



# COMING of AGE

A Publication of the Saskatoon Council on Aging

Projects: Computers to Caregivers

## Council at work

The wealth of projects proposed this year by the Saskatoon Council on Aging to make life better for local seniors illustrates the vital role the Council plays here.

Funding is being sought for projects to: assist informal caregivers, teach seniors to use computers, begin a shuttle service (*see box at right*) and set up a telephone friendly visiting service. Community partners are involved in each.

"The Council is looking at many issues that confront seniors," says president Jean Nahachewsky, "and planning projects that address these issues."

The project to help people caring for a family member at home grew

### News Flash!!

Two computers donated by SaskTel are ready in the Centre for the start of the proposed Computer Literacy Project.

SaskTel has also contributed \$200 to the costs of the steering committee for the Caregiver Project, and \$500 for the monthly blood pressure clinics.

out of the Council's ground-breaking Input '97 forum. Funding is being sought from Health Canada.

Because so many caregivers are women, research will be undertaken to establish their social support needs, document the services available and design ways to provide information, education, counselling and social support systems.

The Steering Committee, the Council and research partner the College of Nursing, University of Saskatchewan, have applied to the Prairie Women's Health Centre of Excellence in Winnipeg for a \$15,000 research grant for the project's first year. Project assistant Erika Wald is now working out of the Community Resource Centre on Third Avenue.

The Council has linked the Saskatoon Public Library, U of S Extension, the Freenet and SaskTel in a Computer Literacy Project to teach seniors to use computers and the Internet and feel comfortable doing so.

Participants – 240 over the project's two years – will receive intensive individual computer instruction once a week for six weeks at the Re-

(continued on page 2)

## Shuttle service gets federal grant, should start soon

Saskatoon seniors will soon have a shuttle service that provides them with safe, affordable, arm-assisted transportation at low cost and helps them maintain their independence.

With a start-up \$11,420 grant from the Population Health Fund, Health Promotion and Program Branch of Health Canada, the shuttle service will begin by mid-1998, says project co-ordinator Lynn Tait.

It will operate in co-operation with MD Ambulance, which will take the calls, and United Cabs and Radio Cab, which will supply drivers who help seniors into the car if necessary, load packages or lock their homes.

The Health Canada grant is just the beginning of the funding needed to ensure the service's secure operation for three years, says Mrs. Tait. The annual cost is about \$120,000, in addition to the \$5-per-trip fee for users. About 12,000 trips per year are anticipated.

(continued on page 2)

## In My Opinion

There is a great need in this country for affordable rental housing for seniors with incomes of more than \$16,500, the cutoff for subsidized housing.

Condominiums are being built at an alarming rate but not everyone wants to go that route. Some prefer to leave the upkeep to the landlord and not make the commitment to a condo.

The ideal complex should contain bright and convenient apartments of between 77 and 88 square metres (825 and 950 square feet). It should have facilities for exercising (with instructors) so residents can keep fit, a dining room serving reasonably priced, nutritious meals, a small grocery store, a chapel and nursing services. There should

be provision for activities such as sing-songs, movies, games, travelogues and study groups.

The complex should have a wing for seniors who may eventually need total care. Since this would be happening under the same roof, an independent spouse could be a key player in his/her partner's well-being.

It is terrible to see residents of some private nursing homes with time heavy on their hands, no companionship and, worst of all, no *joie de vivre*.

Governments need to get their priorities straight.

*Betty Hopkins*

*Coming of Age welcomes submissions for this column, on the understanding that publication will be at the discretion of the Publications Committee.*

## Council projects will help seniors

*(continued from page 1)*

source Centre and be able to practise on computers at public libraries. The Freenet will provide technical support and monthly group sessions.

"We're excited about the possibility of this project," says Mrs. Nahachewsky. "We think that with individual instruction, technical support, practice and group sessions built in, it will be successful."

The Office of Learning Technologies, Human Resources Development Canada, has been asked for \$82,000 for the project.

The Council and the Older Adult Wellness Program of Saskatoon District Health have re-applied for a community service grant from Saskatoon District Health for Telechat, a telephone friendly visiting program.

"We are quite optimistic about it," says Mrs. Nahachewsky. The project will begin by training volunteers and

identifying people who would benefit from regular telephone calls and links made with other Telechat recipients.

Several local agencies will help identify isolated seniors who would benefit from Telechat. The telephone conversations will help point out gaps in services the seniors now receive.

Co-operation with Saskatoon District Health and other community agencies is very important to each project, says Mrs. Nahachewsky. The Council anticipates that local groups or agencies will take them over when they are up and running.

## Shuttle *(from page 1)*

The management team is seeking funding and partnerships from government, business, industry, service clubs and individuals. Tax receipts will be issued for donations, which can be sent to the Saskatoon Council on Aging, 109 Third Avenue North, Saskatoon S7K 2H4. 652-2255.

The service will be implemented when sufficient funding has been established, says Mrs. Tait, who says donations have already been received. The Saskatoon United Way provided earlier developmental funding.

**Coming of Age** is published by the Saskatoon Council on Aging, 109 Third Avenue North, Saskatoon S7K 2H4, with a grant from Sask Lotteries and assistance from the Saskatoon District Health Board. Opinions expressed are those of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Saskatoon Council on Aging. The Council can be contacted at 652-2255.

**Publications Chairman:**

Marion Korol

**Publications Committee:**

Dot Dryden, June Gawdun, Maxine Godfrey, Margaret Mack, Art Sumner

**Editorial Consultant:**

Jenni Mortin

**Photography:**

Teresa Harley, Jenni Mortin

# Photos reveal lives

By Teresa Harley

Thelma Pepper has made a name for herself with photographs that focus on people and their stories.

She learned the basics of black-and-white photography and the secrets of printing photos in the darkroom with her father, an amateur photographer. "That background helped me develop into a printer," she says. "I love the printing part. If I haven't done the printing, it's not really my work."

Mrs. Pepper grew up in Nova Scotia's Annapolis Valley, earned science degrees and taught in Montreal. When she and her husband, a chemistry professor, moved to Saskatoon in 1947, she settled into caring for their four children. But after the children left home in the 1970s, she decided to try photography again.

She had inherited thousands of negatives from her father and grandfather, keen photographers both. After organizing and cataloguing the negatives, she printed a selection of photos that offered a fascinating record of Nova Scotia life from 1900 to 1930. It was exhibited there and in Saskatoon in 1986-87.

Deeply impressed by the pioneer women she met as a volunteer story reader at Lutheran Sunset Home, Mrs. Pepper wanted to know



"what made these people feel good about themselves when they'd been through such hardships." She taped their stories and their thoughts about the world, photographed them in their present homes and, where possible, their former homes. The resulting multimedia exhibition, "Decades of Voices," was shown across Canada in 1990-93 and in Scotland in 1995.

"There will never be any more women like this," commented one Scottish visitor.

Her next project was "Spaces of Belonging, A Journey along Highway 41." She travelled the 110 miles from Saskatoon to Melfort, photographing people and communities and exploring the past and present reality of small-town Saskatchewan. She says she chose that route because of the ethnic diversity of the original settlers. Several of the towns have almost disappeared, spurring regret at the loss of the special "something you got from being brought up in a small town."

"Spaces of Belonging," already shown in Calgary, will be at the Mendel Art Gallery in July and August.

Mrs. Pepper participates in group shows at the Photographers Gallery, is a guest lecturer at the University of Saskatchewan and continues to work with her father's negatives.

Her next project will probably be an exploration of the lives of more recent immigrants to Saskatoon and their thoughts about the aspects of their culture they would like to retain. "I suspect the best of any culture will survive," she comments, adding "You know, you don't have to go far from home to find interesting people."

# Communication problems often follow a stroke

BY GINNIE HARTLEY

**D**ick" was on holiday when he had a stroke. Sixty-five, recently retired, he'd been in good health all his life and didn't smoke. He played golf regularly and ate sensibly.

In addition to partial paralysis on his right side, Dick was left with severe language difficulties. He could nod and shake his head to indicate "Yes" and "No" to questions, but his answers were random. Sometimes he'd say "Yes," sometimes "No" to the same question, even "Is your name Dick?" He couldn't follow a simple direction like "Close your eyes." He had no idea what the words meant; his brain couldn't make sense of the sounds it received. He could not understand written words.

The way he used words was also affected. He could not say the name of something shown to him, but would repeat parts of what was said, and use words and phrases to try to let his family know what he wanted. Some days, he would use the same word for everything he wanted to say. The word varied from day to day and usually had no connection to anything in his environment. "Potash," he would say, gesturing, "POTASH," getting annoyed that no one understood.

Strategies to make communication with him more likely were suggested to Dick's family.

- **Get his attention before talking to him by touching his arm or saying his name**

- **Speak more slowly, in short, simple sentences**

- **Use facial expression, tone of voice, gesture and body language as well as spoken words**

- **Limit the number of people interacting with him, preferably to one**

- **Limit background noise**

- **Guess and ask questions about what he's trying to say**

- **Be patient.**

Dick's stroke had a profound effect on his life. After two months, he left hospital in a wheelchair, still unable to understand much or express himself. He had progressed to being able to add the last word to a sentence such as "Read a ...," and was more aware when he used a wrong word. He had a "global aphasia" -- inability to speak or understand words.

**B**ob" was 62 when he had a stroke. A farmer with diabetes who had smoked all his adult life, he had had heart bypass

surgery. Like Dick, his right side was partially paralyzed and his language affected after the stroke.

Bob's comprehension was only mildly affected. He could answer quite complex questions with "Yes" or "No" and follow complicated spoken directions. His lively gestures and his facial expressions showed that he followed what was going on around him and wanted to be involved. Immediately after his stroke, he could use only one word at a time, often struggling to get it out. It was usually a word that made sense, so a listener could make guesses at what he wanted. His "replies" were animated and helpful.

His speech was very slurred and difficult to understand, for the stroke had affected his speech muscles. While in hospital, he worked hard on strengthening and regaining some control over those muscles.

The major strategy given to Bob's family to help communication with him was to encourage him to slow his rate of speech. His speech muscles needed more time to produce accurate sounds. He also needed to exaggerate his lip and tongue movements to compensate for his muscles' decreased strength and agility.

*(continued on page 5)*

**C**lub 60 is a group for older adults and seniors, men and women, who gather at the YWCA for fun, fitness and friendship.

The club was formed in 1985 by interested people who got a New Horizons grant to purchase equipment for an exercise program. With fitness and aquatic programs especially designed for those 60 and older, it promotes senior physical fitness, well-being and social outings.

Its main target group is people in the downtown area, but those from all parts of Saskatoon are welcome to come and socialize, exercise and meet new friends.

**W**hen I moved into a downtown apartment, I knew I needed to join a club to be with people, for I feel that meeting people is the most important thing in our lives. As we grow older and move around, we lose many of our old friends and acquaintances and have to meet new ones.

Club 60 has made that possible for me, and for others. Many

# Have fun, Get fit, Make Friends At Club 60

By Anne Leigh

lasting friendships have been formed among the wonderful people at the YWCA and in the club. I have enjoyed fun-filled wiener roasts at Pike Lake, potluck dinners with Easter Parade hat themes, costumed Halloween fun, Christmas banquets, bus tours and picnics in the park.

On Mondays there are informative speakers on subjects like arthritis, fibromyalgia, living wills or the history of the Meewasin Trail. Mini-golf at Market Mall followed by an outing for coffee is another favorite fellowship activity on Mondays. Fridays

are Games Days at which cards, Scrabble and Rummoli (a favorite) are played. I particularly like the days when we play whist as it gives a chance to meet and chat with many different people. A bridge club is in the works in the near future.

**I**n addition to the social side, everyone can keep fit with swimming, aquacise (you don't have to be a swimmer), aerobic classes, strength training, walking group and many more wellness opportunities. Classes are offered mornings and afternoons throughout the week.

The membership fee for Club 60 social programs is \$3 a year and you don't have to be 60 to join. YWCA staff help oversee the planning of activities and promotion materials for distribution to nearby apartments to acquaint seniors with upcoming activities.

It is the aim of Club 60 and the YWCA to reach many more of the lonely men and women living in the downtown area so they too can lead active, interesting and healthy lives.

*Anne Leigh is president of Club 60.*

## Strokes differ

*(continued from page 4)*

After three weeks, he walked out of the hospital with a cane. He was using three or four-word sentences. He struggled to get words out, but they came more easily and clearly. Two months later, still talking slowly but using long, complex sentences, he was pleased with his progress.

**D**ick and Bob had different strokes with very different outcomes. No two strokes are the same. What happens to speech and language after a stroke depends on the part of the brain involved and how much was damaged. Some people may make an almost complete recovery; some may be left with slurred speech,

some with difficulty understanding and some with difficulty saying what they want.

For more information on stroke and its prevention, contact the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Saskatchewan at 244-2124.

*Ginnie Hartley, MSLP(C), is a speech-language pathologist at the Geriatric Assessment Unit, Saskatoon District Health.*

# Financing Home Modifications

By Andrew Loken  
and David Loken

*Many seniors have disabilities that make living in their homes difficult. While it may be possible to make their homes more accessible, often they cannot afford the modifications.*

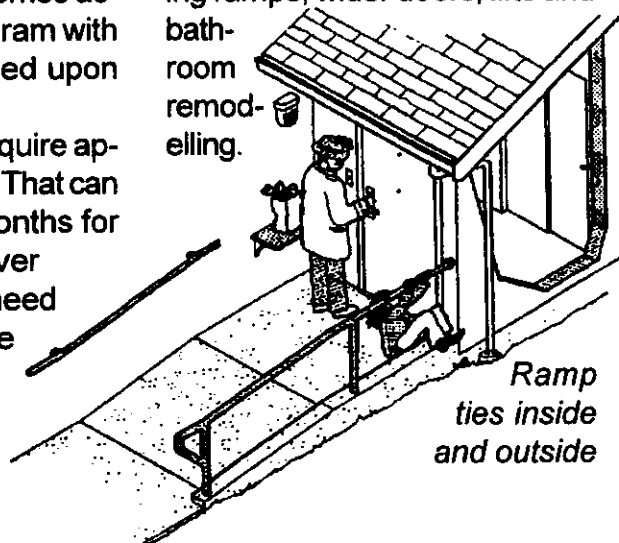
**T**hree programs that can help pay for necessary changes are offered through the Saskatchewan Municipal Government Housing Division: Home Adaptations for Seniors Independence, Home Modifications for the Disabled, and Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program.

The first two require a certificate of disability signed by a doctor and are restricted to people with lower income levels. The third is not just for those with disabilities but can help make homes accessible. It is a loan program with a forgivable portion based upon household income.

All three programs require approval before work starts. That can take as little as a few months for the first two programs, over a year for the third. You need not own your home to use your home to use these programs. If you get your landlord's permission, the assistance may still be available.

iors 65 and older with an age-related disability or diminished capacity, and generally with annual income below \$16,500 (for a single person or couple living in Saskatoon). Maximum assistance is \$2,500 and cannot exceed the actual cost of work performed. If the applicant provides the labor, the program pays only for materials.

Only permanent modifications undertaken to accommodate the applicant's particular disability will be covered, including ramps, wider doors, lifts and bathroom remodelling.



## Home Modifications for the Disabled

Not restricted to seniors, this program has a higher income ceiling for qualification. Disabled

people with household incomes under \$23,000 are eligible to receive up to \$2,000 in assistance. For those with higher incomes, the assistance available is decreased by \$1 for every \$5 of income over \$23,000.

The work must be permanent modifications to accommodate the specific disability.

## Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program Assistance for Disabled Persons

This program is to help homeowners make their homes accessible for persons with disabilities. Loans can be up to \$18,000, and up to \$12,000 can be forgiven, for those who qualify, based on family income and size of household.

For landlords, up to 100 per cent of the loan can be forgiven if the dwelling remains available to disabled persons with low incomes.

Current funding for this program appears to be uncertain. For more details, call the Municipal Government Housing Division at 933-6292 (Saskatoon). In rural areas, call 1-800-667-7567.

*The authors form Loken Consultants Inc., specializing in home modifications for accessibility.*

## Home Adaptations for Seniors Independence (1996 data)

This program is restricted to sen-



## **SENIORS MAKING MUSIC**

By Teresa Harley

Saskatoon seniors who like to make music have many choices of groups to join, whether they are singers or instrumentalists. Here are some of those groups.

**The Silver Strings** -- Bob Caldwell insists the name refers to the sound of the strings, not the members' hair -- are old-time musicians who play in seniors' homes and nursing homes. They also play at dances, especially at the Senior Citizens Centre at 614 11th Street East, where they rehearse on Sunday evenings. Most of the 24 members are retired but there are no age restrictions. The annual membership fee is \$5.

**Contact:** Arnold Finan, 978-4650.

Museum volunteers form the **Western Development Museum Singers**, who dress in period costumes which they provide

themselves and sing songs popular around 1910. "It's a relaxed, free-singing experience," says Shirley Elliott, without auditions or rehearsals. The group sings in nursing homes, malls, schools and, once a year, at Cosmopolitan Industries, and two Sunday afternoons a month in the Museum church. The next dates are March 8 and March 22, 2 p.m. No membership fee.

**Contact:** Shirley Elliott, 343-8095.

The new **Saskatoon Philharmonic Orchestra** is made up of 35 seniors and students with classical music training, playing a repertoire from Bach to Stravinsky, says Fred MacKinnon, viola. George Charpentier conducts. It rehearses Monday evenings in the Saskatoon Concert Band Hall, 236 Avenue V North. The \$100 season membership covers the conductor's fee, mu-

sic purchases and hall rental. A registered charity, the orchestra has had an open rehearsal for family and friends, plus other events.

**Contact:** John Schoen, 653-2898 or 665-0949.

President Ruth Shewchuk describes the **Orpheus 60 Chorus** as a family, people who enjoy singing and want to give something back to society. They practise at the Senior Citizens Centre, 614 11th Street East, on Monday evenings, and have a repertoire of nearly 500 pieces. Members must be 55 or over and available in the afternoons, but don't have to read music. Annual fees are \$10 for membership and \$5 for rent. Mrs. Shewchuk says the chorus plans "something special" when it celebrates 40 years of making music in 2000.

**Contact:** Ruth Shewchuk, 242-7009.

# Pluses for Buses

**Regular bus rider Lorne Paul, 93, sent Mayor Henry Dayday ideas to improve city buses and shared the letter with Coming of Age. This is an edited version.**

As a senior who no longer drives, I am a frequent user of city buses. We have a good service but changes are desirable, which would add little or nothing to operating costs. The studies done seem to be from the top, apparently by persons who seldom, if ever, ride buses. Here are my suggestions.

**1. The Citizens Advisory Committee.** Until about two years ago, a prominent sign in buses listed the names and a phone number. These are gone. Why was the committee disbanded?

**2. Bus Schedule Leaflets.** Only once have I seen a driver with a supply of leaflets; he had them for all routes "because people are always asking for information." Another said I had to go to city hall to get a schedule. I replied, "Me, 93 years old, must go to city hall?" In St. John's, Newfoundland, every bus had schedules in a holder near the entrance. Why should all drivers not have schedules available on request?

Why are only a few schedules posted at the 23rd Street exchange? Why not a notice at each bus station such as: "BUS TIMING. Buses that leave on the hour and half-hour are ..... Buses that leave at 15 minutes after and before the hour are ..... SCHEDULES MAY BE OBTAINED AT THE BUS OFFICE ON 23RD STREET."

**3. Numbers on Buses.** One bus had 6/6A on the rear and 6 on the front; I was told that 6 went to Wildwood and 6A did not. Why are separate routes not given separate numbers? Why not numbers on all buses? Too often there are no rear numbers.

**4. Courtesy Seating Signs for persons with reduced mobility.** A few buses have small signs on the windows beside the front seats, but some are

hidden when persons are seated or low enough to be subject to mutilation. Our low-floor buses have large colorful courtesy signs behind the driver, facing the rear, but you can't see them until you're sitting. I do not recall ever seeing a wheelchair in these new buses.

**5. Use the Rear Exit.** This is stressed. Recently I did, and it had no hand rail -- important for seniors.

**6. Buses to the Airport.** Vancouver buses go to the airport, with a \$14 return fare (one-way taxi to downtown is \$25). Why do Saskatoon buses go close to the airport but not to it? By re-routing, the city could increase its income and improve service.

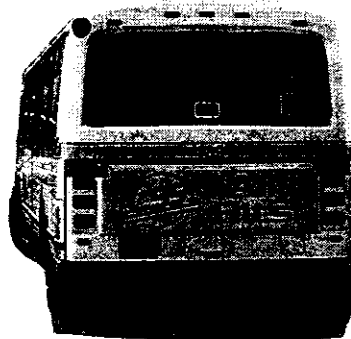
**7. Windows.** On November 4, I took a No. 6 from the 23rd Street exchange, and was shocked that its windows weren't glass but some heavy semi-transparent material. We could see houses but no place could be identified. Only with the driver's courteous help did passengers know where to get off. We were told these were special windows re advertising on the bus! We the citizens paid for this?

**8. Shelters.** The two shelters at the Wildwood Exchange used to have one south-side entrance and gave good protection in winter. For a year, each has had the centre glass on the north missing, greatly reducing the shelter. Will these shelters be brought back to normal effectiveness? And shelter glass can become filthy in winter.

**9. Damage to shelters and buses** might be reduced if each bus carried a notice offering a \$50 reward for information leading to names of persons causing damage.

**10. Drivers.** Most are helpful and courteous, but not all.

*Lorne Paul*



*Unhelpful: Bus with no rear number*