



COMING of AGE

C - Seniors
S - Blood Pressure, Walking
Exercise, grandpa
Autumn 2003
Walking Program
Health Care

A Publication of the Saskatoon Council on Aging

Celebrating ten great years of blood pressure clinics

How many people can claim that at 70 they started a project that is still a popular success a decade later?

Mary Levers can — and she's still happily involved at almost 80.

In 1993, she persuaded the Saskatoon Council on Aging to sponsor a monthly blood pressure clinic for seniors. She found other retired nurses who are committed to the project, and as of Sept. 2 this year, they had performed a total of 15,616 blood pressure tests.

Attendance the first Tuesday of each month ranges from 135 to 161, Mary's records show, with the record set in June last year, 202. In all of 2002, 1,809 people attended.

Some come regularly even if their blood pressure is normal, says Marg Dragan, like Mary a retired City Hospital nurse, who has helped at the clinics for nine years. "It's a social time." Coffee and cookies are available, thanks to long-time sponsor SaskTel.

At first, Mary did the testing and the late Toni Borsa registered patients. "When it got so I couldn't handle it, we got an extra set of equipment and another nurse,"



Nurses of the blood pressure clinics: from left, back, Loretta Kolbinson, Mary Levers, Helen Curliss, Betty Orchard; front, Marg Dragan, Ruthann Handbidge, Phyllis Brown. Inset, Phyllis Colquhoun, absent the day of the photo.

Mary says. Now she has a rota of volunteer nurses and registrars, and she weighs people, so notices if someone is accumulating fluid.

At the first clinic, Toni Borsa was the final patient, and her blood pressure proved to be "sky-high." Several times since, test results have sent Mary to the phone to urge someone's doctor to see him/her as soon as possible. When people phone later to say the doctor has put them on medication

in response to this timely warning, "that makes me feel really good," she says.

"Doctors are accepting us now," she adds with quiet pride. "We've certainly had no flak from any doctors."

"It's an exceptionally good volunteer project," she says. "It takes a bit to organize and keep it going, but as long as you're healthy..." She is very fit as she celebrates her 80th birthday over about six months rather than limit herself to the day, November 25.

The nurses, all 'people peo

(Continued on Page 8)

By Jenni Mortin



President's Message

BY ROWENA MCLELLAN

PRESIDENT, SASKATOON COUNCIL ON AGING

As the new president of the Council on Aging, I look forward to the activities planned for this year:

Our **general meetings and programs** are held at the Frances Morrison Library, Room 3, 1:30-3:00pm.

- Nov. 27 - Mickey MacLellan, motivational speaker
- Jan. 22 - Gordon Sellars, uses of library especially for seniors
- Mar. 25 - Alternative Therapies

Interesting programs have been planned for the **Drop-in Program** at Council's office on the third Wednesday of each month, 1-3:00 pm.

Seniors' Week, which advances seniors' quality of life

and showcases their accomplishments, will be over by the time you read this. I hope you enjoyed some of the programs offered around the province. Our evaluation of the 2002 event showed the need for more publicity directed at senior groups, governments and the public, so Council developed a kit with a poster to advertise it.

We hope Seniors' Week in 2005, Saskatchewan's Centennial, will include neighbourhood events, intergenerational projects, lifelong learning opportunities, active living events (a fashion show or art exhibit?). The possibilities are endless.

Spotlight on Seniors will be held Nov. 5, 2003 at the Centennial Auditorium, our partner. We hope many seniors take in this entertaining, educational event. More details in an insert in this issue.

Free senior directories will be available soon on Council's web site, www.scoa.ca. A revised *Directory of Services for Older Adults* (also available at the office) and a new *Directory of Recreation and Leisure Activities for Older Adults* were developed with the Saskatoon Housing Authority, the U of S College of Kinesiology, Older Adult Wellness of Public Health Services and the Saskatoon Health Region.

Just for Seniors... Forever...in motion



In motion is a health promotion strategy, focusing on physical activity, that is led by the Saskatoon Health Region and its partners, the City of Saskatoon, the University of Saskatchewan and ParticipACTION. Its vision is to have everyone in Saskatoon and area include regular physical activity in their daily lives, with the goal of making this the healthiest community in Canada through physical activity!

The Older Adult Initiative focuses on issues related to seniors and physical activity. The **Forever...in motion** program was implemented in spring 2002 as a pilot project in eight congregate housing facilities. It now includes approximately 500

By Brenda Temple

seniors participating regularly at 13 such housing facilities, two churches and one seniors club.

Most **Forever...in motion** programs include gentle stretching, low-impact cardio and light-weight strengthening exercises. However, any type of physical activity for older adults may be considered a **Forever...in motion** program and receive sup-

port and assistance from **in motion**. Program leaders have primarily been trained by a 16-hour Link to Health program provided by the Red Cross.

In motion is recruiting leaders for upcoming training sessions. If you are interested in becoming a leader for older adult programs or implementing a **Forever...in motion** program, please contact our info line at 655-3648.

Brenda Temple is a Recreation Therapist with in motion.

Coming of Age

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WHEN GRANDPARENTS BECOME PARENTS AGAIN

By Dorothy Bird

I am one of an increasing number of grandparents who are grandparents in name only. In fact, we are 'parents' to our grandchildren, their sole support, security and source of nurturing. The latest Canadian census found 575 children in Saskatoon living in grandparent-headed homes where no parent is present, and 4,100 such grandfamilies in Saskatchewan.

The children we raise are not from teen pregnancies but are the offspring of our adult children. They are often affected by prenatal drugs and post-natal traumas, and may have been neglected, isolated, abused or malnourished. Their mental, physical and emotional health may be impaired in some way. We grandparents have opted to nurture them when their parents could not or would not.

What has caused this fast-growing phenomenon? American studies indicate that 87 percent of grandchildren in grandparent-headed homes are there directly or indirectly as a result of drug and alcohol abuse. Parents' lifestyles have led to addiction, crime, incarceration, sickness or death, and thence to child neglect, abuse or abandonment. Grandparents may have stepped in early, or when Child Protection apprehended the children. Often we expected to help only briefly.

We have become parents again! And we feel unprepared, isolated and often resentful, overwhelmed emotionally and ex-

hausted physically. We must learn how to respond to the security, emotional, physical and learning problems of the children we raise and love. We must learn techniques and strategies to effectively treat disorders such as RAD, ADD, ADHD, FAS, FAE which we never heard of when we were parents, and to alleviate other traumas, limitations and disabilities.

Our adult children
made lifestyle choices
that did not respect
the rights of
their children.

To learn, to support each other and to advocate for parenting grandparents, last fall we founded Grandparents Involved Full Time (GIFT)-Saskatchewan's only non-profit, grandparent self-help group.

GIFT meetings provide a safe outlet for emotional release. We find strength and encouragement by sharing the feelings of resentment, despair, disappointment, sadness, anger, guilt, frustration and failure that overwhelm each of us to varying degrees. Knowing others who are always tired but take time to read to a child, whose house may be messy but the diapers are clean, strengthens us. We gain emotional calm by being

with others who have failing health, energy and finances; whose homes shrunk in accommodating cribs, strollers, toys etc.; who will not retire to travel or pursue long-held dreams. At GIFT, fear and isolation are being replaced with comfort, confidence and unity.

Our adult children made lifestyle choices that did not respect the rights of their children. We merely intervened. At the time most of us did not fully comprehend the scope of the task, nor its permanency, or realize that the dynamics of our entire family, from our parents and senior in-laws to our other grandchildren, would be altered.

Why do we do it? Is there another choice? Adoption? Foster homes? We have chosen to keep the family connection. We do the best we can. We learn, we love, we nurture.

GIFT reaches out to support other recycled parents. It has partnered with the Community University of Social Research in a demographic study of Saskatoon's grandparent-headed households to ascertain their holistic health. There is little Canadian research in this area. We hope beneficial policies will develop from the research findings.

For more information, call Dorothy at 382-3650 or d.gift@sasktel.net

Writing seniors produce anthology

By Louie Wright

I first learned of The Writing Circle from an insert in an earlier issue of *Coming of Age*. When I read the notice, I pictured a group of people gathered in a circle around a table, writing, reading, learning and revising while enjoying the company of others with a similar interest. "That's for me," I said to myself.

Sixty seniors joined The Writing Circle, meeting in various places in the city; my group was assigned a room in the Council on Aging. Ten was the limit that could be accommodated in any one group, to facilitate discussion and feedback. Writing materials were supplied.

We began in March, meeting every other week until the middle of June, six sessions in all. Our goal was to publish a book of our work. Lloyd Ratzlaff, author, editor and seniors' co-ordinator of READ Saskatoon, led us through our classes with patience and encouragement, imparting his knowledge and expertise, ever

mindful of our feelings.

Although some of us were strangers at first, we soon became friends and the time flew as we cherished every minute. We were a motley crew with a variety of styles and subject matter. Each had a personal reason for taking part, but I believe a majority of us saw The Writing Circle as an opportunity to improve our writing skills, broaden our horizons in the realm of writing, and set new goals. Several times I overheard this remark, "Without this workshop I wouldn't be writing." Some-

times we need a nudge to get us started. During our last session we read our contributions and enjoyed a time of fellowship. Our book is aptly entitled, *Seeing It Through*. The cover, unique and meaningful, was designed with photographs by Lloyd Ratzlaff. We each received two copies.

On behalf of all of us fortunate enough to take part in The Writing Circle, I extend our sincere appreciation for such a stimulating and worthwhile project. I think we have all been encouraged to continue writing. I know I have.



Proud Writers: Lloyd Ratzlaff, top back, and The Writing Circle that met at the Council. Back, Dave Aldous, Verna Landry, Aline Perret-Vallee; front, guest Marie Thelander, a writer and poet, Louie Wright, Jeanette Berthiaune. Lloyd says they were "wonderful people, humble, funny, grateful for everything."

Living Simply: Useful Help for those newly on their own

by Millie Reynolds

Life changes continually, so people sometimes have to assume new family responsibilities. Lack of knowledge or skills to comfortably carry out new duties can leave a person struggling and searching for support. Help may be found in *Living Simply*, a 220-page handbook prepared by the Association of Saskatchewan Home Economists (Saskatoon).

Living Simply offers grassroots information on wellness, food preparation, home management and facing the future on your own -- useful to the recently bereaved, young people leaving home, new singles or people considering "retiring" or "downsizing" housekeeping responsibilities.

The wellness section encourages participation and suggests easy, inexpensive activities.

Information on nutrition, meal planning, food

safety and kitchen basics introduces the food preparation/recipe section. Recipes are fast and easy and contain common ingredients. Although most make one or two servings, many recipes can be made in larger quantities and eaten the following day or frozen.

Home management covers housekeeping, laundry, consumerism and personal safety.

Facing the Future... On Your Own offers support to those who have lost a loved one and are working through the grieving process. Guidelines give help in assessing your financial situation and determining how much money you need to live on. Basic information pertinent to entering into a new living arrangement concludes the section.

Living Simply, now in a second printing, is available at the Council office on 25th Street East (652-2255) for \$10.00 if it's picked up, \$15.00 if mailed.



Family Stamp Business



An Excellent Retirement Project

By Jeanette Dean

The tax advisor, a “specialist” we consulted three years ago, looked at us rather pityingly and gently said, “You know you can lose money for up to five years?” My husband Chris and I looked at each other, left quickly and exploded in the car. Did he think we were bungling amateurs playing with this idea of a small philatelic business? That we were past it?

We’d show him, and the whole world!

The idea of going into business had been growing for a year. For almost his whole life, Chris had collected stamps, spending many hours assembling a good collection. He had exhibited and judged at shows. Our children and grandchildren were not interested in stamps. What was he to do with his collection?

Tentatively, he said, “Do you think we could start a small home business and become stamp dealers?” I knew nothing about stamps except that they kept him happy and cost money, but this sounded like fun. “Sure,” I said. “I’ll be the joe-girl.” I knew it would mean going to shows in at least the western cities and envisioned exciting weekends with the work fitted in somewhere.

For a year, we went to shows to learn. I was sent to ask the dumb questions: How do we get a table? How much does it cost? Like a master spy I circled the tables to see how dealers priced their stock, while Chris talked learnedly to two dealers he knew well about profit margins, discounts and the need for

specialization (and physical fitness – those little scraps of paper get heavy!)

We got a business name, bought catalogues, put our stamps in envelopes in 13 shiny red boxes and booked a table in Edmonton. We arrived at the Fantasyland Hotel ready to set up, and went apprehensively to a room where 16 dealers stopped setting up and stared. We were terrified. Would they resent us, think we were presumptuous amateurs, laugh at our pathetically small stock and our homemade sign? No way. Everyone was helpful and friendly and we entered a welcoming new world.

The next morning brought another panic attack. Would customers even come to our table? Gradually they did, most being elderly, serious, male collectors. I felt I had done well to learn the terms mint, hinged, perforation, die and perfin in three months, but I was still a stamp ignoramus and could be teased. It was a heavy learning weekend. I found out what “duck” stamps are (no, they have no ducks on them), large Queens and Cinderellas.

We made a small profit and continue to do so after three years and more than 30 shows. We’ve learned a lot. Going to a show cannot also be a holiday. After the long hours, you’re too dead beat to take in anything cultural in the evenings. No romantic candlelight dinners – maybe a hamburger on the run. Hotels are expensive so we set off or arrive home by moon light.

There’s no stopping to visit places on the way because the valuable stock cannot be left alone. We’ve survived dropping the boxes and having to re-sort thousands of stamps. We’ve driven over treacherous icy roads and through blinding snowstorms.

But – we now have a display table to be proud of. Our daughter bought a great lamp and fancy extension and Chris made the neatest shelves in the show. Our brother-in-law, a retired postmaster in England, sent us a framed penny black and twopenny red, very early, valuable British stamps that attract customers but can never be sold.

We have made many new friends among dealers and customers. Some dealers are part-time, like us, but everyone shares the love of stamps. We visit with regular customers: old farmers from Northern Alberta, the woman in Edmonton who collects only stamps with frogs, the Moose Jaw teacher who brings her Grades 4-6 stamp club to the show in Regina.

Best of all, CJ Stamps has been something challenging for Chris and I to do together. After 40 years with different careers, this experience is fun and exciting and can be recommended as a retirement project.

Fall is here and we hope to be on our way to more shows with 35 red boxes. We’re still very small but growing, and not ready to give up.

Jeanette Dean is a member of the Publications Committee.



Striding Out Safely in Winter

By
**Ginnie
Hartley**

Winter in Saskatchewan. It's cold, it's dark and it's slippery outside. All that snow and ice may look like a Christmas card when you're in your warm, cosy home, but when you're out on the streets – beware!

What can you do to prevent falling on the ice? Canes or walking sticks can be fitted with an ice pick to give you some added support, but taking some precautions with your footwear is the most important step you can take to protect yourself.

Make sure your shoes fit well. Have your feet measured every time you purchase shoes; your shoe size and shape may change (diabetes and arthritis can cause your feet to alter).

Avoid high heels (less than 1½" is recommended) and smooth, thick or slippery soles. The flatter your shoes are, the more surface will be on the ground and the safer you will be.

Shoes with laces are safer than slip-ons.

Consider having ribbed soles added to your winter shoes. Normal soles get hard in our low winter temperatures, but 100% rubber soles and heels remain flexible and won't crack in the cold.

Al Wickstrom at Broadway Shoe Repair sells two products that can also keep you safer when walking on ice. They fit like rubbers and have carbide spikes that dig into the ice and give you good traction. Both come in three sizes.

- "Get-a-Grip" (\$44.95 per pair) has spikes on both the heel and sole (a strap that runs across) which can be replaced if necessary. They will pull out if they catch in cracks in the sidewalk; it's best to wear them only in snowy and icy conditions.

- The lighter-weight "Spiky" (\$35.95 per pair) has spikes only on the sole.

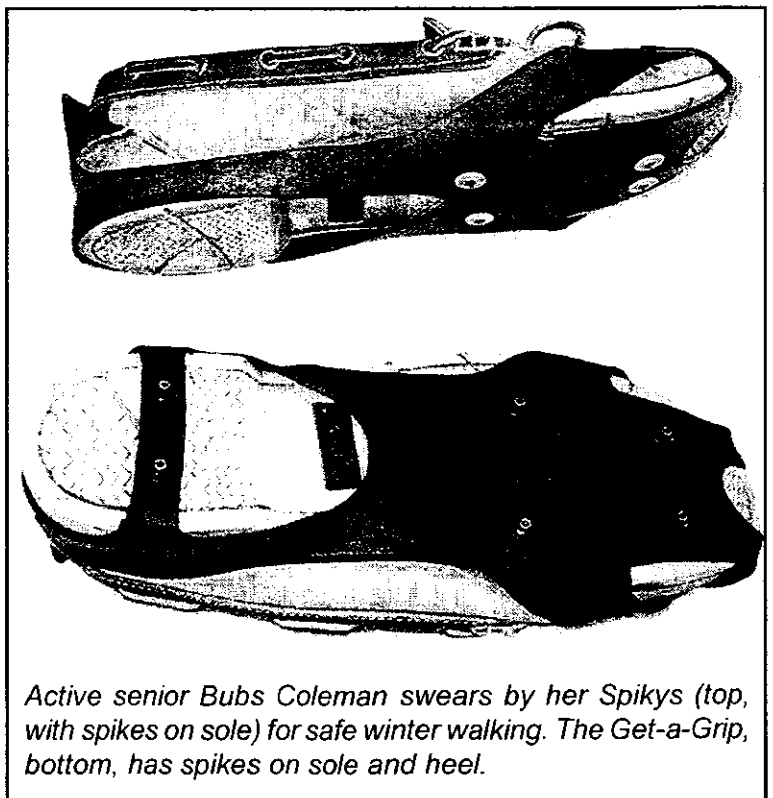
Bubs Coleman is a senior who has been wearing Spikys for several years whenever she walks on ice and snow, and swears by them.

She says they build confidence because they grip the ice. She would recommend them for everyone, she says, pointing out that they cost a lot less than a hip replacement as a result of a fall. She has suggested that all Saskatchewan seniors should be provided with a pair of Spikys free of charge.

Other things you can do to help ensure safe walking: Call the city if the sidewalks in your area are slippery; call your building manager if the pathway to your building has an ice build-up.

Winter in Saskatchewan may be cold and dark and icy, but you can still get out and about if you take precautions.

Ginnie Lawman is a Saskatoon freelance writer with a special interest in seniors.



Active senior Bubs Coleman swears by her Spikys (top, with spikes on sole) for safe winter walking. The Get-a-Grip, bottom, has spikes on sole and heel.

Individualized Funding Option May Ensure the Support System You Want

By Jenni Mortin

Do you know that home care has an option that lets you arrange and manage your own support services or those needed by a family member, helped by funding from the health region home care program?

It's called the individualized funding option.

If you are eligible for home care and have long-term needs, this option may be available to you or your family member, says a Saskatchewan Health pamphlet. It lets you have more flexibility and control in the way your support needs are met. To participate, you (or your family member) must be living at home, not in a personal care home, group home or long-term care facility.

The funding is based on your needs as assessed by home care staff, and will vary for each person. You use it to pay for the kind of support services that are typically available from home care, such as personal care. Professional health services such as registered nursing or

therapies are not included, but are still available through home care.

This kind of option was sought for years by advocacy groups for people with disabilities, who wanted more consistency in their caregivers, more independence and the dignity of directing their own care.

Individualized funding lets you have more flexibility and control in the way your support needs are met.

Here's an example:

Suppose you are assessed as needing 100 hours of support service per month. The health region would provide \$1,500 (100 hours x \$15), and from that money you must pay the salary and benefits of the person providing the 100 hours.

You must arrange, manage and account for your support services, by:

⌘ Hiring and training personal staff, who cannot be

family members or, in some cases, home care employees

- ⌘ Handling scheduling and payroll, including deductions for income tax, Canada Pension, Employment Insurance, etc.

- Applying for coverage under The Workers Compensation Act, and meeting labour, occupational health and safety, income tax and other standards
- Establishing a back-up care plan that does not rely on home care

- Reporting to the Regional Health Authority regularly
- Paying applicable home care fees.

Some interested people have been concerned about the paperwork involved in the regular reporting. Help with this may be available from certain advocacy groups.

More information is available from Saskatoon Health Region Client/Patient Access Services (655-4346), from Terry Blackmore at Saskatchewan Health (1-306-787-1502) or from community-based agencies.

Tax Credit Available for Caregivers

Many seniors are caring at home for family members who are dependent due to mental or physical infirmity. The federal and provincial governments recognize the financial stress this may cause, and provide, through the income tax system, various non-refundable tax credits that can reduce the income tax you would otherwise pay.

One such credit is the Caregiver Amount, which you may claim if you live with and care for a parent or grandparent (65 or older), or other relatives, including a brother, sister,

aunt, uncle, nephew or niece (18 or older and dependent on you by reason of their infirmity), whose net income is less than \$16,172.

The basic Caregiver Amount for 2003 is \$3,663 and is reduced dollar for dollar by your relative's income in excess of \$12,509. This can reduce 2003 federal taxes by up to \$586 (16%) and Saskatchewan provincial taxes by \$403 (11%) for individuals residing with and providing in-home care for a qualified relative – a possible total income tax reduction of \$989. That's not something to sneeze at.

Handy Glossary to Interpret Those Glowing Movie Blurbs

Movie blurb lingo, as depicted on the DVD and tape boxes that line the walls of video stores, is meant to be deceiving. People get paid by newspapers, magazines and even cable channels to write about movies they may or may not have seen, and other people are hired by the movie studios to winnow these comments down to a few pithy words. To help you in your quest for worthwhile time-wasters, you might want to memorize the following glossary of lies.

"I laughed till I cried." . . . ("Too bad it was a drama.")

"Meryl Streep has never been funnier." . . . ("Meryl Streep has never been funny.")

"The best movie of this or any other year." . . . ("Any other year divisible by 17, that is.")

"Rip-roaring entertainment for the whole family." . . . ("The X-rated stuff is two aisles over.")

"A dramatic tour-de-force." . . . ("Moody, lots of symbolism, Danish actors, boring.")

"Four and a half stars!" ("Out of ten.")

"This movie will have you rolling in the aisles." . . . ("As people stampede to escape the theatre.")

"Directed by award-winner Bosco Fleamartin." . . . ("He was awarded a subpoena once for creating a public nuisance of himself.")

"A Canadian masterpiece." . . . ("With American actors, shot in Vancouver to save money. Blood by Heinz.")

"An absolute gorefest where nothing is left to the imagination." . . . ("And therein lies the problem.")

"Nothing you have ever seen will prepare you for this." . . . ("That's why we don't give refunds.")

"Terrific soundtrack!" . . . ("Played back beyond the threshold of pain.")

"Two thumbs up!" . . . ("But the other eight fingers are down.")

"Two hours of blistering sensuality." . . . ("Lots of bare-naked stuff shot indoors to save on expensive sets.")

"An epic tale of passion and adventure that will enthrall you from beginning to end." . . . ("The end for you will be 8:30, when you fall asleep.")

"A tear-jerker in the hallowed tradition of Terms of Endearment." . . . ("So why not rent Terms of Endearment instead?")

"An entertainment bombshell." . . . ("The studio is still picking shrapnel out of its hide from this turkey.")

"Gives new meaning to the word 'wow!'" . . . ("That's 'wow' as in 'bow-wow.'")

"See it with someone you love." . . . ("It will be a great test of your relationship.")

"A great ensemble cast." . . . ("Working from a script typed by an ensemble of monkeys.")

"This movie will change your life." . . . ("It will make two hours feel like eight.")

Michael Gillgannon

Space, Staff Are Excellent, Say Clinic Veterans (Continued from Page 1)

ple', get to know the clinic regulars, Marg says, so if their blood pressure changes sharply, "we ask why? And find out they didn't take their pill, or are under stress, or didn't renew their prescription."

Space in the Council's new premises in the Community Village is excellent, they say, as are the helpful Council staff. Mary's dog Jessie breaks the ice and makes everyone feel welcome, gobbling up any bits of cookie she is given. Some people bring dog

biscuits for her.

In addition to SaskTel's support, Jerry Meckleborg of RPS Retirement Planning Specialists Inc. funds the sandwich lunch provided for the morning and afternoon shifts of volunteer nurses and registrars. Another much-appreciated gift came from former Council on Aging president Mary Helen Richards and her husband, Howard.