



# COMING of AGE

A Publication of the Saskatoon Council on Aging

## Council focuses on elder abuse

**SPOTLIGHT ON SENIORS ON OCT. 3**

*By Jenni Mortin*

The Saskatoon Council on Aging has a new focus on the old topic of elder abuse – which can be physical, emotional or financial, can affect adults in vulnerable circumstances and often hides behind closed doors and lips.

Early in 2005, the Council called together groups interested in the subject, says president Muriel Baxter. It proposed to examine the systems that protect vulnerable seniors from abuse – from laws to helping agencies –

and the protocols of dealing with it when it occurs, “and to build on the positives already out there.”

The Council, which in the early 1990s was a driving force in developing a protocol for looking into suspected cases of elder abuse, hopes to discover whether there is a role for it today in making constructive changes to help prevent abuse.

Many agencies focus on specific aspects of this problem, and the Council hopes to work

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*By Diane Hergott*

Seniors Week is imminent and the Saskatoon Council on Aging, in partnership with the Centennial Auditorium, again presents Spotlight on Seniors. The big day is Monday, Oct. 3.

The Auditorium’s lower level will bustle from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. with commercial and non-commercial booths displaying goods, services, information and entertainment. There’ll be craft demonstrations and physical activities of

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### **Nursing Grads of 1945 Still Going Strong**



Memories and laughs were shared when ten 1945 graduates of City Hospital’s School of Nursing celebrated this year. Thirty-one grads remain of the class of 42, says Mary Levers, organizer of the Council’s blood pressure clinics. She says training was hard “but we had a great time. We made our own fun.” The alumnae are, from left, Eileen Smith, Audrey Holmes, Esther Jones, Bessie Gibbings, Mary Levers, Laura Shepherd, Lee Metcalfe, Shirley Newby, Elva Wishlow, Margaret Wallace.



# President's Message

**BY MURIEL BAXTER**

**PRESIDENT, SASKATOON COUNCIL ON AGING**

**A**s we move into fall, we adjust to a busier schedule of activities. Council's drop-in program continues to provide interesting things to do on the third Wednesday each month, along with tours throughout the year. Individual computer instruction is offered at the Resource Centre.

Be sure to include Spotlight on Seniors in your schedule. It promises to be even bigger and better this year. Council and the

Saskatchewan Seniors Fitness Association are planning a seniors walk/luncheon on Sept. 28 as part of Seniors' Week. Call 652-2255 by Sept. 20 to register, or for more information. Lunch is provided.

Two new members have joined Council's board. We welcome Kamal Parmar and Eleanor Williams and look forward to working with them. We have also been fortunate to have Elliott Paus-Jenssen involved as

a consultant on our Elder Abuse Task Force. Her experience and expertise in this area have been invaluable as we seek effective ways to address this issue.

We are grateful to Jubilee Ford for again inviting the Council to participate in a noon barbecue as a fundraiser for our organization.

We trust that each of you participated in Centennial celebrations in some way. If you haven't, there is still time!

## Physical Exercise Can Help Prevent Falls

*By Brenda Temple*

Programs to prevent falls stress the value of an active lifestyle in reducing the risk and severity of such accidents. Physical activity, whether it's golfing, swimming, walking or gardening, helps reduce the risk of injury through:

- increase in joint mobility
- development of stronger bones and muscles
- improvement in heart and lung function.

With stronger muscles and bones, your balance and coordination improve, reducing your risk of falling. The improved strength, flexibility and posture from physical activity help you move around more easily, thereby increasing independence.

*What kind of activity is best for improving bone and muscle?*

**Weight-bearing exercise** in which bones and muscles work against the force of gravity, and your feet and legs carry your weight – walking, dancing and stair climbing are examples.

**Resistance exercise** involves moving objects with your own weight to create resistance. It strengthens the muscles being worked, which strengthens the bones in that area. Hand-weights,

therabands and swimming are resistance exercises.

*What kind of activity is best for improving balance and coordination?*

**Balance and leg strengthening exercises, and TaiChi.**

For more information or to get a physical activity program started, please contact the *in motion* info line at 655-DO IT.

 **in motion**  
Physical Activity - do it for life!

*Brenda Temple is a recreation therapist with the Saskatoon Health Region's Older Adult Program.*

### Coming of Age

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# After Overcoming Much, Elder Helps Many

By Jenni Martin

**H**elen Isbister survived residential school, two abusive marriages, alcoholism and years as a single mother on welfare to become one of the social workers she once hated and, today, at 78, a Cree elder recognized and respected among her people and in the wider community.

We met to talk about the role of elders in First Nations life. "I don't know really what an elder is," she admitted. At a two-day conference last spring, participants agreed that "elder" is like a brand name. They prefer to be called "kay-tay-yak" – Cree for "old people". "We are old people that people recognize as leaders."

Some elders work in sweat lodges, some do pipe ceremonies, some are medicine men and medicine women. There are traditional counsellors and teachers and others who do a lot of public speaking and community humanitarian work.

An elder doesn't hang out a shingle. "To me, you're chosen by your community, recognized by the community as a helping, healthy person for whom compassion and sharing in the life of the community comes first," Helen says. Elders are able to help others because they have



**"Being a senior isn't forever. You're writing your final chapter. My circle has been blessed."**

**-- Helen Isbister**

lived long and gone through so much.

Her long life began happily on the Mistawasis reserve near Blaine Lake, but happiness ended at seven when she and her four brothers were taken to residential school. The goals, she said, were to Christianize, assimilate and educate, to separate them from their traditional ways.

For 10 miserable years she worked mornings and went to school after lunch; she was often beaten. She married two abusive men and after the marriages ended in divorce and death, raised 13 children on welfare. She became an alcoholic, living through what she calls her "black period" before she began the healing journey that led to her present contentment and ability to contribute to her community.

Living in Prince Albert with her children, she quit drinking and began volunteering at the Friendship Centre. When the

kids left home, she moved to Saskatoon and became a mature student of the University of Regina, beginning in arts but urged by the Dean to transfer to social work.

"I was at an identity crisis in my life. I had to go back to my roots and everything I had before came flooding back. Gifts I didn't know I had came blooming forth."

Armed with two degrees, she was hired as the first native social worker in St. Paul's Hospital emergency. In her seven years there, she saw so much pain – self-inflicted wounds, alcohol and drug problems, "so much death that didn't need to be, it made me respect life and want to be a helper more."

Earning the respect of her co-workers and the people they all worked with was powerful and beautiful, she says. "I think I was placed there to counteract the stereotype."

After retiring from St. Paul's,

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# You Can Rent Movies by Internet and Mail

**By Michael Gillgannon**

**C**inephiles, take note: There's an alternative to the local video rental place that might be worth your while. Like so many things these days, it can be found on the world wide web, and numerous versions operate in Canada.

I'm referring to online DVD rental companies that will sign you up as a member and mail you the movies of your choice from a very large list (much larger than any conventional video store can manage). The amount you pay determines how many DVDs you can have out at any time (in most cases, three, four or five), with the price ranging from \$20-\$30 per month. Theoretically, that \$25 or so can net you well over 10 movies a month, depending on how efficient a viewer you are. There is no time limit but the longer you keep them, the slower the turnover.

Other facts to be aware of:

You pay by providing a credit

card number, with the appropriate amount deducted once a month. Most, if not all, companies provide a free trial period, usually two weeks.

DVDs are mailed to you and you mail them back in the envelopes provided. The company pays postage both ways.

## Quick Turnaround

You can count on the companies for quick turnaround times, but Canada Post is not the zippiest service imaginable. Five days in the mail (each direction) is not unusual. This is made worse by the fact that all the companies seem to be located as far from Saskatchewan as possible.

How do they know what to send you? You build up a list of desirable DVDs. At least 20 titles are recommended. The websites provide useful information about the movies on offer (top 100, Oscar winners, browse by genre, etc.)



And since you're already on the computer, there is an ocean of movie knowledge at your fingertips (IMDb.com, rottentomatoes.com, efilmcritic.com, and dozens more.) It's much easier to make informed decisions this way than to wrack your brain in the aisle of a video rental emporium. (I think Ebert liked that. Or did he despise it?)

That list you provide can be updated and rearranged at any time. If a particular title is out, the next on the list will be sent.

So, while Canada Post cripples the DVD-by-mail system to some degree, it can be a good choice if you're patient, if you hate having to return movies within a certain time, and if you have wide-ranging cinematic taste.

A partial list of online DVD rental outfits includes zip.ca, vhqonline.ca, moviesforme.ca, starflix.ca, dvdhype.com, and dvd-rental.ca.

*Michael Gillgannon is a member of the Publication Committee.*

## Helping families (Continued from Page 3)

she was sought by the Saskatoon Tribal Council for its CHUMS – Creative Healing for Urban Members – and parenting programs. In 7½ years there, she has worked with Inner City families with issues of abandonment, alcohol, drugs, violence at home, children left to raise themselves, “people still struggling with their problems.” And, she says happily, “I’ve seen so many success stories.”

“Life experiences are very powerful tools and

you have to experience alcohol, violence, abandonment, loneliness, hunger, all these negatives before you can help other people who are experiencing them. You go through training for your inner spirit.”

She also works two days a week at SIAST as a traditional counsellor of aboriginal students in the Adult Basic Education program.

Now, she says, it's hard to believe life can be so beautiful. “Being a senior isn't forever; you're writing your final chapter. My circle has been blessed.”

*Jenni Mortin is editor of Coming of Age.*

# From home to health, Cliff Shockey is grounded in nature



Ginnie Hartley

*Cliff and Sylvie Shockey at their home near Vanscoy*

**Y**ou may recall Cliff Shockey for instigating the senior Saskwalk for Health last spring, but there is much more to this former insurance agent/Saskatoon berry farmer/Costa Rican bed and breakfast operator who says he'll never retire from life.

Cliff remembers his dad talking about "rammed earth houses," an ancient form of construction using earth "rammed" into place. (Rome's great foe Hannibal built watchtowers this way.) His dad also instilled in him the importance of good health and using earth's resources wisely, lessons he lives by.

In keeping with his philosophy of recycling and using natural products, Cliff lives just outside Vanscoy in a stackwall house – the second he's built – that won him Harrowsmith magazine's energy-efficient house design competition in 1993. Stackwall or cordwood houses are built from round logs embedded in cement.

What sets Cliff's apart is that he used double wall construction: an eight-inch exterior wall of cordwood backed by particle board sheathing to keep out weather and insects, 10 inches of batt insulation, a polyethylene vapor barrier and an inside six-inch cordwood wall. Recycled utility poles and salvaged cedar fence posts make the walls. Cliff reuses materials from the acreage's old barns and outbuildings to add to his beautiful home as floor boards, stair treads and furniture.

## Ill Health

In the late 1980s, his health was poor and his doctors warned he would be on medication for the rest of his life. He refused to believe this and started on a quest for better health through diet and personal growth. As his health gradually returned, and realizing that education and awareness were the

keys to preventing chronic disease, he wanted to share what he had learned to promote healthy lifestyles, including physical fitness, balanced diet and a positive social environment.

Out of this came, gradually, Saskwalk for Health, in which senior citizens would walk the length of Saskatchewan, celebrating its centennial. They hoped to set an example by celebrating the accomplishments of the generations that built the province and to raise funds to establish a foundation to fund educational events to promote healthy lifestyles, which would reduce health care costs.

## Saskwalk

Saskwalk for Health started in mid-March on the Saskatchewan/Northwest Territories border at Selwyn Lake. Accompanied by a somewhat reluctant motorhome that blew a radiator hose and a fuel pump before ending up in a ditch, a series of 20 senior skiers and walkers made their way south through Black Lake, La Ronge, Prince Albert, Saskatoon and Regina, ending up 975 miles later at the North Dakota border. They walked 40 to 50 miles a day for 22 days, in a four-man leapfrog system that allowed time to recuperate.

Although the walk did not raise the funds Cliff hoped for, he considers it a success and treasures the dedication of his fellow walkers and the kindness of people along the way who opened their homes and hearts.

Always active, Cliff plays golf, old timers' hockey and slow pitch, gardens and uses recycled materials to enhance his house and yard. He has never smoked or drunk alcohol or coffee.

*Ginnie Hartley is a Saskatoon writer interested in seniors.*

# BE PART OF SASKATOON'S CENTENNIAL FESTIVITIES

By Bubs Coleman

Saskatoon's 100th birthday in 2006 will be a year-long celebration, and seniors will be important contributors to the festivities. So start planning now to make this the best centennial ever.

It's "our time to shine."

Because seniors have contributed so much to Saskatoon for so many years, we have a unique opportunity to make history come alive, celebrate current happenings, and participate and advise on future events – especially in this festive year. There are many ways: encourage family members who have left the city to revisit; plan a community event celebrating a bit of neighbourhood history; get to know neighbors with a tenants' association party; write your family's story in this province. The possibilities are endless.

To provide a focus throughout the year, a Centennial Committee, chaired by Darlene Bessey, has planned key events. Centennial will be launched with New

Year's Day in the Park, with bonfires, sleigh rides, tobogganing and music at Diefenbaker Park.

In mid-February a no-cost, accessible Winter Day of Fun for the Family will be enjoyed by grandkids to grandparents, with ice sculpture workshops, storytelling, crafts and winter sports demonstrations at the YWCA, Kinsmen Park and the Mendel Gallery.

Spring will salute the city's ties to rail and river with Right on Track: 100 Years of Looking Back, Looking Forward – a declaration dinner and revue at the Western Development Museum on May 26, followed the next day with Back to the Days When the Carnival Came to Town – a public fun event on the Exhibition Grounds re-enacting simple carnival activi-

ties.

Summer events will stretch from May through August and incorporate all our current summer festivals, perhaps with a bridge party. A Saskatoon Harvest Celebration in September at the Forestry Farm will recognize our agricultural roots, and Celebrating Our Heroes in Sports, Sciences, Arts, Business, Education and Culture is proposed for a November date to be determined.

The celebrations will conclude with the passing of the centennial torch on New Year's Eve to the University of Saskatchewan to celebrate its 100th anniversary in 2007.



It will be a fun-filled, meaningful year, and seniors can play a special part – leading, organizing, participating, having fun. The Citizens Centennial Committee is ready to help with ideas, a centennial website for your event ([www.saskatoon100.ca](http://www.saskatoon100.ca))

and a special tool kit to help you plan, develop and stage your activities.

For more information on how you can be part of Saskatoon's special year, contact Kim Ali, project co-ordinator, at 652-1400, or Bubs Coleman, seniors' representative, at 652-9044.

## Century Club's Saskatoon Branch Plans More Activities This Fall

The Saskatoon branch of the Century Club now has more than 140 members over 90, who have every intention of living to 100. It plans an event at the Western Development Museum during Seniors' Week, and another near Christmas, tied in with a local school.

More than 80 members and friends enjoyed

a tea at Riverside Terrace on June 1, hosted by the members living there. Dawn Bevan and Shirley Pridmore entertained, and there was lots of reminiscing and visiting.

For information on joining, call 652-2255. It's free and it's fun!

*Jeanette Dean*



# Supporting hospital patients in the sacred aspect of their lives

Upon retirement from the health care field, I wanted to return something to society for the privilege of having had a job. I chose two activities related to important aspects of my life: my work and my faith. I would make hospital visits and assist with spiritual care of those in hospital.

I visit Ukrainian Catholic patients at all Saskatoon hospitals, in rotation, on behalf of the women's group of my church, the Ukrainian Catholic Women's League. People appreciate connection with someone of their faith. Those from out of town may feel at a loss without the support of their own pastor or pastoral care workers.

During the visits, patients may want to talk, have a prayer said, make connection with a spiritual advisor or just know that someone cares. An example: while my co-worker and I were signing in at the office one day, a woman came in looking for a priest to baptize a newborn grandchild. After some quick research, we were able to find a priest she could contact.

In my volunteer work with the Spiritual Care Department of one hospital, I visit new patients, often from out of town, sometimes from a remote northern area. I confirm their religious denomination and tell them I am a non-partisan volunteer, as reassurance that my goal is not to convert them. I try to assess their spiritual needs without prying. Catholic patients may wish to receive communion, see a priest or request the Sacrament of Healing (formerly Extreme Unction). Patients of other

denominations may ask to see a minister, and there are special arrangements for First Nations patients.

To be effective in providing spiritual care, active listening is paramount. Frequently, that is all a patient needs. People with dementia may just need someone to sit quietly by their side for a while.

Having worked in health care, I find this experience most satisfying. I have sensed that my visit and presence provide unconditional support to the patient and, at times, to the family. Staff have limited time due to other commitments. The spiritual care volunteer can fill this void.

Patients may experience a spiritual distress that indicates a lack of connectedness to values and beliefs. Illness, need for surgery or impending death may cause anxiety, fears or helplessness. Spiritual care volunteers can help the person retain or achieve transcendent values. Even agnostics can find depth and meaning to life from their perspective.

It is important for spiritual care volunteers to be aware of their own spiritual beliefs and prejudices, and to respect patients' beliefs and values. To help me in this inner reflection, I take advantage of opportunities to attend seminars, conferences and workshops to keep current with approaches and ideas about being an effective spiritual care volunteer.

In this role, I believe I can help ameliorate patients' moments of concern, anxiety and helplessness. I have found it very rewarding.

By  
**Kathy Kozak**

## Centennial Atmosphere Will Add Excitement

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interest to older adults .

The centennial atmosphere will spur the excitement, with entertainment sprinkled throughout the day. The noon fashion show by Designer Discount was a big hit last year. The Saskatoon Jammers will play old-time music for listening and dancing to end the day.

Two preventive health events are new this year.

Public Health will provide a flu immunization clinic, with the same policies as other flu clinics, and the Council's volunteer nurse brigade will check blood pressure.

The \$5 admission includes coffee sponsored by Teachers Credit Union. A reasonably priced lunch will be offered. Limited transportation help is available; call the Council at 652-2255.



# Conversations with my dentist

Communicating with one's dentist while one's mouth is filled with clamps, rubber dams, syringes, wads of gauze, drill bits, suction devices and human fingers can be rather trying. If you have something to say, it's usually wise to go into a Zen-like trance until the urge passes.

Nevertheless, as a public service, here is a glossary of mumbled, Novacaine-ized terms yanked from the maws of dental patients and rendered into English. All you dentists out there, please clip this and tape it to your golf bags.

"Hunhhfru zaghh ir glunj"

("Pardon me, but I think I just swallowed someone's latex glove.")

"Oncumfhhurtbulll? Nyuhh, Ahhvlwuz bon ahhbilloo evvithunnn eykdiss.

("Uncomfortable? No, I've always been able to levitate like this.")

"Ayre idyuu sayhh uenttuu entahllllool?"

("Where did you say you went to dental school?")

"Owwuchh ziss osstt?"

("How much is this going to cost?")

"OWWuch?"

("HOW much?")

Speaking of dentists, a funny thing happened

there recently. After services were rendered and all the gauze, irrigation equipment and scaffolding had been removed from my mouth, the receptionist presented the bill. I don't know why but the dentist never gets to be in on this part of the festivities. Perhaps to show that he is a caregiver, and that money is the furthest thing from his mind.

Anyway, the fee was \$472.70. The elapsed time in The Chair was 40 minutes. That works out to a pretty good hourly wage – \$709.05 to be exact. Maybe dentists charge by perceived time, not real time. Forty minutes can seem like 400 to someone with a hardware store in his mouth.

This particular dentist does have a sense of humour, at least. Various cartoons of a toothy nature were affixed to the ceiling, in viewing range of the recumbent patient. I've always found it hard to read with my mouth full of lip separators, air and water hoses and metal instruments that emit a whirring sound. I'm sure they could open bank vaults with that stuff.

In a way, they do.

*Michael Gillgannon is a member of the Publication Committee.*

**Michael  
Gillgannon**

## Variety of agencies on elder abuse task force

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with them in a broader way.

Along with the Council, the Task Force on Older Adult Abuse involves the Saskatchewan Registered Nurses Association, Saskatoon Police Service, Family Service Bureau, Catholic Family Service Bureau, Crisis Intervention Centre, Community Clinic, United Way, College of Nursing, Saskatoon Health Region through Public Health, Primary Health and Client/Patient Access Services, National Advisory Council on Aging, private caregiving agencies and a lawyer.

Peggy MacLeod of the College of Nursing is the chair. Elliot Paus-Jenssen, formerly of the

Geriatric Assessment Unit, has been hired as coordinator, with funding from the health region for the exploratory phase in which she is determining what protective systems are already in place.

For example, she has examined recent changes to provincial legislation governing powers of attorney, guardianship and co-decision-making, and the Public Trustee which increase protection against abuse for vulnerable adults.

"I'm doing an inventory of where we're at," she says. When she reports in October, the task force will decide "where we go from here."

*Jenni Mortin is editor of Coming of Age.*