



COMING of AGE

A Publication of the Saskatoon Council on Aging

Seniors and Computers Mix Well in New Project

The computers are buzzing at the Saskatoon Council on Aging's Seniors Resource Centre, as seniors learn their way around this omnipresent technology — and around the Internet.

With a \$7,000 grant from the Saskatchewan Women's Secretariat, through its Women's Organizations on Line: Internet Access and Training Program, the Council's Computer Literacy Project got under way October 26.

Fifty-two people signed up for the first sessions, October 26-November 13 and November 23-December 11. Nearly 70 per cent opted to learn word processing; the rest will learn to use the Internet. The fee is \$15.

Daily classes run from 9 to 11 a.m. and 1 to 3 p.m. Each person attends once a week for two hours. Two people attend at one time; each has full-time use of a Pentium computer.

The Council's office manager, June Gawdun, co-ordinated

the registration and worked with the Computer Literacy Project Committee to arrange teachers. She, Council president Jean Nahachewsky and experienced computer user Pat Smith are teaching the word processing program, Microsoft Word for Windows.

The Internet classes are taught by Bill Postle of the Saskatoon Freenet, one of the Council's partners in this project. The other partners are the Saskatoon Public Library, University of Regina Extension Division and SaskTel, which donated two computers.

Four thousand dollars of the grant from the Women's Secretariat went for equipment and Internet access through Shaw Cable's The Wave, and \$3,000 is for paying teachers.

The next session in January still has openings. Seniors interested in it or future classes should call the Centre, 652-2255.

Telechatting Brings Seniors New Friends

When her phone rings at 9.30 every other morning or so, Margaret Levins could just pick it up and say "Hi, Evelyn!" The person on the other end is likely to be her regular Telechat volunteer, whom she describes as "such a sweetheart."

Mrs. Levins, who lives alone in an apartment, learned about the Council's Telechat project last spring in *Coming of Age* and called co-ordinator Carol Zubiak to sign up for the regular phone calls. At first, Evelyn called her daily.

They have met and, she said, "just hit it off."

She enjoyed the regular chats so much she decided to become a Televisitor herself. "I thought that if she (Evelyn) could cheer

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In My Opinion

How many times have you been nearly hit by a person on a bicycle, skateboard or roller blades while walking on a sidewalk or trail in Saskatoon, or seen someone else nearly hit? Such an accident could be very serious, especially for seniors. Do you know the regulations governing these situations and the action that can be taken to reduce the hazard?

Bicycles are not permitted to be ridden on the sidewalk in Saskatoon, with some exceptions. They can be ridden on the Meewasin Trail and on bridge sidewalks, but riders must use common sense and yield to pedestrians. Bicycles must be fitted with light, reflector and bell or horn. Licences have not been required for more than two years.

The fine for failure to have accessories is \$25. There is a \$65 fine for riding erratically on the road or sidewalk, without due care or consideration for others.

Skateboards are not permitted in City Hall Square, the downtown core or Broadway. There are no other restrictions for skateboards or roller blades, but the Police Service is investigating regulations in several other cities.

We can help prevent accidents by talking constructively to people who are a hazard to pedestrians. As pedestrians, we should be alert to dangerous sections of the Trail such as hills and curves, and keep on the right-hand side of the sidewalk. When we are aware of a dangerous situation, it would probably be helpful to advise the Meewasin Valley Authority or call the Saskatoon Police Service Traffic Unit NCO (phone 975-8218).

Happy and safe sidewalking!

- Art Sumner

Update

Efforts by the Saskatoon Council on Aging and its many partners to develop a shuttle service for seniors have been given a boost with a \$10,000 grant from the Saskatoon Foundation.

To date, the Council has received a total of \$18,000 to help establish the personalized, affordable, arm-assisted transportation service, says project co-ordinator Lynn Tait.

The Council and the shuttle service management team will continue to raise funds toward the \$90,000 goal which will make it possible to start the service.

Donations have been received from local businesses, service clubs, seniors' residences and individuals. Local businesses also contributed to the Safety Family Fun Day Raffle held in June.

Telechat *(continued from page 1)*

me up in the mornings, why couldn't I pass it on?"

Now, two evenings a week she calls Elizabeth, a recent widow who really looks forward to the call, Mrs. Levins said. "A couple of times I forgot and she called me."

Mrs. Levins' comments are typical of Telechat partners, says Carol Zubiak. Fourteen volunteers call 30 people, some referred by the Council's partners in Telechat: the Older Adult Wellness Program, Saskatoon

District Health, Services for Seniors and the Saskatoon Housing Authority.

She expects more seniors will want to sign up for Telechat now that winter is close, and is looking for more Televisitors. Mrs. Levins is ready to respond. "I think maybe I'll take another one on. It's very easy to do."

Others interested in reaching out to provide cheer to someone who needs someone to talk to can call Carol Zubiak at 683-2621.

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Exercise is her thing

By Ray Williams

It is difficult to say how many people Audrey Atchison has led in exercise or how many hours she has spent in gymnasiums and pools. But it's a lot.

The regular instructor of the SeniorAction program at the Saskatoon Field House, she has also made time to lead exercises for residents of Luther Tower, Elim Lodge and St. Ann's Home — despite a new, still-sore, hip.

Who knows, she may someday show us how to stretch and move about in our wheelchairs!

It was in the old YMCA where Mrs. Atchison began swimming and some general exercising in 1959, and there has been a lot of muscle stretching since, and perhaps a few tears, with sprains and broken bones.

But she had not been inactive before 1959. She took sons Glen and Bill and daughter Beverly — children of her marriage to Keith Atchison — and her niece with her to the First Avenue bowling alley, which had a children's play area.

When Beverly finished public school, her mother began swimming, and her involvement in this field continues to this day. Royal Life Saving and Red Cross

courses qualified her to instruct and examine swimmers, and as an examiner, she travels extensively. She also developed an aquacizing program that is still going strong after 31 years.

It was her activities at the YMCA which led to her development of a complete exercise program. Word of her success in handling groups of enthusiastic people who wanted to change their way of life by exercising crossed the city to the Saskatoon Field House.

Debbie Bell persuaded Mrs. Atchison to look at the Field House facilities and perhaps move across town. Early in 1983, she did so, beginning a new chapter in her life as the instructor of what is now known as the SeniorAction program, with 100-125 members.

Shifting to the Field House was just one of many moves in Mrs. Atchison's life. The first occurred when she was three and her family moved to Saskatoon from Regina when her father's railway job was transferred here.

She started public school at Buena Vista and then moved to Thornton — until the Army took it over early in the Second World War. She remembers the students parading down Lorne Avenue in their move to Buena Vista.

Audrey Atchison has had to deal with tragedy; her son Bill died in 1996 of cancer. But unless her health suddenly changes, she has no plans to retire to a soft chair on her deck. She'll keep on helping people to maintain their health, whatever their age.



Blindness Can't Stop This Senior

By Teresa Harley

Like many seniors, Glen Cross keeps busy — doing yard work, getting together with friends for curling, bowling and dancing, special hobbies such as Morse telegraphy, front-row seats at Persephone Theatre. He and his wife Gladys enjoy a special trip every two years, probably to Alaska next time.

What's different is that Mr. Cross is legally blind, caused by diabetes. That means careful planning but the couple usually achieve their goals.

Take curling. Mr. Cross joined a church league because it was not too competitive, and uses a "secret weapon" — his skip holds a flashlight instead of a broom when he delivers his rocks, for he can see the light. Or bowling, where his main problem is stepping over the line, so he incurs a fair number of penalties. Not to worry, the Crosses bowl with friends in the CN Pensioners Club.

A lifelong railroad man, Mr. Cross was literally born in a station. An agent like his father, he has lived in many Saskatchewan communities, especially Prince Albert. He keeps one skill honed through the Morse Telegraphy Club and enjoys putting on demonstrations at the Western Development Museum. He meets with his fellow CN Pensioners at a local mall and for monthly social get-togethers.

Until their dog Mikey died, daily walks helped keep Mr. Cross fit. Now he may get a seeing-eye dog. The couple plan to house-sit dogs and already have two customers lined up so they are taking an Extension Division course on first aid for dogs — Mr. Cross's first university class.

He is learning to walk with a cane, but will use



A railway crossing sign on the lawn signifies Glen Cross's long railway career

his treadmill when winter weather makes outside walking difficult.

Diminished eyesight has meant giving up many of his hobbies and he can no longer drive or read, but the move to Saskatoon four years ago means less driving and he and his wife enjoy listening to tapes, including the *United Church Observer*. "We get more out of listening than reading. The last one had a piece [about] Salisbury Cathedral, and as we'd been there we really enjoyed the talk," says Mrs. Cross.

Instead of square dancing, they now enjoy old-time dances. "I don't usually bump into too many people," says Mr. Cross. Diminished vision has not dimmed his sense of humour.

"You can't lie around too long," he says. "It happens, there's nothing you can do about it. There are always people worse off than you."

Mrs. Cross inspects his work after he has mowed the lawn, checking for patches he may have missed. Theirs is a partnership.

Macular degeneration threatens eyes

By Jenni Mortin

The first many seniors hear about age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is when the ophthalmologist says they have it. The incurable eye disease will change their lives.

"I'd never heard of it. It sounded terrible." Edith Sumner learned about 10 years ago that it was AMD in her right eye which made television blurry and caused pain in that eye.

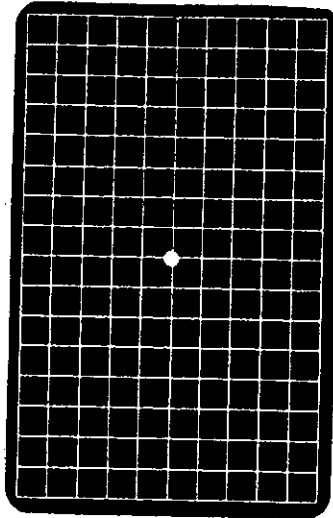
She's one of many. The Association for Macular Diseases, Inc., a U.S. group to which she belongs, says macular degeneration is the leading cause of legal blindness for Americans over 50. More than 165,000 new cases are reported a year, estimates the (U.S.) National Advisory Eye Council. Canada is unlikely to be different.

Macular degeneration is caused by the deterioration of the central portion of the retina, the inside back layer of the eye that records the images we see and sends them to the brain. That central portion — the macula — is responsible for focusing central vision. It controls the ability to read, drive, recognize faces or colours.

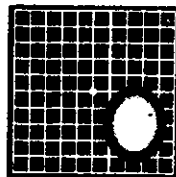
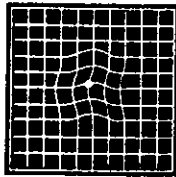
Why the macula deteriorates is unknown, but smoking habits, blood pressure or cholesterol levels seem to be influential. Wearing sunglasses and eating fruits and vegetables may be beneficial. There are two types: dry and wet. Mrs. Sumner's is dry, more common and less serious than the

Try this do-it-yourself exam: Hold this Amsler grid about a foot away, cover one eye at a time and look at the centre dot.

Grid as it should look to a person with normal vision.



Wavy distortions or a blank spot are signs of trouble to tell your eye doctor.



Sources: Foundation Fighting Blindness; Macula Foundation; New York Times Service; Globe and Mail

wet, but not amenable to laser treatment. The wet type may respond to laser if detected early enough, but can rapidly destroy central vision if not detected. With either type, lost vision cannot be restored.

Mrs. Sumner was in private practice in mediation and psychotherapy, with offices in Toronto and Mississauga, when macular degeneration was diagnosed. Soon she could not drive at night. She adapted her practice to require less reading.

When her left eye showed a 10-percent decline, she was prescribed a drug that combines vitamins, minerals and zinc, for much of the zinc in the body is contained in the retina.

There is no cure for this little-understood disease, but various treatments can slow or even halt its progress. Some researchers have reported benefits to the dry type from vitamins C and E plus minerals. Eating dark green leafy vegetables has an apparent protective effect to the retina. Helpful optical devices are available.

Mrs. Sumner is now 71 and living in Saskatoon and her eyes are holding steady. Her left eye has compensated for its damaged partner, and handles close work. Thankfully, she can still read. She eats a lot of fresh fruits and vegetables and believes the zinc and vitamins she takes "have probably been very helpful in not getting it in the left eye."

She used to do outdoor sports without prescription sunglasses. Now she wears hat and glasses outside, and needs her sunglasses in fluorescent lighting. She has her eyes checked every year, and finds *Eyes Only*, the newsletter of the U.S. association*, helpful and reassuring.

"They maintain you can lead a fairly ordinary lifestyle, making some adjustments." And she is.

*Association for Macular Diseases Inc., 210 E. 64th St., New York, NY 10021. Annual membership fee \$20.

Seniors are still globe-trotting

My husband and I are in our 80s and still travel. We did most of our big overseas trips in our 70s. Occasionally we made our own plans, as in Australia and New Zealand, but we came to enjoy small group travel (20-25 people) with various tour companies. Seniors can feel overwhelmed by numbers.

When travelling outside Canada, it is important to have health insurance. Without it, we would have incurred heavy medical expenses last year in Virginia, since my husband had to go twice to medical clinics for a nagging pain, query gallstones.

We try to take suitcases we can manage comfortably. There are, for instance, no porters in Greece or the Greek islands. Sensible walking shoes are a must. A fellow traveller to the Galapagos Islands who brought only high heels went home at the first opportunity.

I have to make myself cut down on clothes but it pays. Seniors may be troubled by extremes of heat and cold so layered outfits are preferable. Shirts, blouses and "smalls" that can be washed and dried easily in a hotel bedroom are the best investment. I take pantliners for reassurance.

Most of us need to take medication along. We also go prepared to cope with sore throats and small fevers. It is important to take anti-diarrheal precautions since unfamiliar food and questionable water may affect people. On a recent trip to Istanbul, Turkey, we unaccountably failed to do this and I would have been laid low without help from fellow travellers. Whenever possible we buy

By
Betty Gerrard



bottled water unless we are going to places like Britain or Scandinavia.

We take travellers' cheques for most of our expenses. In many countries, American dollars are accepted for casual payments, but the low rate of exchange makes this difficult. But globalization is helping. Two summers ago, on Santorini Island in the Aegean, we found an automatic teller where we acquired Greek money on our bank account in Saskatoon.

It is rewarding to go prepared about the geography and history of one's destination. If I am going to spend more than a day or two in a country, I get a small phrase book so I can at least say "please," "thank you" and other small courtesies.

I take a travel diary or a slim exercise book for comments and notes. Most important is to have a record of our travellers' cheques, details of our cameras and binoculars, addresses and phone numbers of our families back home.

Language should never be a worry. More and more people speak English and many want to do so. In China, we were frequently approached by people who wanted to

practise English. Only in Russia did my husband have difficulty. In Alma Ata, capital of Kazakhstan, he forgot to note the name of our hotel and all roads looked the same. Cleaning women on the streets knew no English. He remembered the hotel was near a church used as a museum and at last he found it.

Nothing abroad will be quite as you expect it to be, but both good and difficult experiences will be treasured memories.

Abbeyfield offers new type of housing for seniors

BY VERA-MARIE WOLFE

A new kind of housing for seniors is coming to Saskatoon.

It's called Abbeyfield housing. It had its genesis in England in 1956 and now accommodates about 9,000 residents in 1,100 houses worldwide. Canada has 20 such houses and at last count, 14 Abbeyfield societies were working to establish houses, including two in Saskatoon and Prince Albert.

Abbeyfield houses accommodate a small number of seniors—usually 7 to 10 persons each—and a housekeeper who lives on site. Residents pay a monthly fee to cover day-to-day costs. There are no income restrictions.

The houses provide care and companionship for elderly people who do not want to live alone yet don't need a nursing home. Residents furnish their individual bedsitting rooms with their own things, and share a common living room and dining room. The live-in housekeeper looks after the daily running of the house, the shopping and the preparation and serving of meals.

The Abbeyfield goal is to preserve residents' privacy and independence in supportive surroundings that free them from daily domestic chores.



While they are affiliated with Abbeyfield Canada which is affiliated with Abbeyfield International, it is the local societies which set up and manage houses. They are non-profit organizations and usually have charitable status.

The Abbeyfield Housing Society of Saskatoon recently conducted a needs assessment to find out if seniors here would be interested in living in an Abbeyfield house. The seniors and the adult children of seniors surveyed gave substantial support to the idea. Seventy-eight percent of the seniors expressed interest.

The survey was done by Ailsa Watkinson of Saskatoon, whose report recommended that Abbeyfield Saskatoon proceed with plans to set up a house in the city.

Her survey showed that potential tenants would like to see an Abbeyfield house that would:

- be accessible
- be close to shopping and a recreation centre
- provide a private wash-room for each tenant
- provide at least two meals a day
- provide some programming for physical activities and the arts
- provide tenants with the opportunity to set house rules.

The report recommended that Abbeyfield Saskatoon approach service organizations, corporations, private foundations and governments for assistance in funding the capital costs of an Abbeyfield house.

In Canada, the funds needed to build or renovate Abbeyfield houses have come from the community through donations or through partnership with service clubs or other organizations. In some cases, governments have provided assistance.

Vera-Marie Wolfe is a member

The Abbeyfield Housing Society of Saskatoon invites interested individuals to attend its next meeting, at noon on November 26 in the Community Clinic Annex, 424 First Avenue North. For more information, contact Jane Wagner at 664-4283 (w) or 664-8732 (h).

Kiwanis Seniors Reward Young Achievers

The Saskatoon Golden "Ks" are a unique club composed entirely of retirees from all walks of life. Professors and farmers trade experiences with engineers and salesmen, teachers and contractors. They drive less able people to appointments and visit the sick, as well as doing the Kiwanis community services.

It was the latter that spawned the idea for Young Achievers.

Lorne Paul, a retired Extension professor, pointed out to the group that many high school students who were good in their studies and organized their time to work outside the home went unrewarded. They worked because of need, often for many hours a week, and went to school full-time. Their marks were not quite good enough to get scholarships or bursaries, but they were leaders in school projects, music, drama or sports, the very material on which success is built.

He proposed that the Golden

By David Blyth

"Ks" should reward them with \$100 scholarships, basically recognition of young achievers. We raise the money through garage sales, the apple campaign with other Kiwanis clubs, the sale of Christmas fruitcakes, and our other usual methods of fund-raising, and by donations.

Since we began Young Achievers two years ago, we have given seven scholarships, two the first year and five this year. All of our winners have shown a bright-eyed attitude toward life.

■ One young man from a family of nine worked in a filling station 35 hours a week, tutored two students having trouble,

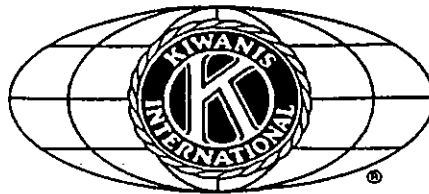
helped in school projects and kept a high 70s average.

■ A young woman refugee from Bosnia had an equally impressive record. She learned English and with her teammate won silver in the provincial debating competition. She plays for her church choir, teaches music while preparing for her Grade 9 music exam, and is a star basketball player.

How could anyone fail to admire these young achievers? They are so appreciative of our help, and the fun of working with young adults is just exceptional.

An especially good feeling comes over us when we honour this type of young person. There they stand at the gateway to adulthood, unfazed at the complicated life before them. Our members have a deep feeling of contentment, seeing that we have helped to forward this standard of excellence.

David Blyth is president of the Saskatoon Golden "Ks"



SSCL Offers Learning Opportunities to Seniors

Open minds can always learn, and Saskatoon Seniors Continued Learning Inc. (SSCL) continues to offer opportunities for those minds.

Started in 1982-83 as Saskatoon Seniors Cultural and Creative Studies Inc., with the goal of lifelong learning, SSCL offers classes to people 55 and older in co-operation with the University of Saskatchewan Extension Division.

The non-credit courses, taught by resource people arranged by the university, are offered on cam-

pus in the fall, winter and spring semesters. They are on subjects of broad appeal.

In the current semester, the eight classes are in history, geology, literature, music, religion and writing one's own history. The two classes for the winter semester in January and February are not yet set, says co-ordinator George James, but will likely be in geography and comparative religion. Details will be available from Mr. James at the Extension Division, 966-5560.