

DUSTOFF

Durham Unit Superannuated Teachers of Ontario For Fellowship

"The Warmth of Winter"

Ode to the Emerald Isle

(written for my late Belfast step-mother)

Ireland, Ireland, that gem of the sea,
I feel her calling back to me.
I may never return to her blessed shore,
Yet I hold her in my heart forever more.
The green, green grass that blankets her hills,
My heart forever fills.
The hundreds of castles that dot her land,
Are all to me, something grand.
The folks I've met from shore to shore,
I bless in my heart forever more.
From the tales of giants to leprechauns,
Her myths and stories go on and on.
And when I close my eyes in death,
I'll bless that land with my last breath.

By John Pratt - 92 years old

RTOERO District 28 has amazing members with such interesting and diverse life stories. We are delighted to share some of these stories in this edition of DUSTOFF



John Pratt with Sandy Thomas

Recently, I had the pleasure of meeting with John Pratt, the author of a poem titled, "Ode to the Emerald Isle," which had been submitted to the Poetry Interest section of the RTOERO Newsletter this past spring.

Needing permission to print the poem in the fall issue of DUSTOFF led to a delightful afternoon chatting with John and his special friend, Sandy Thomas, whom he has known for many years and who did his secretarial work at the Trinity Pentecostal Church in Oshawa.

The beautiful poem, written this year, is included in his inspiring self-published book titled, "Good News." John is very proud of the book which he was motivated to write so he could share practical suggestions about aspects of life ranging from life's purpose to gardening, to the joy of the four seasons, to ways to keep healthy. These all reflect John's passion for the past thirty years which has been the unique ministry of introducing, sponsoring and establishing a World Wide Ministry.

(Continued on page 3)

TRANSITION

Approaching with stealth through sun, cloud and rain,
beautiful Autumn is coming again.
Heralded by flowers, their true beauty gone.
the season progression is moving them on.
Humidity chased by persistence of breeze,
of winds gathering strength as they toss up the leaves,
as if saying "Oh trees you have bloomed, met your prime,
now start thinking of rest for the future is mine.
My time is arriving, prepare now to leave.
I've so many gifts, people wait to receive.
My colours so glorious folks gather to see.
The woodlands and fields are just waiting for me.
Towns, cities, and villages now hold their breath.
All are planning for change with a sigh of regret.
As the last days of summer fade gently away.
Most with no sadness for they've had their play"
So, it's on with the new, with a wave to the past,
for life moves along.
FALL'S ARRIVING AT LAST!

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES:

I am very grateful to be a part of this very caring and dynamic organization. It is great to get together with friends and former colleagues.

There are many opportunities to get more involved with our various committees and even getting onto the Board. I would seriously encourage you to consider using some of your time to not only enhance your life, but the lives of others.

If you would like more information or if you have any questions, please feel free to contact me, Connie White, or anyone else on our Board of Directors.

Thank you in advance.

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John was born in a home near the CNE grounds in Toronto. When he was around 3 years old, the family moved to Oshawa, and settled on four and a half acres of land just south of Rossland Road. After five years of mixed farming there, the family moved to Simcoe St. N., and purchased the front twenty-four acres of the Chandler Farm, while Sam McLaughlin (a well-known Oshawa personality), owned the rest of the back area with woodlands and a creek. It was at that point that John started to take a keen interest in the area, observing wildlife and wildflowers. He remembers how upset his grandfather used to get when John would take off and wander the area on his own. These early interests greatly influenced John's life through his teaching years and into his retirement years.

As a young fellow, John attended Westmount School, North Oshawa School, O.C.V.I, {Oshawa Collegiate Vocational Institute}, Queens University, and Pape Ave. Normal School. He taught at a number of schools in this area, beginning his career at Raglan School, which had forty students, where he taught grades one through eight. From there he went to a four-room school at Pickering Beach as a teaching principal. He next moved on to Courtice, which had two buildings, one on the highway with three teachers, and the other in the field, with four teachers. From there John was a Principal Assistant and grade eight teacher at South Simcoe School. After that he was a science teacher at Ridgeway Public school.

What John most enjoyed about his teaching career was talking, and teaching about our relationship with the environment and appreciating all that has been provided for us to use and enjoy. His early fascination with nature has been a driving force his whole life. When John retired, he was able to travel extensively over the next thirty years, to Asia, British Isles, and Europe, where he was instrumental in introducing, sponsoring, and assisting people with farming and environmental issues through his ministering and wealth of knowledge. This inspired him to attend Harvest Bible School, whose vision, like his own, was "to meaningfully connect Christian parental educators for the purpose of networking, encouraging, coaching, resourcing, and facilitating their educational efforts." In time his ministry became a Worldwide Multimedia Ministry. He is very proud to have been a part of this ongoing effort.

John had also been a Scout Leader and had a very special interest in the Camp Samac area nearby. The existence of the camp can be traced to February 19. 1937, when at an Oshawa Boy Scouts Association meeting, it was decided to use the well-wooded area because of its natural environment, good stream, and hiking access. In 1943, the Mc Laughlin family donated some of their adjoining farm to the Camp, which was officially opened as Camp Samac in 1946.

As recently as April 24, 2021, there were ongoing concerns for the future of Camp Samac, but it finally was recognized by Oshawa City Council as a Designated Historical Site. John had been one of the vital group of concerned citizens who wrote letters to City Council requesting that the area be use as a nature and learning site.

John has been living his ministry and sharing his beliefs his whole life, through being an educator, and always finding ways of caring and sharing. Within the next two weeks, John will be a guest speaker at the residence where he lives, sharing his thoughts about ways to accept, appreciate and cope through life's journey, with dignity, hope and peace. According to John, we are all exactly where we are supposed to be! Thank you John.

District 28 Executive - Lorraine DeBoer

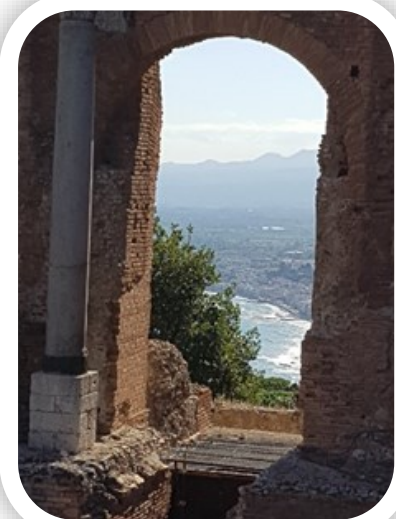
SOUTHERN ITALY ADVENTURE!



Inviting you all to this amazing social event - adventure to Rome, Amalfi Coast, Capri. Southern Italy, and Sicily!

May / June 2024. For more details about this great trip, send me a message. If on Facebook - contact me through messenger, or email me at cwhite211@sympatico.ca.

I will forward the detailed itinerary including cost etc. YES, you may invite family and friends! The more the merrier!



President's message

Winter is certainly nipping at our heels! Winter, for some of us, is full of fun and merriment, outdoor activities, and reading a lot of good books. For others, it can be the start of a very dark and isolating time of year which one hopes will soon be followed by spring. I want to take a moment to thank Janet Beaton and our team of goodwill volunteers for bringing a little warmth and cheer to many of our members who are dreading winter. Also thanks to Charmaine Huculak and Penny Kutlik who head up an enthusiastic team that plans many in person and virtual social events throughout the year. I hope to see many of you at our Pre-Christmas Luncheon before the driving becomes too difficult.

RTOERO is an organization that relies heavily on volunteers. Your local District 28 Council meets regularly to discuss the concerns of seniors, plan out events, share information from our head office, and create information for posting on our social media and through regular emails and this very newsletter. None of it happens without volunteers. We certainly make sure we have fun doing it too! There is always room for more if you are interested in getting involved! There are lots of small, or even one-time jobs available all the time.

Speaking personally, it has been a wonderful way to ease into retirement and make a lot of new friends. I taught in Clarington and although many of my former colleagues joined other RTOERO districts, I was anxious to meet more people from Durham region and remain closer to home, and I haven't looked back. Since getting involved, I have attended several meetings in Toronto and met many active, involved retirees from all over Canada. I have learned more about the organization, our benefits, and our incredible foundation. There are so many things happening, especially virtually, that people can get involved in. Check out the links in our webpage and sign up for seminars or activities. Please get in touch if you have any questions or need help signing up. I hope you enjoy this edition of our newsletter and the contributions by our many members who wish to share with you the "Warmth of Winter".

Aileen Fletcher

MODEL BOAT BUILDING



We all know Canadian winters can be brutal. My method for shortening them is wooden scale model boat building. It started out with a trip to Nova Scotia and purchasing a wooden kit model of the Bluenose II, and I was hooked. I start with a manufactured kit and make changes to more accurately represent the ship to scale and increase the level of detail. Each project takes eighteen months on average. As a result of this hobby, I'm in touch with fellow scale model ship builders in Canada and around the world. We commiserate over out-of-scale parts and celebrate "modeling milestones." Recently one of my ship projects was donated to a fundraiser for a friend dealing with a life-threatening condition. It's very gratifying to see the work pay off in unexpected ways. I'm often asked where I find the patience. As with most challenges in life, it's simply a matter of one step at a time. Now on to the next boat!

Cheers!



Coffee On Us:

Come on out and let us buy you a coffee and enjoy some great conversation with fellow District 28 members. We meet at a Tim Horton's at 10:00 a.m. on the last Wednesday or Thursday of the month depending on the location.

Wednesdays		
	Location	Host(s)
Ajax	245 Salem Rd. S.	John Alford
Bowmanville	980 Bowmanville Ave.	Doug & Myra Brown
Oshawa	1361 Harmony Rd. N.	John Fowler
Port Perry	15930 Old Simcoe Rd.	Don Farquharson & Marg Geer
Uxbridge	325 Toronto St. S.	Gerry Oldham

Thursdays		
	Location	Host(s)
Pickering	742 Kingston Rd.	Bernice Pyke & Karen Prisciak
Whitby	Brock St. & 401 (off Consumers Rd.)	Maureen O'Reilly

WED	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June
	27	25	29	31	28	27	24	29	26
THURS	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Feb.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June
	28	26	30	1	29	28	25	30	27

District 28 is delighted to welcome the following new members:

Randy Besco

Carol Ellis

Joy McKay

John Evans

Roberta Mitchell

Esther Garber

Peter Murby

Karen Halket

Betty Raymond

Isobel Hopkins

Karen Sharon

Dennis Kelly

Winnifred Willis

Heather Lindsay

Roberta Wood

COMMUNICATIONS AND MEMBERSHIP SERVICES

- ◆ Stay up to date on District 28 activities by going to our webpage (district28.rtoero.ca) and our Facebook page ([RTOERO District 28](https://www.facebook.com/RTOERO-District-28)).
- ◆ We welcome member contributions to DUSTOFF, so send in a paragraph or two about your hobbies, post-retirement job, or volunteer work. Tell us about an amazing trip you took recently. Send contributions to district28@rtoero.ca.
- ◆ In the sad event that a member of District 28 dies, or loses a loved one, we can share the information and service details with our members through an In Memoriam mass e-mail. **This is only done at the request of / with permission of the family.** Contact Sue Nieuwenburg at district28@rtoero.ca.

Submitted by SHARON LOCHAN



I retired in 2019. I've always been active at work as a French teacher in a high school. I frequently took on student teachers and always participated in extra-curricular activities that were essentially the precursors to my retirement volunteering.

I've chosen to volunteer because I enjoy staying active in my community, making connections with people, and trying new things. Honestly, volunteering gives me a great sense of satisfaction for helping others too. I'm frankly unsure if I get more out of my experiences or if the places where I volunteer do!

I volunteer at The Alzheimer Society of Durham Region in Whitby every Tuesday afternoon. I found the position on a website called Volunteer Durham. Thank you Google! My title is Office Hero, which is super endearing and indicative of the value that ASDR puts on volunteers. Essentially it's exactly as it sounds. I work at the reception desk. My jobs include making calls and answering the phone, making photocopies, helping with mailers and special events, other clerical type duties and receiving anyone who comes into the office. My favourite thing though, has been, since they found out I was a French teacher, doing some translating! I translated a job posting and was even asked to sit in on the interviews of the candidates to ask some of the questions in French and then translate their answers for the interviewers.

This is one of the best volunteer experiences I have had. For the year I've been volunteering there, they've even held a Volunteer Appreciation event and made us all feel valued and included as vital team members. I think I'll be staying on with ASDR for a while longer!

After my best years as a teacher...

It has been 5 years of retirement and I have decided this is the best part of any career.

As October blends into November, we realize the winter weather will be here in December. Time to enjoy your favourite beverage and a good book. The morning newspaper, if you still have one delivered, is always ready for you to linger over the latest updates while you sip a hot coffee. All this coffee is before 1:00 pm to avoid the wide-awake all-night syndromes. Daily walks, yoga classes, bike rides, visiting friends and shopping are the busy parts of routines in retirement.

"How did we have time for all this when working full time?" is the question all of us think about.

Retirement is for people with experience at leisure activities. It can be a difficult transition if you have no practice at resting and relaxing. Seven-day weekends can be exciting or boring - that is a personal choice. Keeping the mind fresh and alert is the key part of aging. As educators, we gave and gave to our learners; now we find other ways to donate our time and share our expertise.

For the past seven years, I have been part of the editorial team for a community newsletter. Every month we capture the stories, pictures, and recap of activities in a 64-page colourful, professionally printed newsletter. The last 32 pages highlight the generous businesses who support the newsletter as advertisers. It was exciting and challenging to learn a graphic design program and embrace the terminology for the production of a monthly newsletter. As "the teacher," it was my responsibility to write sentences and edit spelling, grammar, and punctuation. A team of human proofreaders double-checked the final draft before it was emailed to the printer. The newsletter will transition to a digital website at the end of this year. The ever-increasing cost of paper has made it too costly to print a monthly newsletter.

Living in a small community of 1500 means a return to my roots as a young girl on a dairy farm in Chatham-Kent. We take care of each other, socialize together, and volunteer to coordinate many activities. This lifestyle means all of us feel valued and appreciated, another key part of aging.

Travelling in Ontario, across Canada or Europe adds spice to your life in retirement; meeting new people, tasting new food, and making memories of places and people. It is a great way to keep you active and interested in new adventures. I have been blessed to travel with my husband and enjoy the excitement of new destinations.

Wishing all of you a year of good health and all the happiness you need.

Marie Gabriel, Newcastle Ontario

Quote: "My life became immeasurably better when I stopped making excuses, and I started to look for a reason." Wab Kinew, Premier of Manitoba.



The End of the World and Then Some

Educators often like to travel the moment their career is over, and they are no longer constrained by the holidays they can take. Cheaper flights, more availability and fun in the sun. My daughter and I chose to do fun in the sun a little differently with a nearly 24-hour sun in February in the Antarctic. We had booked an adventure cruise and wanted to walk on the shores of the seventh continent and paddle in the waters with whales, seals, and penguins. We enjoyed daily learning sessions with specialists, and it even included a polar dip, which was exhilarating!

Our journey to our departing port began in Toronto with time in Buenos Aires and then down to the most southern city in the world, Ushuaia. Ushuaia is a resort town in Argentina. It's located on the Tierra del Fuego archipelago, the southernmost tip of South America, nicknamed the Fin del Mundo - "End of the World." The windswept town, perched on a steep hill, is surrounded by the Martial Mountains (part of the Andes) and the Beagle Channel. That's where we met up with our tour group to board the Intrepid, a ship specially well-suited to Arctic and Antarctic adventures, spending six months of the year in each.



It was two days at sea to cross the Drake Passage, and we were grateful for the time to get our sea legs and adjust to the rocking on board. We saw albatross and penguins and seals even long before seeing the shores of Antarctica, but when land began to appear, it was majestic and like no other place in the world. As an adventure cruise, it was full of activities and zodiac rides and landing on shore for exploring. We had signed up to kayak the ocean to experience the brash ice and wildlife up close. The crystal-clear water, the rocky barren shores and massive icebergs did not disappoint. Only minutes into our first paddle, a curious humpback whale approached our kayak, diving only twenty feet from our boat. Gentle and unaffected by humans, this wasn't the last such encounter. The variety of penguins in colonies, and many types of seals, were likewise unimpressed, and undisturbed by our presence. We visited a number of abandoned research stations left standing as frozen time capsules. The lack of plant life was notable, and the variations of blues as sun shone everywhere was incredible. The Antarctic is a special place that very few visit, as a virtually untouched paradise with a rhythm all its own, and words and pictures do it no justice. To truly experience the scale and crispness of the water and air, one must visit. I highly recommend this trip of a lifetime and hope one day I find my way back there again.

Submitted by Aileen Fletcher





Ted Glover

I am a retired secondary school teacher and member of RTO-ERO District 28.

I volunteer monthly at Durham Outlook for the Needy (DOFTN), formerly, St. Vincent's Kitchen. The facility is located at 227 Simcoe St. South, Oshawa, at the corner of Simcoe St. South and Hemlock St. We operate a Soup Kitchen Monday to Friday from 4:00 to 6:00 pm and a Sunday Brunch from 12:00 to 2:00 pm, 365 days a year. Our Food Bank is open every Saturday from 1:00 to 3:00 pm. I am a Supervisor at the Soup Kitchen, where patrons can purchase a hot, nutritious meal for \$1.50. No one is ever turned away for lack of money.

We are staffed almost exclusively by teams of daily volunteers who serve from 150 to over 200 meals daily. Our patrons are the homeless, the hungry, the marginalized, the disenfranchised and the poor from the Durham Region, and occasionally from a wider catchment area. Some suffer from mental health issues.

In addition, I am a monthly volunteer Coordinator at the Saturday Food Bank, where numbers are increasing exponentially at both facilities. Many of our patrons are young people; some are families with children. Our patrons are very grateful for everything that DOFTN provides. I often wonder where some patrons would eat, were it not for the kitchen. Sadly, many would not!

My work as a volunteer is extremely enriching and rewarding! As I mentioned, we operate mostly with volunteers and are grateful for the generous donations that are provided, including food, clothes, and financial assistance.



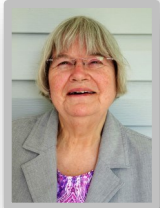
SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

Scientists In School

We are so pleased to let you know that Cindy Adams, Executive Director of Scientists in School, has been appointed to the Order of Ontario! Scientists in School's story started in her basement in Pickering, ON in 1989 and steadily grew over the next 25 years across Southern Ontario and into Alberta. In 2020, we became a national organization. Cindy's unwavering passion for, and commitment to, science and education has helped our charity reach nearly 11 million young scientists across Canada since our founding. So many people, including you, have been part of our journey over the last 34 years. Cindy is an amazing person who has achieved so much, and we hope that you will join us in congratulating her!



Goodwill Committee Contacts



Goodwill Chair - Janet Beaton

905.728.5578

janet.beaton@sympatico.ca



Committee Members

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- ⇒ **Out of Town** Lorraine DeBoer 905-434-7895
ladedoer@hotmail.com
- ⇒ **Special 90th & 100th Birthday Celebrations**
Janet Beaton janet.beaton@sympatico.ca 905-728-5578
Lea Kitchen kitchenlea7@gmail.com 905-430-2818

Do you know of a District 28 member who needs a cheery message through a card or visit? If so, please contact a Goodwill member.



The Goodwill Committee is looking for any District 28 members, currently in **retirement or nursing homes**, who are not receiving the cards and plants gifted by District 28.
Contact a Goodwill member.



2023 Annual Golf Tournament

June 29, 2023

The Annual RTOERO District 28 Golf Tournament, was a great success. Our numbers were up from last year. A total of **fifty-five** players, **seventeen** of whom were invited guests of our members, enjoyed a beautiful, sunny day at Sunnybrae Golf Club in Port Perry. We sincerely appreciated the Sunnybrae staff who were friendly, helpful, and very accommodating!



Thirty-three members stayed to enjoy a delicious barbecue luncheon served on the patio. Each golfer was given a swag bag at the start of the tournament, and everyone went home with a prize at the end!

The Co-chairs of the D28 Social Committee, Charmaine Huculak and Penny Kutlik, would like to thank our incredible team of volunteers: Robin Helgeson, Edith Hoekstra, Dave Huculak, Sharon Lochan, Sue Nieuwenburg, and Maureen O'Reilly, for all their help. We make a great team!

EVERYBODY WAS A WINNER!

This year we were a little less competitive, using a team SCRAMBLE format, so we had no individual scores, but EVERYBODY WAS STILL A WINNER! In particular, we presented the following qualified prizes:

LOWEST TEAM SCORE was awarded to Bradley Brouse, Jim Olson, Steve Hess, and Rick Kolumbus

CLOSEST TO THE PIN was Mark Magee

LONGEST DRIVE by a lady was recorded by Candice Higgs

LONGEST DRIVE by a gentleman was recorded by Steve Hajdy

MOST OUTSTANDINGLY HIGH TEAM SCORE was cheerfully reported by Karen Shepherd, Patty Sayer, Margaret Ann Hawkins, and Sue White. There was a lot of hilarity as it was suggested that these last winners didn't need to be reminded not to drink and drive, but it was suggested that perhaps they shouldn't drink and putt, either. They loved their special gifts of practice balls and putting cups but wouldn't promise not to win again next year.

A huge **thank you** goes out to these wonderful local businesses who donated gift cards and products to our District 28 Golf Tournament at the end of May. Their generous contributions helped to make it a great day for all!

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DONATIONS:

SUNNYBRAE GOLF CLUB not only catered cheerfully and efficiently to our every need, but generously provided a prize of a round of golf for 2 players.

COPPINWOOD GOLF CLUB & AL CADIEUX who provided hundreds of dollars' worth of clothing, equipment, and cases of craft beer.

CTC Port Perry provided \$100 worth of golf equipment.

LEGENDS SPORTS OSHAWA provided a squash racquet, balls, and goggles.

SPORT CHEK WHITBY provided a \$50 gift certificate.

MAUREEN O'REILLY provided cartons of golf related gifts for our swag bags.

JACKIE DICK, TUPPERWARE provided gifts for the swag bags.

RTOERO DISTRICT 28 provided logoed stylus pens for each participant.

MCDONALDS WHITBY & DAVE HUCULAK provided the bags for our swag.

We hope to see you on the course next year!!



FUNDING AVAILABLE TO RTO/ERO MEMBERS

Each year funds are made available for a variety of education-related and/or community projects providing a means by which RTO/ERO members can participate in education, social and/or community projects and raise the profile of RTO/ERO and its members. Below is a list of what is available to Durham 28 RTO/ERO members

(1)Community Grants and Scholarships

Community Grants are designed to encourage all RTOERO Districts to support and partner with local organizations to promote projects that will help Districts to meet our strategic goals of improving the lives of members and seniors; being the trusted voice for the broader education communities; and broadening our membership base. Since the inception of this grant 21 years ago, we've donated \$1.85 million for 523 projects. This year RTOERO Districts are eligible to receive grants of up to \$4,000 for community projects. Districts interested will serve as the project sponsor and will submit the application for a Community Grant in partnership with a community organization.

Scholarships

Members can recommend students from their family or community for a post-secondary scholarship that leads to careers, including education, which could benefit members and seniors in Canada. Each year RTO/ERO awards 20 scholarships in the amount of \$3000.

For more information re Projects and Scholarships, go to: <https://rtoero.ca/giving-back/>

(2)Local Funding

Funds are also available from Durham District 28 for local projects. The maximum gift is \$500. Durham District 28 Executive has established local project funding guidelines and a Gifting Committee. This committee will receive applications for requests, and present a prioritized list of requests to the District 28 Executive for consideration. The deadline for submitting a request is May 1, 2023. For information regarding local funding, contact Jim Craigen of the Durham 28 executive jcraigen@direct.com.

THANK YOU DISTRICT 28!

The following notes of thanks were received:

From Oshawa Garden Club

On behalf of the Oshawa Garden Club, I would like to thank you for your generous donation to our Giving Gardens and Junior Gardeners programs.

The Giving Gardens program had 8 volunteers that prepared, planted and harvested from 3 plots. From this they harvested 615 pounds of food, which was donated to a local food bank.

The Junior Gardeners program held planting sessions at 4 libraries, during which children planted seeds and went home with 8 types of seeds to plant. The Junior Gardeners also helped to plant and maintain one plot. They could take home produce on the nights they helped. The rest was then donated to a local food bank.



Thank you so much.

Chris Merlin (Oshawa Garden Club Board member)

From Oshawa-Whitby Kiwanis Music Festival

On behalf of the Oshawa-Whitby Kiwanis Music Festival, I would like to thank you for your generous gift of \$500.

Your commitment to helping to support the festival is sincerely appreciated. Our mission is to provide children, and other parties interested in the arts, access to the adjudication process. Our goal is to encourage the creative interests of our youth by providing a positive and constructive appraisal of their performance. The adjudications are designed to inspire and direct that individual or group's efforts in the future and are aimed at encouraging excellence.



Thanks again for your generous support of our efforts.

Best wishes,
Bruce Madgett.

(note - unfortunately the 2023 Oshawa-Whitby Kiwanis Music Festival will be the last due to a lack of financial support and manpower)

From Scientists In School

Thank you for the RTOERO-District 28's 2023 donation of \$600, which will provide 2 classroom workshops in lower-income communities in Durham Region. Your support means so much as we continue to navigate the effects of the pandemic on the children, youth, educators, and families that we serve and our organization.

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(Continued from page 13)

The pandemic years have been more challenging than any other time in our history, but we are incredibly optimistic and proud of all that we have accomplished. Our workshops brought hands-on STEM programming to over 283,000 children and youth in 500 communities throughout Canada last school year: Nearly 2,600 of the 12,000 classroom, community and Family Science Night workshops delivered in 2022-23 to date were complimentary, thanks to donors, providing equitable access to vital STEM programming for 58,000 children across Canada.

We have relaunched our on-site programming in select areas. The first workshops took place with much success last summer through our community workshop program, and we are excited to now also be back on-site in classrooms!

Our goal has always been to bring our engaging enrichment programming to as many children as possible in Canada. Donations support a lower user-fee for all schools, complimentary workshops to low-income, rural, and remote communities, new program development, expansion, and much more.

Thank you for your support and for believing in the importance of STEM enrichment education for Children in Canada. With a predicted shadow pandemic in education expected, your donation helps to ensure that we can make vital investments that help all children flourish and grow into the future leaders and innovators of Canada.

Cindy Adams, Executive Director

ECHO

Radiate LOVE

Love comes back to you

What you send out

returns to you

What you sow

You also reap

Seek

and you shall find

Ask

and the door shall be opened unto you

Judge not

and you will not be judged

What you perceive

in others

Already exists

in you

The voice in the valley

speaks

"I LOVE YOU!"

a voice answers

"I LOVE YOU!"

by Ted Glover

What's Happening on the Social Front?

NO BELL LUNCHEON

RTO/ERO District 28 put summer to bed with The No Bell Luncheon held at the Mandarin restaurant in Oshawa where 110 members and 20 guests shared the popular lunch buffet and the company of friends and colleagues. What better way to celebrate our freedom from school on the first day of the new school year? President Aileen Fletcher undertook MC duties and did a wonderful job of helping everyone celebrate. The group welcomed 16 newly retired RTO members who enjoyed lunch compliments of District 28. Our 50/50 draw, in aid of Hearth Place Cancer Support Center, was won by Janelle Harding who received \$247, with the same amount donated to the Center.

FINANCIAL PLANNING SEMINAR

On October 3, 2023, at Woodview Community Centre, 18 members attended a Financial Planning Seminar sponsored by RTO District 28 and presented by financial planners Greg Gillespie and Doug Browning of Gillespie, Adams & Associates from Newmarket. Refreshments were provided during the informative 90-minute presentation. Topics covered included estate planning, budgeting, the effective use of TFSAs, and the importance of using the most effective way of transferring these assets to your heirs. Also discussed were when and how to transfer your RRSPs to a RIF. Attendees had many terrific questions and reported that the information provided was a great guide for retirees. The importance of having a Financial Planner was stressed.

WINE & CHEESE SOCIAL

A very good time was enjoyed by 108 District 28 members and guests at our Annual Wine and Cheese Social. The event was held at Woodview Community Centre in Oshawa on October 18, 2023. Sandwiches, veggies, and dip, provided by The Great Canadian Meat Company in Whitby, and dessert squares, were provided at a cost of \$5.00 per attendee.

For members, one glass of wine (red or white) was provided by our District and a second could be purchased by attendees. Lorraine Veroba was presented with a 25-year certificate for membership in our RTO District. Congratulations Lorraine and may you enjoy many more years of RTO District 28 Membership! Many thanks to our President Aileen Fletcher, who acted as Master of Ceremonies, and the members of our wonderful social committee who worked so hard to make this event successful. We would also like to thank Charmaine Huculak for her tireless work on these events and David Huculak who went

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Your Social Committee Members: Penny Kutlik & Charmaine Huculak (Co-Chairpersons), Edith Hoekstra, Sharon Lochan.

What's Happening on the Social Front?

(Continued from page 15)

above and beyond in the planning, preparation, and set-up of this excellent event. Rochelle Guimond won \$224 in our 50/50 draw. The matching funds will be donated to Hearth Place (a registered cancer support charity). Out of her winnings, Rochelle made an additional donation to Hearth Place.

Our next planned event is the Pre-Christmas Luncheon and Carol Sing to be held on December 1, 2023, at Scugog Community Centre in Port Perry. Doors will open at 11:30 am, and special Certificates of Recognition will be presented at 12:30. Nick Reynolds and Cheryl Gow will provide seasonal musical entertainment and support for a singalong.

The luncheon buffet will be catered by *Basil Leaf* who provided the wonderful meal at our Annual General Meeting in June. This will be the last in-person event District 28 will host until the June Golf Tournament. During the winter months we offer Zoom presentations monthly to reduce the need for members to drive in Ontario's often nasty winter conditions.

ZOOM PRESENTATIONS FOR WINTER & SPRING

JANUARY 17, 2024, at 7:30 pm - Amy Barron, archaeologist, and professor at Sir Sandford Fleming, will present *DIGGER, TEACHER, SOLDIER, SPY* about archaeology, spying and intrigue in the WW1 era. Amy is an accomplished presenter who thoroughly captivated our members with her presentation *Agatha Christie, Archaeology and Alzheimers*.

FEBRUARY 7, 2024, at 7:30 pm - Lianne Harris will discuss and challenge our perceptions about Vikings and their brutality while discussing the early Scandinavian colonization of the Western World. Their exploration, practices, industry, and artistic achievements are still felt today but often not given the recognition they deserve. Lianne is an enthralling presenter who has received rave reviews from our members.

MARCH, APRIL & MAY 2024 - RTO/ERO District 28 will also have our annual Spring Garden presentation by Master Gardeners of Ontario, in March. We plan to have a Senior Safety presentation from Constable Darryl Rice of the Durham Regional in April. He has previously presented important information that has helped our members plan for safety at home, in their communities, and on their devices. For our May Zoom, we have planned an informative presentation by a Hearth Place representative about their facilities and the support services they provide for cancer patients and their families. We will also be looking to provide a "travelogue" presentation by Zoom over the winter. Watch RTO/ERO District 28 E-Blasts for more information. Email registrations will be sent to all members closer to Zoom dates. There is no cost to members for these online presentations.

JUNE 2024 - RTOERO District 28 Golf Tournament at Sunnybrae Golf Course, Prince Albert, Ontario. Date to Be Announced

Finding My Irish Roots



"I have just found your tree on Ancestry and I think we are closely related! Assuming that your father was Patrick Francis Logue, then your grandmother Alice Jane Convery was a sister of my grandmother Margaret Isabella Convery. Our fathers would therefore have been first cousins. I would love to hear from you."

That message in March 2020 surprised and delighted me. In a subsequent email, Eugene wrote that Isabella, 30 years of age, "left Derry for New York on November 26, 1910." Both young women emigrated separately.

My wife Susan and I have Facetimed Eugene and his wife Gerardine regularly since. With the threat of COVID abating, we finally were able to visit them for a week in May 2023.

What a visit it was! We were treated like royalty, from being picked up at our hotel in Belfast, fed like kings, introduced to relatives, shown the area and dropped off at the airport after our week's stay in Magherafelt, Northern Ireland. We knew where we were lodging, for Eugene and Gerardine ran their own guest house, or bed and breakfast. Breakfast consisted of eggs, bacon, scones, toast, and Irish tea. Gerardine's fruit scones were to die for. Susan and I often had dinner with them in the modern kitchen of their 150-year-old house.

To meet Susan and me, Eugene invited his relatives, including his brothers Eamon and Philip, sister Imelda, sister-in-law Angela, cousins Maureen and Brendan, to afternoon tea in the dining room. We all talked and talked. One topic that was top of mind was the Gaelic football championship match between Derry and Armagh the previous Sunday. Derry won 3-1 before a crowd of 30,000 fans and qualified to play their counterpart from the Republic of Ireland. Eugene, his two sons Pdraig and Diarmaid, and cousin Brendan had attended. Derry is their home team.

Eugene drove us around the area, showing us places my ancestors would have known. He pointed out great-grandmother Anna Shields's church (now abandoned) where she was married, her house's location near Drumsamney, and Slieve Gallon, a mountain which would have been visible from her window. She was Alice and Isabella's mother. We also spent time in graveyards looking at relatives' headstones. Eugene, a local historian and genealogist who seemed to know everybody, once spent time talking to a woman in a cemetery who, it turned out, was related.

One of the places we drove through was the industrial port of Larne. It was from there my father departed in 1945, to return to his regiment in England. I have Dad's Embarkation Card issued by the Canadian army, dated April 16, 1945, for "L/Cpl. LOGUE P.F." April 16 happens to be my birthday. And Dad met Eugene's father all those years ago, looking for his Irish roots at the end of World War II. And 78 years later his son followed in his footsteps.

The Troubles still trouble people, Susan and I learned. When we were chatting in the B&B's kitchen about our trip to the fascinating Titanic Belfast museum, the normally quiet Eamon perked up and grew talkative. Catholics, he said, were not hired at Harland and Wolfe, the shipyard that built the famous, doomed ship. So, he said, he would never visit that museum. Though the Troubles (1968-98) formally ended with the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, the events of that violent period remain vivid in the memories of the older generation. In our local drives Eugene pointed out incidents from the Troubles: an ambush at this bridge, a pub blown up here, a man killed by a car bomb there. We noticed every Londonderry sign had "London" spraypainted over by Nationalists. Cemeteries' headstones commemorate victims of the Troubles. The past lives.



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One thing I must mention is the B and B itself, Laurel Villa. It is a shrine to poet Seamus Heaney, a local boy who went on to win the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1995. The Nobel Prize committee commended his "works of lyrical beauty and ethical depth, which exalt everyday miracles and the living past." Eugene, an expert on Heaney, has covered every wall with framed blown-up poems and has provided, like a librarian, books by or about Heaney. Our bedroom was no exception. Almost every square inch was covered with Heaney memorabilia. Heaney himself once gave a reading of his work at Laurel Villa. In the Seamus Heaney HomePlace museum in Bellaghy, Eugene was one of the people who commented, by video, on Heaney's work and life. Two others were Prince Charles (now King Charles III) and former U.S. President Bill Clinton.

On the day before we had to leave, all four of us enjoyed a final celebratory dinner, with wine, in the warm kitchen. Our time was near an end, and we did not know when, or if, we would be able to return. Perhaps it is best to remember our visit as a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

On the matter of Margaret Isabella Convery, or Bella, my grandmother's sister, I could not help Eugene. Bella died in New York in 1912. When she embarked for the New World, Eugene said, she left behind her husband and children in the Old.

By John Logue



District 28 Has Lots of GOOD WILL!

District 28 members continue to support Goodwill initiatives throughout the district.

We acknowledge special 90th and 100th birthday milestones. Our birthday recipients are very happy to be remembered by former colleagues and friends. To date we have honoured 18 members celebrating their 90th birthdays, and one member celebrating his 100th birthday. These former educators are most willing to share their memorable classroom moments. Each month, Committee members prepare birthday cards for members 80 years and over. We can always use some assistance in the preparation of these cards.

For the fourth consecutive year, our district will be sending Festive Floral arrangements to members in Retirement and Long-Term Care facilities. Due to budgetary limitations, we will not be sending an additional floral arrangement to each facility as in past years.

Anna Huston will be sending 130-140 Christmas cards to our senior members. Thank you, Anna!

We do know that Goodwill is a collective responsibility, and we are pleased that individual members have come forth to suggest that a member might need additional support. Our Goodwill Committee has assisted members in a variety of ways, such as ensuring that member information is up to date and accurate, helping with sign up procedures, and sharing bereavement information.

Our district members continue to attend GTA Zoom meetings where issues can be discussed, and positive action can be an outcome.

We welcome Lorraine de Boer and Lea Kitchen to our Goodwill Committee.

Thank You to all Goodwill Committee members for your diligence, caring ways, and dedication!

Janet Beaton

Meet me at the racetrack!



There are so many ways to volunteer in our communities, and I know some of you are actively involved in multiple organizations like me. Perhaps you are a part of Big Brothers, Big Sisters, or the Lions club, Ski patrol or a local theatre troupe. There are so many interesting ways to give back to our communities. In the fall of 2019 I joined the Motorsport Marshalling Services team and learned so much about racing and met some really interesting people.

Racetrack Marshalling involves using a system of coloured flags to inform race car drivers or bikers about the conditions of the track ahead, and communicating by radio to race control what is happening. They track the drivers, look

for safety concerns and are prepared to respond if there is an incident. There are a lot of intricacies involved, and you must volunteer as a qualifying Marshall (QE) for a minimum of fifteen race days to get your official license from the Canadian Automobile Sports Club (CASC), the official body that oversees all sanctioned races in Ontario and Canada. Once licensed, you can continue your learning journey to become a starter, a blue flagger (they notify cars they are about to be passed by a faster class), or how to work in the tower.



Marshalls are encouraged to learn by visiting other tracks and events. My home track is Canadian Tire Motorsport Track (CTMP), affectionately still called Mosport by locals. Located just north of Bowmanville, it offers a very high level of racing and, at one time in the late 60's and 70's, hosted the formula one races. Maybe some of you visited the track back then. We see NASCAR, IMSA and the Superbikes as well as many vintage race series. I got interested simply as a race fan who likes shiny, expensive cars going fast. They have on-site camping to take in all the ambience and after track hours fun, such as walking or riding a bike along the track, campfires, concerts and fireworks. It is fun for the whole family. I had a goal when I joined of making it to the big shows: The Toronto Honda Indy and the Formula One race in Montreal. In this last year those both came true. As a Marshall, I got behind the scenes visits, met drivers and teams, and participated in intervention pushing Formula one cars off the track. That is what I call getting close to the action. The best part was I didn't need any prior knowledge of cars or racing to join. Everyone was very helpful in mentoring me and patient in answering all my questions, and trust me, there were a lot of questions. There are so many interesting ways to continue to volunteer and learn in retirement, and I can't wait for my next big adventure, but in the meantime, perhaps I will see you at the racetrack!



Submitted by Aileen Fletcher

Is There A Fulfilling Job After Teaching?

By Marvin Sandomirsky, District 28



Teaching is the most fulfilling job that one could ask for! It is self-rewarding, and you may realize the effect of your work years later, when a former student recognizes you (one, in my case, 35 years later!), remembers what you taught (not always your subject matter!), and thanks you. I retain many fond memories of 30 years behind the desk and in front of the blackboard (quick trivia question for dinosaurs – what is the meaning of purple fingers?).

Because I started teaching at age 22, I was able to retire relatively young, at age 55. When I approached my last year, I began looking for a post-retirement career. I found it almost by accident at Toronto Pearson Airport, where I was hired for the winter season to drive a runway snowplow, among other duties. Three years later, it became a full-time gig, and, to my amazement, it lasted for 15 incredible years! I retired from the airport in 2017, but I always enjoyed the work, and I still miss it.

So, here I was, 70 years old, and still too stupid to quit working. It had always been in the dark recesses of my mind to drive a school bus. I already had the required B-class licence from many years previous, so the morning that I walked into the school bus office and showed them my abstract, they would likely have put me behind the wheel that same afternoon. In February 2018, I signed on and took a route driving high school students (my favourite age). I quickly fell in love with the routine, the students, and the extra money. I drove every school day for two years – until the 2020 March “COVID” break made its ugly appearance. Schools were shut down, and I was unable to work.

When school re-opened in the fall of 2021, I was able to drive again, and to this day (now age 76), I get up every school morning, go to my bus, inspect it, drive my students to school, then go back to my bus every afternoon and drive my students home. I also get a few charters, although not nearly as many as pre-pandemic.

Which brings us to the main thrust of this article – if you are retired and looking for something to do, is driving a school bus right for you? (Spoiler alert – yes!) If the thought of driving a school bus has (n)ever occurred to you, allow me to enlighten you.

First, a brief job description. You will likely drive for two (or fewer) hours in the morning, around 7:00 - 9:00 a.m., and again for two (or fewer) hours in the late afternoon, around 3:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. Most routes service only one school; other routes may serve two. Most companies pay a four-hour minimum work day, even if the routes do not take that long. Your four-hour paid time also includes a daily Ministry of Transport circle check and log-in of your bus, an MOT-mandated check of your empty bus for sleeping students (yes, it happens), refuelling your bus

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as necessary, and sweeping of your bus floor as needed. If extra duties, such as charters, or moving your bus to and from locations, are required, you will be paid extra for that time as well. Many bus companies have unions, so your pay and working conditions, your seniority, your personal safety, and your job protection, are governed by Collective Agreement, as was the case when you were a teacher.

Depending on which routes are available, you may not have a choice of which grades of students to transport, but your preferences will be accommodated as reasonably as possible, because the bus company obviously wants you to be a happy camper. You can even drive Special Needs students if that is your thing.

In order to drive a school bus, you must possess an Ontario Class B licence, for which the bus company will train you at no cost; in fact, most companies pay for all training. Your paid training will include the logistical skills required to manoeuvre a large bus, all of the related operating requirements, plus the required MOT written and practical driving tests, (often provided in-house). Two other requirements are a pre-employment Vulnerable Sector police background check, and, if you are over 65, an annual MOT medical, both of these also paid by the bus company. If you have any trepidations at all, the trainers will help you deal with them, to give you full confidence whenever you are behind the wheel. Most bus companies pay their drivers \$20 +/- \$2 per hour, so for a four-hour minimum work day, you will gross about \$80, which translates to a bi-weekly take-home pay of around \$600, plus any money earned for extra work. You are NOT paid for school off-times, i.e. March and Christmas breaks, and July/August. However, you ARE paid for p.d. days, and you are paid your full four hour day if school is cancelled for poor weather (like winning a mini-lottery). Unfortunately, benefits, if any, are minimal, usually only a few sick days a year, although that is slowly improving.

Because you are employed by the bus company and not by a School Board, this income is all yours to keep – you will not lose any of your teacher pension, as you would if you were to supply teach beyond the allotted hours. Nor will you lose any of your Canada or Old Age Pensions – although you may end up in a higher tax bracket. (I mitigate this by having my bus company deduct an extra \$100 per pay period to be forwarded to our good friends at Rev. Can.)

Currently, there is an industry-wide shortage of school bus drivers all across North America, so if you are able to walk, talk, and drive, and if your licence is clean (fewer than 6 demerit points), almost any school bus company will hire you on the spot. If there is more than one bus company near where you live, you can shop them around.

Let us summarize the negatives and the positives of becoming a school bus driver.

Negatives:

- ◆ This is a real job, with strict starting times, working conditions, and responsibilities.
- ◆ Your income is essentially gig pay with no benefits, as if you were driving an Uber.
- ◆ The job is AM/PM split shift, so you must schedule your life around it.
- ◆ During the winter, you will drive (slowly!) in dark, snowy, or slippery conditions.
- ◆ School busses are well-heated, but almost never air-conditioned.

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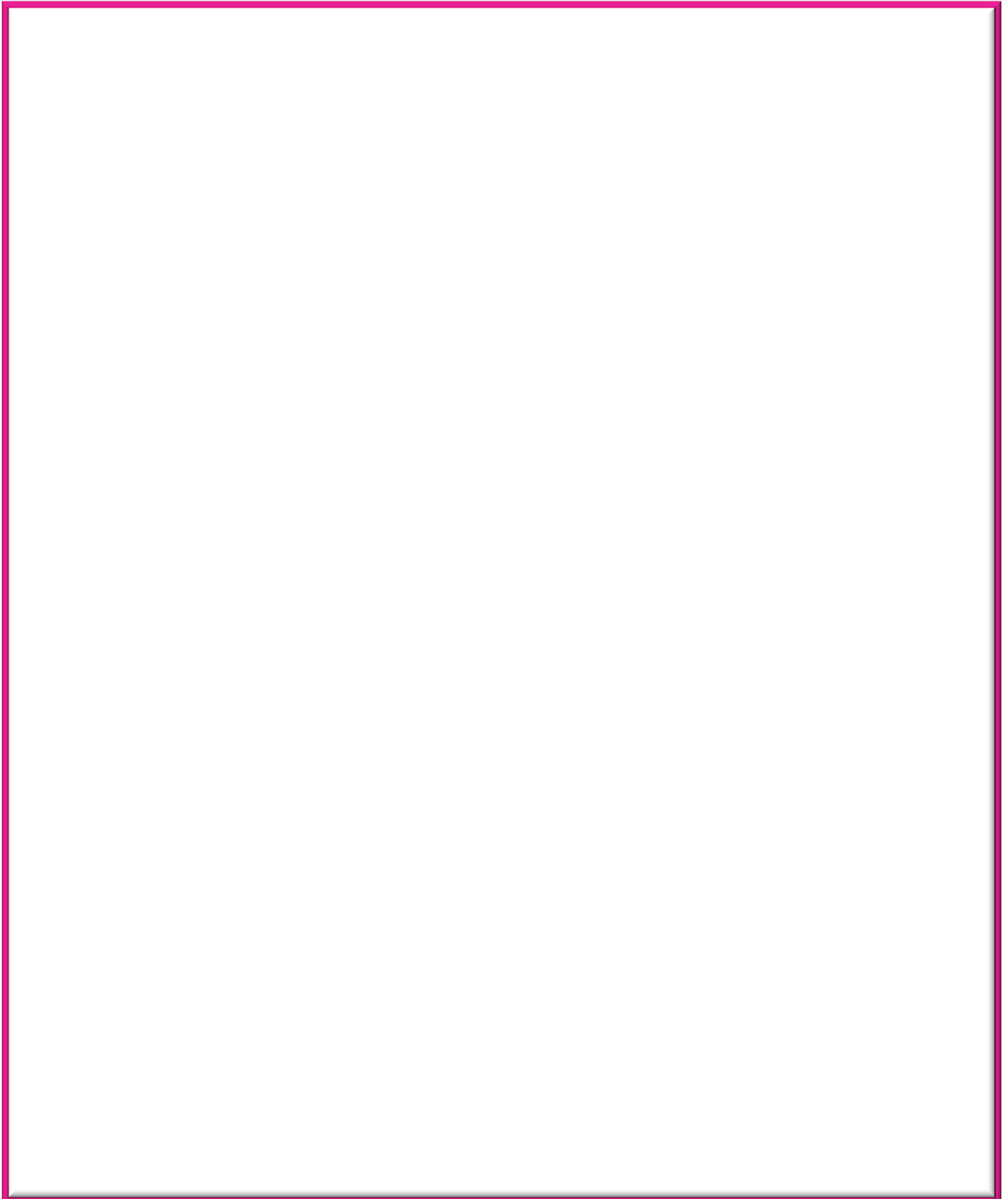
- ◆ You may sometimes drive on poorly marked or poorly maintained back roads.
- ◆ You are driving a very large vehicle, with special logistics for parking, turns, etc.
- ◆ Your driving is held to a much higher standard than for lower classes of drivers.
- ◆ As in teaching, you have tremendous legal responsibilities for your students.
- ◆ As in teaching, you may (rarely, I promise) encounter difficult students or parents, or disruptive behaviour (but your union and company will be supportive and helpful).

Positives:

- ◆ You will enjoy \$10,000+ per year in extra spending money. For me, this is a huge difference between just getting by and being comfortable.
- ◆ You will keep your brain sharp manoeuvring a large vehicle in heavy traffic, remembering your route, and remembering your students' names.
- ◆ You will socialize every school day with both students and adults.
- ◆ Are you female? Over half of all school bus drivers are female, and they rule the road!
- ◆ □You will have a purpose in life, a reason to get up in the morning, and something to look forward to and to be respected for.
- ◆ You will be doing what you love – you will be with students.
- ◆ The best part of all – the students (and their parents) – will love you back! (Tim cards are an extra bonus.)

So in a way, when you retire from teaching, you are not really retiring at all – you are engaging with students from a different perspective. You are also keeping both your brain and your body active – you won't spend the day loafing around the kitchen in greasy sweats feeding Fluffy his cat treats.

If this discussion has convinced you to even remotely think about driving a school bus, talk to a school bus driver at a school near you, or contact a school bus company in your area to pay a visit. I can truly state from personal experience that driving a school bus is not only fun, but also challenging, fulfilling, badly needed, and much appreciated. Regardless of what you may have been told, there is life after teaching, and that life can include a responsible, satisfying post-retirement career.



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(CONTACT ANYONE OF US AT district28@rtoero.ca)

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