are more relevant to a senior.

I was recently talking to a manager of the dairy section in Save-On Campbell River about wrapping smaller portions for seniors when a

senior lady came by and said "This is too much food for me". He just looked at me and said "I get your message. I hear this many times a day."

We must keep up our rhetoric to get the services that we need as retired folks. Businesses will respond to the demand. Please be confident in asking for your needs.

The meat department at our new Port Hardy Save-on also has a smaller portion section. Please thank them when you buy something. They need to know that people appreciate their service.

Christmas Shopping Online

Most of the major retail outlets have already placed their Christmas orders to their suppliers. I know it is hard to think that far ahead when the sun is shining and the pool is so inviting.

Some of the best Christmas items are super cheap right now. Last year's stock can go for pennies on the dollar and even local stores have stock stored away that didn't sell last year.

The best prices I have found are during the two weeks after Christmas before things are stored for the season.

That means swim suits and summer items are going on sale very soon.

It's also very easy to get flyers, special sales and pharmacy prices online.

Think off-season.

An Inspirational Senior

As we get older we sometimes doubt our ability to "make a difference" in the world. It is these times that our hopes are boosted by the remarkable achievements of other seniors who have found the courage to take on challenges that would make many of us wither.

George is such a person. He told us "I've often been asked, "What do you do now that you have retired?"

"Well, I am fortunate to have a chemical engineering background and one of the things that I enjoy the most is converting beer, wine and whiskey into urine. It's rewarding, uplifting, satisfying and fulfilling. I do it every day and I really enjoy it."

George should be an inspiration to us all.

