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Vol. 7 Issue 4

December 2024



Feature Business

Schweitzer's

Community Resource Guide
Empowering Seniors to Embrace their Limitless Potential



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On The Cover

Mark and Christa Bender stand in front of the trailer that served as home base for six months while she biked across Canada.

See the full cover story on page 12

Photo & Cover by: Scott Dunstall



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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

As we approach the holiday season, it's important to remember how challenging it can be to keep holiday traditions alive, especially when families are scattered across different cities or even countries. For many seniors, the holidays can be especially lonely, with no close friends or family members nearby to share the festivities. I feel incredibly blessed to have grown up in a home where love, support, and cherished Christmas traditions were always present. Each year, we came

together as a family to celebrate, and though I too have felt the sadness of missing loved ones who can no longer join us, I have always felt surrounded by love during this special time of year.

One of the most important lessons I learned from my father was the value of opening our home to others at Christmas—especially to those who may not have anyone to share the holiday with. If you're fortunate enough to enjoy the warmth and joy of the Christmas season, I encourage you to reach out to someone who might be feeling isolated. Whether it's a friend, neighbor, or someone you know who doesn't have family nearby, an invitation to join in the holiday spirit can make all the difference in brightening their season.

Thank you for taking the time to read another issue of Embracing Change. We're so grateful for your support and for spending a moment with us. From the bottom of my heart, I wish you all the joy, hope, and magic of Christmas.

Tara

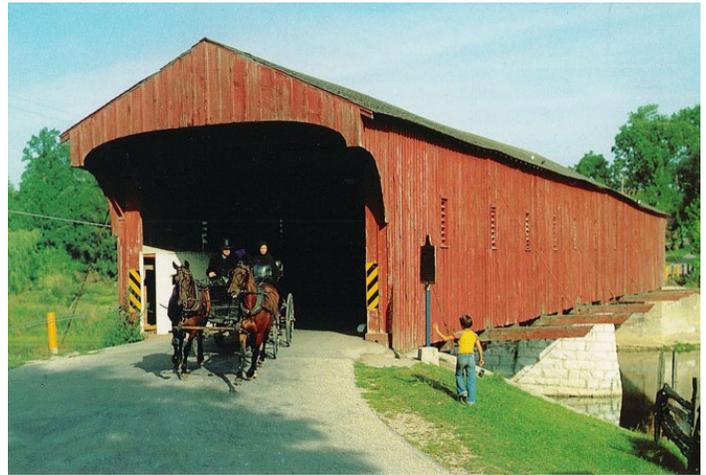


Warmest wishes from our family to yours!

FLASHBACK PHOTO

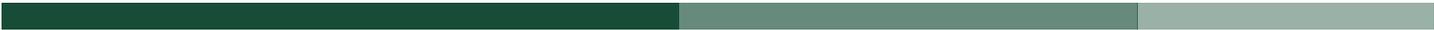
West Montrose Covered Bridge, Also Known as the Kissing Bridge

The “West Montrose” covered bridge, 208 ft.in length, commonly known as the “Kissing Bridge” was constructed in 1881. In December 1880, Woolwich Township council moved “to adopt plans and specifications furnished by John Bear for the erection of a covered bridge over the Grand River at West Montrose” and the clerk was instructed to advertise for tenders to be handed in by noon, January 17, 1881. It was apparently completed by November, 1881 when payment was made to J. and B. Bear. The bridge survived several demolition initiatives to undergo extensive repair work in the 1950’s, 1960’s and 1970’s. It is now a popular tourist attraction.



Courtesy of the Grace Schmidt room, Kitchener Public Library

It is Ontario’s only covered bridge in use today and was recognized as a historical site by the Ontario Archaeological and Historic Sites Board in 1960. The bridge is located 10 miles west of Elora, Ontario.



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A Legacy of Excellence: Celebrating 50 Years with Schweitzer's Bath & Kitchen Building Beautiful, Functional Spaces Since 1975

For half a century, Schweitzer's Bath & Kitchen has been woven into the fabric of our community, transforming houses into homes with an unwavering commitment to quality, integrity, and personal service. Founded in 1975, Schweitzer's was built on the belief that home is more than just a place; it's a sanctuary that adapts and evolves with us through every stage of life. As we approach our 50th anniversary, we invite you to explore the commitment and values that have made Schweitzer's a trusted partner in creating lasting, comfortable spaces—from kitchens and baths to every other part of the home, for all generations.

From the very beginning, Schweitzer's set out with a clear vision: to foster enduring relationships in every job we do with precision and care. Decades later, this vision remains at the heart of everything we do. Our team of skilled professionals combines skilled trades and craftsmanship with innovation, ensuring that each project is not only functional, but a lasting expression of our quality and care. From decorative grab bars and curbless showers to elevated toilets with bidet options, we thoughtfully incorporate features that blend design with accessibility. These additions make everyday routines safer, more comfortable, and supportive, allowing clients to enjoy their homes with ease at every stage of life.

At Schweitzer's, we understand that remodeling a bath or kitchen is about more than just aesthetics, it's a deeply personal experience, especially as priorities shift toward creating spaces that support independence and comfort over time. It's about shaping areas that make daily routines smoother, from safe and accessible morning rituals to welcoming spaces for family visits and the peaceful moments that bring warmth to a home. For 50 years, we've built partnerships rooted in trust, transparency, and a shared vision for spaces that evolve with you. We take pride in offering more than just services; we offer peace of mind, knowing that every detail will reflect the highest standards. Our clients know that when they choose Schweitzer's, they're choosing quality that stands the test of time.

As we look to the future, our commitment to these core values remains unwavering. We will continue evolving our designs and techniques, keeping step with modern needs while honouring the principles that have guided us for decades. For us, this anniversary isn't just a celebration; it's a reminder of the incredible relationships we've built and the meaningful transformations we've created along the way in homes just like yours.

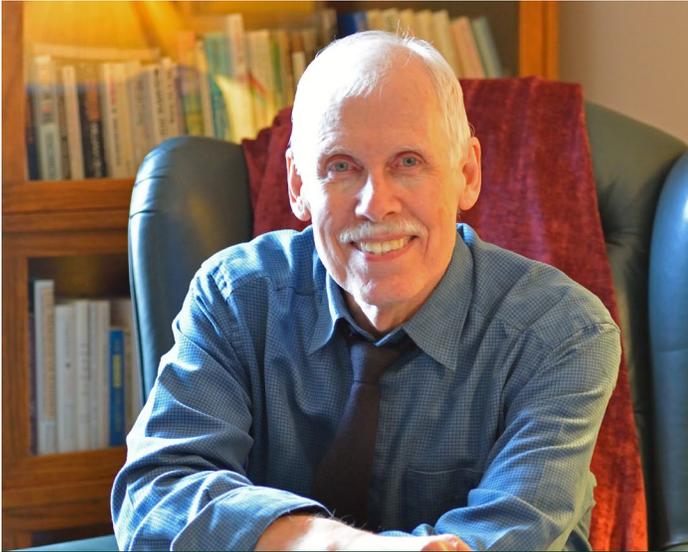
Thank You for 50 Years!

Our 50th anniversary would not be possible without the trust and loyalty of our clients. From the early days to today, it's your belief in Schweitzer's that has allowed us to grow, serve, and thrive. As we celebrate this milestone, we look forward to many more years of making your home a beautiful, comfortable place designed to be lived in. Here's to the next chapter of Schweitzer's legacy—built on values, crafted with care, and inspired by you.



When Daydreams turn into Nightmares

Part Three



Life is meant to be played from beginning to end regardless of the number of mistakes.

Previously in Part Two

The offer to purchase my partners shares in order to become sole owner of the company was accepted setting the stage for the final confrontation with the full onslaught of the oncoming 'storm'.

The outcome would be a testament to faith and stamina.

Now moving on: Well, the inevitable happened as we all knew it would, and when the auditors had finished their annual audit of the company, it showed we were drowning in unpaid and impossible to pay debt in the millions of dollars, owed to both our bank, and a multitude of creditors.

I decided to give myself a bit of time to let the cold reality of that ominous situation settle. It was necessary to calm my ragged nerves and prepare a strategy before giving our audited statement to the bank. I already knew what to expect knowing that when they saw our corporate bottom line, they would immediately commence foreclosure, and demand full payment of our corporate debt. And since there was no way of paying it, the company

would be put into bankruptcy/receivership, and our creditors, given the worst news one can ever get in business.

Normally, under these 'funereal' circumstances, the bank assigns a Receiver to liquidate all assets of the company, to first pay the bank its complete debt followed by the creditors with whatever money might be left over.

However, this was not going to be one of those a normal "business as usual" 'playbook' scenarios. In this case, my corporate 'survival' plan (that had previously come to me in the night) was going to be put into action. I had researched the legal options available in Bankruptcy, and decided to implement what is known as making a 'Proposal' to our creditors.

A Proposal is making a financial offering to one's creditors based on as much capital as one can raise (by any means), though less than what is owed, in the hopes that it will be enough to satisfy the majority of the creditors. In other words, the 'gambit' is to try to offer them more than they would get if the business were liquidated.

The strategy is not used very often, because in 99% of the cases, the assets are next to worthless, and the owner/partners are usually burned out with no energy left, or inclination to try to save the business.

Everyone, including the professionals and my friends, tried to convince me that my efforts would be futile, and to let the Receiver liquidate everything. In other words, to walk away and "let the chips land where they may".

But that was not the plan that I had envisioned and prepared for, since I had already taken pre-determined fateful steps to assume full ownership of the company, and full liability in order to face the consequences and do whatever I had to do to try to save the company. There was no turning back regardless of any common 'logic'. My position naturally alienated me from my friends who thought they knew what was best for me, and that I was a fool to waste my time and energy

expecting anything good to come from my vain efforts.

Time would tell.

Obviously, I didn't have millions of dollars on hand, so I had to 'battle-up' to find capital in any way possible, from borrowing money if I could find it, to the more adventurous option of searching for potential new partners willing to invest in the company. Here's how that works: usually if there's any hope for business survival, the 'angel' investor, they're called (usually a foreign buyer looking to pick up corporate 'bargains') who will take over your company, and perhaps even keep you in a minor position for a short while until they rebuild your business back to a more profitable position in order to sell it to make money on their investment.

However, regardless, of that 'no win' personal reality, my plan was not based on vanity but rather, like a 'parent' to save their 'child'/ company if at all possible; so that I could go on to rebuild my life having done the right thing. (The blind idealism of youth, one might say.)

I was not going to be bullied into defeat this time, at least not without putting up a good fight.

It was quite unusual under the circumstances to be allowed to continue to manage the day-to-day operations of a business (that was going out of business) even with having very limited authority. After all, the Receiver was in charge; however, I had earned his trust, and one of his staff was always floating around the company keeping a careful eye on everything I did.

My days were exceedingly long and stressful, and the more important work I did outside the company trying to raise enough money to offer as a 'Proposal' to the creditors. This meant true entrepreneurship having to beg, borrow, 'steal', and look for potentially new partners (the world over) willing to invest in the company. Every day was a new battle beginning with the 'dawn of hope', most often ending with the 'dusk of disappointment'.

At the same time, I was doing my best to manage the morale and work standard of the staff handling the daily events of the declining business. And to their credit, the staff never let me down, except one, a manager, whom I had to let

go to reduce costs who, to my shock immediately sued me – and won! (The stories beneath the surface were equally challenging and exhausting and reveal a surprisingly selfish side of human nature that isn't the most kind in crisis.)

Fourteen impossibly difficult, and adventurous months later, I had accumulated enough money including revenue from the sale of the building the company owned (though in the midst of a recession AND being in Receivership, no less. Now THAT was a nail-biting story), to make an offer to our creditors.

Naturally, I had no way of knowing whether that money would be enough; and of course, the 'nay sayers' were never supportive.

No one could have worked harder, longer, or with greater determination to fulfill the mission of a near impossible cause than I, and, of course, my hard working, loyal staff. Fortunately, nothing remains the same forever, except death. And I was still alive enough to keep fighting.

Finally, what started as a daydream, and turned into a nightmare came to an end. The time had come to make the 'proposal' to our Creditors for their consideration.

And tell me, what could be a more appropriate time, season and setting for this precarious story to end on, but in the dead of winter?

It was early on a freezing, wintry Monday morning in January, when a 'crush' of creditors were all squeezed into one room at the Creditor's Meeting, to decide my fate, and future of my company.

Two nights before, a high-priced lawyer from New York representing a large, international US company that we owed several hundreds of thousands of dollars to, had called me late at night to humiliate me, and inform me that they would "not" be accepting my 'proposal' (no matter what it was) shattering any hope of survival.

That gray, 'other-worldly' morning, I sat alone at the front of what felt like a court, with my mind awash in all kinds of thoughts and dizzying memories. I felt fully energized, and yet, completely exhausted at the same time. Somewhere in limbo. Nothing can prepare you for such an indescribable moment.

The bank's 'receiver', and my lawyer sat sombre and stiff-backed at the front, behind a long dark mahogany table, to 'chair' the proceeding. The City Sheriff stood 'sentry' straight at his place at the back of the room, to potentially take the keys to my business when it was all over.

The creditor's voting ballots were ceremoniously handed out. Shortly after, I heard some apprehensive rustling noises and chairs scraping the floor, as they were being collected to be tallied. In the 'in-between' second of time, I was transported back to the day when I was sitting in the back of a funeral vehicle at the front of a procession, plodding in slow motion to the cemetery to bury my father, as I looked out the window, amazed at the people I saw and traffic going about their usual tasks, in real time, with hardly a glance in our direction. Such is life that two opposites can coexist at once, one a world in which time had stopped, now missing the presence of my precious father going to his final resting place, and the other, a vibrant world of countless people racing the clock to get to where they were going in that same moment.

Then suddenly the room filled with a breathless hush of suspended silence, followed by the firm and final, soul-touching announcement by the Receiver, that the creditors had "accepted" my Proposal.

In mere split seconds, the endless waiting and working was all over. The nightmare had come to an end with a single word, that now couldn't be reversed, as though written in stone. A monument to not giving up.

Only later was I told that in that gut wrenching, heart-stopping moment my company became one of the less than 1% of over 37,000 bankruptcies in Canada that year, that had miraculously survived closure and liquidation. An incredible 'gift' by our creditors, giving us a miraculous new lease on life.

A new day: None of my former partners came to congratulate me, and within the next two years of having to start over, the times were so difficult that we nearly went back into bankruptcy twice more.

Eight years later, the company was on top again, with millions in sales, making a 6-figure profit

for the first time in its history. I was burned-out, and it was time to sell the now profit-making company, to a younger, stronger visionary to 'Captain' the business to its glorious centenary year, (an historical 'hallmark' of Canadian business) in just a few years down the road.

Unfortunately, the young 'visionary', found the task too daunting, and sold the business to a competitor who ran it for a few years before closing it down.

Epilogue: Looking back, we all confront such challenging times in our lives, sooner or later, that can make all the difference. Life is never easy, and we must seek our models of inspiration, especially if we don't feel we have the fortitude to face our fears.

We are all victims, in one sense or another of the vicissitudes of life, and we all have those moments in time when we are faced with potentially life-changing choices, pivotal points that will determine the development of our character and carve out our future.

If this is one of those times in your life, then take heart, because you are far stronger and braver than you ever thought possible. And you will discover your true character, regardless of whether you win

or lose, because giving it your best is all that matters to be truly proud of yourself, and to create the possibility of a new future you never thought existed.

You only lose by giving up; so, never – never give up!



Will Brubacher

P.S. But those of you who read my earlier story in this magazine (August and September issues), know that the tides of time still had more challenging plans for me. I was to lose both my hard-earned retirement, and my life savings of 1.2 million dollars, just 8 years later in the 2008 market crash, forcing me to once again, start over to forge my new future, this time as a senior.

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Healthy Eating for the Holidays

The holiday season is a time for celebration, connection, and, of course, delicious food. But it's also a time when our healthy eating habits can easily slip, with tempting treats and large meals everywhere we turn. Here are a few simple tips for nourishing your body and feeling great throughout the season:

- 1. Balance Your Plate:** While holiday meals are often centered around indulgent foods, try to include a variety of healthy options. Fill half your plate with vegetables, add lean proteins like turkey or fish, and choose whole grains like quinoa or brown rice. This ensures you're getting a range of nutrients while still enjoying the flavors of the season.
- 2. Practice Portion Control:** It's easy to overeat during the holidays, especially with so much variety on the table. Use smaller plates to help control portions, and take the time to savor each bite. This can help you feel satisfied without overindulging.
- 3. Stay Active:** The holidays are a busy time, but try to make space for physical activity. A brisk walk after dinner, or even a winter hike can help you stay active and keep your energy levels up.
- 4. Hydrate:** In the midst of rich foods and holiday beverages, it's easy to forget about water. Make sure to drink plenty of water throughout the day to stay hydrated and support digestion.
- 5. Mindful Eating:** The holiday season is about more than just food—it's about sharing moments with loved ones. Try to eat mindfully, focusing on the taste, texture, and aroma of each dish. This will help you feel more connected to the experience and prevent overeating.

Remember, the holidays are a time to enjoy and indulge in moderation. By making mindful food choices, you can stay energized and healthy while still celebrating the season with joy. If you have any questions about your diet and would like to speak to one of our dietitians at the Woolwich Community Health Centre, reach out to us!



We are at 10 Parkside Drive in St. Jacobs. Visit our website, at www.wchc.on.ca, or give us a call at 519-664-3794.

Merry Christmas

• Wishing you and your loved ones good health, peace, joy, and prosperity this holiday season!

Rich & Ron

Boomers & The Privilege of Aging: Seniors Care into the Future

Written by: Emily Shannon, Tri-County Mennonite Homes (TCMH)

When I was young, I often assumed certain things would happen in my life. I would automatically reach milestones just through the grace of aging. I never really considered how reaching those milestones was in fact going to be a privilege. It's the avarice of youth to take aging for granted – but time would inevitably teach me I was wrong. I would come to understand what many Boomers already know: aging is a privilege many people never achieve. A long life is precious, and the golden years are to be cherished.

Working in the Seniors Care sector at Tri-County Mennonite Homes (TCMH) has shown me many things about the delicate nature of life. It shines a bright light on the importance of independence, individuality, choice, and community support. It illustrates how Seniors Care is supposed to complement a longer life. But it also leaves questions about how we make Seniors Care something that fits for the future. How do we make Seniors Care something that acknowledges and honors the privilege of aging?

Admission into care is now an older cohort of people than 10 or 20 years ago. Boomers are choosing new ways of obtaining the care they need, so that the care system doesn't rob them of their distinctiveness. As a group, boomers prize individuality. They embrace their aging differently than the generations before. Boomers are interested in preserving their independence and taking the driver's seat in the aging process.

We are seeing changes in the workforce as the youngest boomers prefer work to retirement, despite having reached retirement age. We are seeing changes in care settings as elder boomers choose to live at home and use their wealth to bring needed support in house. By and large, boomers chafe against the social norm associated with ageism. They refuse to give up their right to choose, to have their age tarnish their future by falling into the trap of "this is it's always been done". Not everyone gets to be old, and the older we are, the better we understand. So, what does that mean for Seniors Care?

As TCMH works on Building a New Nithview, we considered how seniors care is evolving. Better integration with technology, careful implementation of infection control measures, and ideas how to make a house a home were all factored into the new design. But it's this last point – making a house a home – that will prove TCMH's biggest challenge with the highest reward for Seniors. The bricks and mortar that make the building are just that, bricks and mortar. How do we fill the building in a way that honors the privilege of aging?

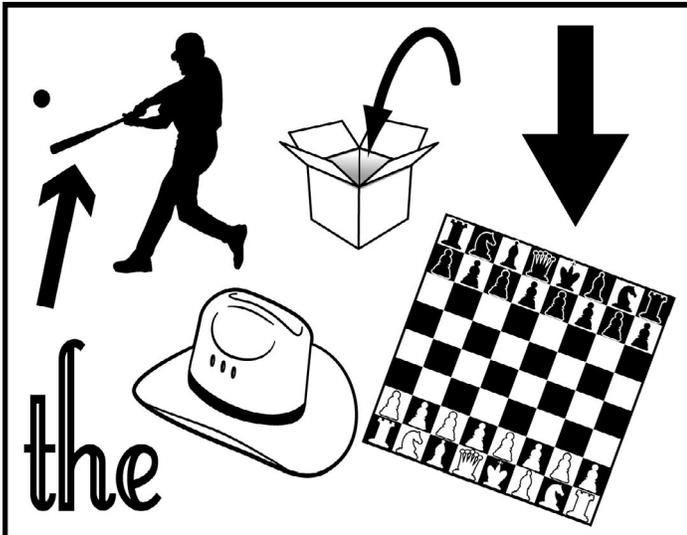
In regrettable plain fact, the Seniors Care system in Ontario and in Canada is not equipped to handle the influx of people who require care. The system is underfunded and overdrawn. Despite this, we know that by 2041, the Province of Ontario expects 25% of its population will be people over the age of 65. More beds are required. More nurses, PSWs, and care providers are needed. But if the system continues to reinforce ageist practices and ideas that ignore choice and individuality, how can it also make space for the loud tenor of Boomer-voices demanding something better.

Decision makers have yet to acknowledge that society has the honor of caring for a growing senior population. It is not a chore as many would believe. Caring for our aging population is just as much a privilege as aging itself. The future of Seniors Care must evolve, be adaptable, and be compassionate to meet the demands of boomers and generations that follow.

To accept the thrust of change, Seniors Care needs to be reimagined. From funding models, staffing, and government policy, an evolution is needed, one that reflects the autonomy and dignity aging deserves. This evolution can create spaces that are more than rooms in a building. It can integrate Seniors Care into our communities. It can create a system that reflects the individuality, preference, and contribution of the people living in the home. The golden years are a rich phase of life, a privilege, and the path forward is not only about resources, but about shifting how we value aging itself.

Concentration Puzzle

Use the visual clues in the puzzle to figure out what it says.



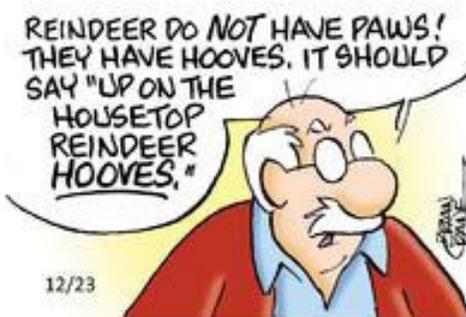
December Puzzles!

Spot the Difference!

Find 10 differences between the two pictures.



PICKLES



BY BRIAN CRANE

12/23

Solutions on page 34

COVER STORY



10,600 Kilometers Across Canada: The Bicycle Ride of a Lifetime

WRITTEN BY SCOTT DUNSTALL

10,600 Kilometers is a long, long way. Imagine riding that distance on a bike. Not an eBike. A Bike. Now imagine doing that at 71 years young. I am in that same age orbit and I am quite sure I would have snapped something or tore something else in the first morning.

Not for Haysville resident Christa Bender who biked across Canada this past summer. The odyssey began when she and her husband left to drive out west through the US starting in April this year. The actual ride began a couple of weeks after arriving on the West coast and travelling around Vancouver Island. The official start was May 7 at the western most terminus point of the Trans Canada Highway at Tofino

British Columbia and ending on October 28 in Saint John's Newfoundland. Not for any cause or charity. Not for any family member. And not for any money or sponsorship. Just a ticked box on a bucket list that started over 30 years before when she first envisioned the trek. That vision came after a biking trip with her husband along the St. Lawrence River. From that journey came the desire to go further and bike all around every Great Lake. Shortly after that they learned of friends in the United States who biked all the way from Seattle to Maine. That was the final kicker that got the idea for this trip implanted in her mind. But 30 years ago, she had a young family and a busy career, as did Mark. So the final ingredient that made this happen now was simply time.

I can't go any further without mentioning more about her devoted and supportive husband, Mark. He, their Honda pick up and the trailer it pulled were their homebase for four months. A typical day would cover 120 kilometres. It would begin with her hitting the road at 5:00 am and him staying behind to sleep in a bit longer, clean up any carry over from the night before and grab a little breakfast. Often, they were in a campsite, so he needed to unhook and check out. By the time he caught up to her she had covered 40km and they would stop for a lunch that would almost always include a bagel with peanut butter and sliced apples. She would ride for another 80 kilometers until sometime in the mid-afternoon. After lunch he would travel ahead and get established at the next campsite and pick up any necessary provisions along the way so that when she arrived, she had a place to relax and recharge. Relax? Recharge? Not Christa. Along the way she identified towns and locations that had fabric shops and/or Thrift stores where she could purchase material to sew quilts. That's right. She took a small sewing machine on the trip and assembled 12 quilts that she donated to the MCC store in New Hamburg when she returned. There is more to this woman. After she completed her mission of 12 quilts for evening work she then moved on the grading math papers. What?? Christa had been in the Waterloo-Oxford school system for 30 years serving as a math teacher. When she retired at 55, she and Mark returned to her homeland of Germany and settled in Munich for 10 years serving that time teaching math at the International School. Bicycling had been a natural extension of her life since she was a child and after she got settled in in Munich she and Mark

began bicycling along the Danube—that eventually evolved into a 5000 kilometer journey that you could say was the “training” that served her well for her eventual ride across Canada.

I know that I would worry if my wife left in the morning darkness every day to cycle along a highway in a place she has never been. So, I asked Mark if that concerned him and he replied that he had faith in her ability and strength to deal with any situation. The one thing that did concern him was a stretch of highway in Northern Ontario that had little to no shoulder for about 200 kilometers, forcing her to ride in the same lane as traffic. When I asked Christa what the most difficult part of the journey was, she indicated that for five days straight, also in Ontario, she was met with a continuous wall of horseflies recalling that she nearly fell off the bike more than once, swatting them away.

When I asked her what the most memorable part of the trip was, she replied: “Travelling the Icefield Parkway which runs from Jasper to Banff was beyond beautiful. It was a true highlight.”

I have to tell you, between her and Mark, they amazed me and never seem to stop. They have a beautiful home complete with corn field, separate garage/guest facility that he built, Gazebo attached to their kitchen, that he built. They are Mennonite and have an extensive array of friends that they visited on the trip out west and some on the cycle back across Canada. Speaking of cycling, she rarely takes the car anywhere. Even when she needs to shop for a few items in New Hamburg, she will always ride her bike. And that leads me back to one of my original questions to her and that was... how long did you train for this? The answer being the most obvious one and that is—“all my life”.

One final comment from Mark which I thought was quite humorous. He said “to me, the most difficult challenge they had was not getting a divorce living in that trailer for 6 months.”

Some Fast Stats:

142 days from start of biking in Victoria to end of biking at Cape Spear

125 days of biking

17 days of visiting

119 days of sunshine

23 days with rain (3 days of soaking rain)

88 days in campgrounds 26 days in driveways

10 Days using a parking lot for a bedroom

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Thoughtful Gift Guide for People Living with Dementia

The holiday season often adds stress to our lives. This is also true for people living with dementia. When choosing gifts for someone with dementia, focus on items that provide comfort, mental engagement, and emotional well-being. Here's a simplified gift guide:

Sensory and Comfort Gifts

- Fidget Blankets: Textures, zippers, and buttons to keep hands busy.
- Weighted Blankets: Calming and anxiety-reducing.
- Plush Toys: Soft animals or dolls offer comfort.
- Aromatherapy: Diffusers with lavender or chamomile for relaxation.

Engaging Activities

- Large-Piece Puzzles: Simple, vibrant images.
- Adult Coloring Books: Relaxing and easy to use.
- Craft Kits: Creative, ability-appropriate projects.
- Simple Games: Bingo, dominoes, or large-print cards for fun interaction.

Assistive Devices

- Easy Music Players: Preloaded with familiar songs.
- Talking Photo Frames: Recordable messages alongside family photos.
- Day Clocks: Clear displays showing time and day.
- GPS Devices: Wearable trackers for safety.

Memory Aids

- Photo Albums/Digital Frames: Filled with family photos to trigger memories.
- Custom Puzzles: Simple puzzles featuring family photos.
- Memory Journals: Help with recording personal stories.
- Music: Playlists from their era to spark positive memories.

Books and Reading

- Large-Print Books: Engaging stories with bigger text.
- Audiobooks: Enjoyable for those who struggle with reading.
- Memory Lane Books: Picture books from past decades for reminiscing.

Practical Gifts

- Adaptive Clothing: Easy-to-wear garments with Velcro or magnets.
- Non-Slip Socks/Slippers: Safe for around the house.
- Pill Organizers: Simple designs for medication management.
- Grip Aids: Tools to assist with holding utensils or writing.

Nature-Inspired Gifts

- Indoor Herb Gardens: Simple kits for growing small plants.
- Bird Feeders: Window or garden feeders for bird-watching.
- Sun Lamps: Mood-enhancing lights for winter.

Therapeutic Gifts

- Massage Tools: Handheld massagers or pillows for relaxation.
- Comforting Robes: Soft, cozy clothing.
- Lotions: Relaxing hand massages with soothing creams.

Caregiver Support

- Gift Cards: For self-care activities like massages or dining out.
- Books on Dementia Care: Helpful resources for navigating care.
- Personalized Gifts: Thank-you tokens for caregivers.

Continuing to include a person living with dementia in the holiday giving tradition is important. Focus on things that stimulate the brain, increase social interaction and promote healthy living are all good gift ideas. When selecting gifts, focus on the person's current needs and interests, balancing physical items, quality time and emotional support.

Alzheimer Society
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For more information about our programs and services, call us at 519-742-1422.

Group Travel Gaining Popularity for Many Reasons

By Stewart Grant



Last month, I had the opportunity to travel to South America for an industry event put on by our travel consortium. It was a great chance to speak with fellow travel agency owners as well as representatives from a variety of tour companies.

One aspect of the travel business that everyone was talking about was “group travel”.

In the last couple years, I’ve been fortunate enough to host four different group travel vacations. We’ve toured the Golden Circle in Iceland, taken a scenic river cruise down the Rhine River, and traveled to the highlights of both Ireland and Newfoundland via coach. In each destination, we’ve had expert local guides who made our visit memorable, safe, educational, and fun.

What I like most about traveling with a group is the variety of great conversation. Over the course of a 10-day vacation, for instance, we end up getting to know everyone, and we often sit with different people each day at lunch or dinner. Because we are all from southwestern Ontario, we have much in common that leads to quick friendships.

What our guests tell me is that they appreciate knowing that someone is there for them, taking the stress out of the journey. Our vacation starts from small town Ontario when we all travel together via coach transportation, meaning no one has to fight Highway 401 traffic on their own.

For some, the airport itself can be a stressful experience, so our group leaders make it easy by helping with the check-in kiosks, leading people in the right direction through security, and arranging for a relaxing meal in the airport lounge prior to take-off.

Upon arriving at destination, this is where the local guides truly shine. If you’re like me, you’ve probably been on self-guided vacations in the past where you weren’t sure where to go, or what you were looking at. The good news is that with a group, the guide has done all the required planning. I find that traveling with an expert guide has provided a much richer travel experience. The locals simply know where to go, what to eat, what to avoid, and they’ve got so many interesting stories to share. I find that I end up really understanding a destination better because of a good local guide.

Sometimes, the unexpected can happen when traveling. Again, that’s where being part of a group can bring peace of mind. This might involve rescheduling a flight that has been canceled, taking the required steps to find missing luggage, or supporting someone who has taken ill while traveling.

Most of all though, what our guests say they like the best about group travel is the same thing that I do – it’s about great times shared and new friendships and memories made.

Stewart Grant is owner of Stonetown Travel Ltd., a travel agency with offices located in New Hamburg and St. Marys. In 2025, Stewart is leading group trips to Western Canada on the Rocky Mountaineer train, through Portugal via coach with Globus, and down the Lower Danube with Scenic River Cruises.

**STONETOWN
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Tips For Getting Through the Winter



While many of us will appreciate the beauty of the first snowfall, the long, cold days of winter can be difficult. Community Care Concepts, a local non-profit organization that supports older adults to live independently, offers the following tips to help you get through the upcoming winter months:

Getting the flu shot & COVID-19/RSV vaccines – Unless you have a history of an adverse reaction, getting a flu shot as well as COVID-19 and RSV vaccines not only protects you but also protects the health of those around you. Contact your local primary care provider or your local pharmacy.

Eat well – Eating nutritious meals is a key component of helping individuals to remain healthy. Many struggle with cooking for themselves or getting out to get groceries in the poor weather. Consider having Meals on Wheels' hot meals delivered at noon on weekdays or their nutritious frozen meals delivered to your door for evenings, weekends or during poor weather.

Stay physically active – Research shows that participating in three 45 minutes sessions of exercise each week minimizes the risk of falls, the leading cause of health decline. Consider participating in the many free gentle exercise classes offered throughout the community each week by Community Care Concepts. No registration or long-term commitment is required. Exercises are customized to the needs of older adults and can be done sitting or standing.

Stay mentally active – Keeping your mind active is equally as important as remaining physically active. Enjoy a good book. Complete a crossword puzzle. Enjoy a game with a friend. Alternatively, join many of the free social and recreational activities, including cards, games, crafts, coffee hours, discussion groups and activities available through seniors active living programs offered at the Wilmot Recreation Complex, Bill Gies Recreation Centre (Wellesley Township Recreation Complex) and several other community centres including Breslau, Hawkesville, Linwood, New Dundee and St. Clements.

Leave the driving to us – Getting to where you need to go in the winter months can be difficult for many. Community Care Concepts has vans as well as volunteers to drive people to medical and other important appointments both within and beyond our community.

Avoid over exerting yourself – Cold weather combined with over exerting yourself through physical activities such as shovelling can create health difficulties. Contact Community Care Concepts to get help with snow removal, homemaking and other maintenance needs.

Stay connected – Maintaining contact with others can be one of the best ways to maintain your health. Community Care Concepts offers a variety of opportunities to connect with others including its community dining programs and a variety of social and recreational activities.

Contact us – Help is only a call away. Connect with our Senior Support Workers for free, practical in-home support or help with getting through the flu season, groceries, getting to activities, accessing the services you need, information and any need that impacts your ability to live independently.

For more information or to access services, contact Community Care Concepts at 519-664-1900, 519-662-9526 or 1-855-664-1900.



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Emily Giau, Audiologist

Emily has extensive experience working with older adults which has led her into the hearing care industry for the last 5 years. As an audiologist, Emily has mainly worked in private practice settings and has traveled to retirement, long-term care and personal residences to provide exceptional hearing health care.

Education:

Bachelor of Science in Honours Health Studies/Aging Studies Option – Psychology Minor (University of Waterloo)
Master of Clinical Science in Audiology (University of Western Ontario)

Selina Mauro, H.I.S

Selina has 10 years of experience in the hearing industry as a Hearing Instrument Specialist and has also been certified in ear wax removal for 10 years as well. Selina also has experience working directly at a hearing aid manufacturer doing audiology support and training for all of Canada. Working as direct sales and training support for clinics traveling all over Ontario.

Education:

Bachelor of Science in Biology/Psychology Trent University
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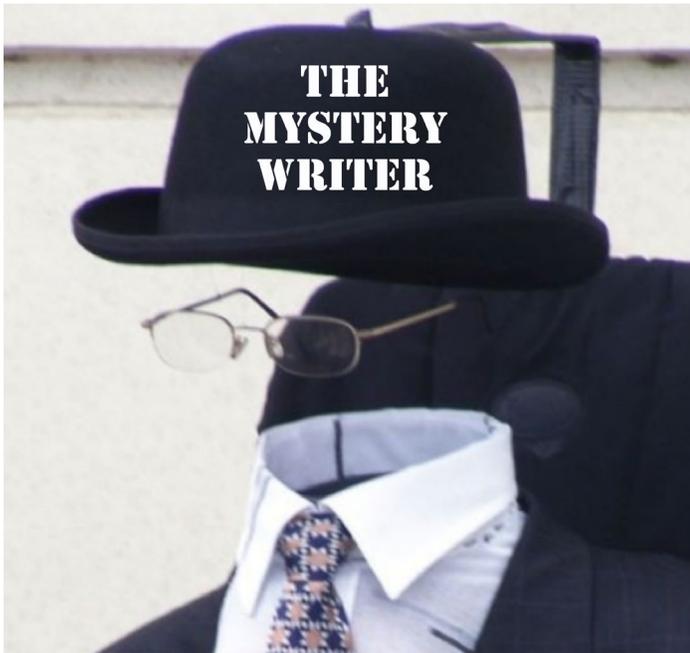
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Rudolf the Red-Nosed Reindeer

Dear Children of all ages.....

This story is a cherished gift of my childhood still shared I believe by many of the young in spirit who,

like me, will believe and behold, and see the 'truth' that lies in fantasy, where anything is always possible.

Now, what could be more exciting than to see the wide-eyed wonderment in a child's sparkling eyes and sense the stirring joy in their hearts imagining the coming of a very magical man bearing gifts?

And what fanciful character could be more alive than the one who lives at the top of the world, in the cold and icy North Pole all year long with his helpers working at top speed in the 'gift' making shop, to create the toys and all manner of things that will keep spell-bound kids awake in anticipation weeks before that special night, in the hope of their dreams coming true?

And what delight could be stronger than that of children leaving a tall glass of chocolate milk and their favourite cookies for Santa to drink and nibble on during the long night of deliveries all over the world?



And what could be more thrilling for a youngster than the possibility of catching even a glimpse of the giant sleigh with a mountain of colourful presents, flying through the sky at lightening speed, led by a mighty team of tall reindeer with jolly old Santa gripping the reins calling out encouraging words to each of them by name.

It's a childhood image to last a lifetime; but shallows in comparison to the meaning of the real story that touches the hearts and minds of children everywhere.

It's the one that inspires them to believe that dreams can come true, and also proves that being different is no reason they too, can't rise to the top by doing their best – and by just being themselves.

And whose story is this?

Well, it's the astonishing and beloved story of Rudolf – called the 'red-nosed' reindeer.

Now, he was different than the other reindeer and felt he just didn't belong; so he had to work twice as hard as the others.

You see, Rudolf wasn't just any reindeer.

No, he was a runt who just showed up one day. No one even knew where he came from - except Santa, and Rudolf was the smallest, and most peculiar looking reindeer in the herd.

He had a bright red nose that always shone and he was small compared to the other taller and more muscular reindeer who laughed when they first looked down on him. You see, they were so very full of their own self- importance and stature that they would make fun of him just because he was different.

Rudolf wondered if he would ever be like them and able to join the team on that special night soon to arrive and he worked hard at everything he did in order to improve his strength and skills.

Santa always knew where he was and made sure he was included in all the reindeer activities. He would often give Rudolf a kind smile and encouraging word.

The other reindeer couldn't understand and sometimes resented the attention he got, and wondered what Santa had up his fur-bound sleeve.

Why did he keep him around? So, they would often just ignore him. Rudolf would feel very lonely, but

also determined to do his best. He had spirit there was no doubt and even the rest of the reindeer had to give him that.

But secretly, they hoped Rudolf would be left behind this year because they thought he would only get in their way. Little did they know what Santa had in mind...

So as the winter sun slipped slowly over the cold horizon and was replaced by an unusually dark and heavy curtain of night that even the stars couldn't penetrate, Santa went about his usual task of:

making sure all the presents were secured to the sleigh so none would be lost, and that the sleigh's snow runners were waxed just right for landing on all kinds of surfaces from slippery roofs and snowy backyards to parking lots and city streets.

He made sure the reindeer were coated in oil and deeply massaged and fed their favourite food, and above all, that everything was ready for take-off on the very second of launch.

In no time, Santa had praised, patted and strapped the reindeer into their harnesses, each in place, with one exception. It was the front harness, which was left unfilled.

This 'empty' position created quite a mystery among the reindeer because none of them expected this last minute suspense. After all, the front runner was the lead – the key to a smooth, successful run which was especially important on such a dark and cloud-filled night as this.

There had never been so deep a silence and bewilderment just before a flight before, and Rudolf stood alone in the lengthening shadows of his hope, tears welling up in his drooping eyes, disappointed he would not be going.

He felt sad and dejected as he had worked so hard.

Then suddenly, Santa strongly called out his name: "Rudolf, come here; I need you. I've chosen you to lead my team tonight because you are now ready and your bright red nose will be a perfect beacon of light for us to safely follow, and will be seen far and wide across the night sky to reassure all the children of our coming."

And with that, Rudolf was led to the front of the line and strapped snugly into the harness attached to a single, special 'reign', that lead straight into Santa's strong hand to direct him.

A moment of silence passed, then the rest of the reindeer suddenly understood and had a miraculous change in heart. They all loved Santa and trusted him to do the right thing and realized how wise it was

for Rudolf to lead them and that there couldn't have been a better choice.

They felt energized and excited knowing they would be the first team in history with such a special and unique reindeer to lead them and all wished they had been blessed with such a bright red nose.

And even before the team left the Pole, word had spread on earth that a new, small – though mighty reindeer called Rudolf, would be leading the herd and that his mystical light would navigate the sky that night.

And with that the herd started running as one, then gently lifting off the snowy run way, were flying with Rudolf at the lead followed by a jolly, laughing Santa with a sleigh full of presents for the waiting children round the world.

And since every fantasy has it's own special lesson, the story of Rudolf once a small, lonely reindeer different from the others, with a big heart and who never gave up, was rewarded for his patience and perseverance, and became even more than he ever dreamed possible.

Isn't this what miracles are made of? All we need to do, is believe like children...

And as Santa sped out of sight, he shouted in glee:

"A Merry Christmas to all and to all a Good Night!"



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'Music in Me' writer Fred Parry is a lover of people and a collector of stories, music, wisdom and grandchildren.

Find him at www.fredparry.ca



Christmas Songs — Remembering My Favourite Things

Each year you probably become inundated with Christmas commercial craziness.

I understand completely! Yet, with the unavoidable coming every year, I got reminiscing recently and it seemed like someone or something was opening up my heart — like opening up the front of my upright piano and plucking the heartstrings inside. This was from a far away time yet I'm feeling it now— connected to the future by a magical hand sweeping across my past giving me hope.

Certain seasonal songs take me there.

"I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus" by Perry Como

I can still see my Mom now, as she danced around the living room singing this 1950s

Christmas gem. "Come on Freddie, get up and dance, its Christmas time!" as she laughed at my pre-teen shyness. But before long, we were singing and decorating the Christmas tree, getting into the holiday spirit and having fun.

My mom took great pride in doing the tree up just right. My Dad, on the other hand, had a very unique style of decorating the tree. He considered it a success if he hit the tree with tinsel from ten feet away. My mom was never impressed with his humour, but her zest for life could never be dampened or, after all this time, forgotten

"Blue Christmas" by Elvis Presley

Elvis is Elvis! I mean, really, I'm not going to include something from "The King"?

Being slightly ahead of my generation I didn't know Elvis well, but John Lennon declared, "If there hadn't been an Elvis, there wouldn't have been the Beatles."

It's only on looking back (check out YouTube) that we see how great he really was— the real deal— with non-manufactured moves all his own. In later years, even as the pressures of stardom weighed heavily on him, his vocals were still as pure as they were genuine.

Those who could see past the tassels and rhinestones of the 'superstar' saw a sincere individual who loved people and who had an immense talent for interpreting and transferring the feeling of a great song.

"Happy Xmas (War is Over)" by John Lennon

This hauntingly beautiful modern day Christmas classic is another personal favourite because it asks a telling question: "And so this is Christmas / And what have you done? Another year over/ A new one just begun."

His message challenges us to realize that leaving it up to others costs a lot. At my worst, it's hard for me to voluntarily think of other's problems— even for five minutes— because my own needs and concerns get in the way.

The truth is we all have a capacity to serve; some value it much more than others and set the example.

The holiday season shows that I'm overly blessed: enveloped in the love of family and friends, seeing the excitement of children growing in anticipation, the tradition of great meals, fun, laughter and scores of seasonal music so sweet for the soul... undeserving divine love — without which, all the rest would just be noise.

'Peace on Earth?' I'm thinking that starts with me. But, saying it and doing it are two different things. Whatever, let's be thankful for the season and for a more hopeful, happier new year.

That's the way I figure it. – FP

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End-Of-Life Care For Your Pet



Most of us share an intensely close bond with our animal companions. They bring us love and joy and help us through challenging times. Pets are beloved members of our family, and when they're gone, it's normal to feel grief.

Whether your animal companion is approaching old age or has been diagnosed with a terminal illness, it's essential to discuss their end-of-life experience with your veterinarian.

In recent times, palliative care has become an important part of end-of-life care for humans and animals.

What Type of Palliative Care is Available?

It's crucial to understand when it's the right time for palliative care. The first step in creating a plan for your pet will involve meeting with your veterinarian. The veterinarian will provide details regarding your pet's health and how it will impact their quality of life.

Depending on your pet's health, several different forms of palliative care are available. The goal is to make sure your pet's final days are comfortable and happy. Palliative care appointments can be booked in person at your veterinary clinic or be provided by mobile palliative care services. The key is to work closely with your veterinary team to identify the best option for your pet.

How to Say Goodbye

It's human nature to avoid uncomfortable conversations, and death is something we rarely talk about. However, we have all experienced loss of a loved one or will experience it at some point in our lives. And it's not easy to bid goodbye. Think about the meaningful ways in which you would like to say goodbye.

You may want to spend the last day with your pet at home. Do things that would make both of you happy. If it's possible, do an activity you would usually do together. This could include taking your pet to all of their favourite places and offering them their favourite treats.

How to Deal With Loss

There are healthy ways to deal with the loss of your pet. While being prepared may help cope with the loss of your animal companion, it doesn't make your grief any less. It's important to reach out to your friends and family for support. There are several **support groups** and online communities available that can be easily accessed. If your grief is hindering your ability to function, we encourage you to reach out for **professional support**.

What to Say to Those Grieving the Loss of a Pet?

Be kind. Losing a pet can be extremely painful. And while times are changing, some people still don't understand the depth of emotions one might be going through. Depending on the role the animal played in the person's life, the loss may impact people differently. For instance, if the pet was a working animal – service or therapy – the impact would mean losing independence or emotional support.

The most important thing you can do when someone is grieving the loss of their pet is to let them know you are there for them. Make sure you offer sympathy and support. Continue to check in on your grieving family members and friends. The loss of a pet can often lead to feelings of being lonely. Give them a call and listen to what they have to say. Ask them if there's anything you could do to help.

We want to say a very special thank you to The Humane Society of Kitchener Waterloo & Stratford Perth for contributing this blog post to Hospice Waterloo Region.

We know how devastating the loss of a pet can be, and hope you find these tips helpful during this challenging time.

This post was written by Nasreen, the Marketing and Communications Specialist for the Humane Society of Kitchener Waterloo & Stratford Perth.

Additional Support

Hospice Waterloo Region provides a wide variety of programs and services in the community and at the Gies Family Centre. These programs and services are designed to help and support individuals who are living with a life-threatening illness, their families, and their care providers. Hospice also has programs for the recently bereaved.



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Ask the Doctor

with Dr. Nicole Didyk

I have sciatic nerve pain and came across this acupuncture brace that seems to help the discomfort. Are these braces safe to use and/or do you have any other recommendation to help with this type of pain?

Eighty-four percent of us will have low back pain at some time in our lives! About 10% of that pain is related to sciatica.

The medical term for sciatica is “lumbosacral radiculopathy”. The lower part of the spine is made up of five lumbar vertebrae and five sacral vertebrae, and the coccyx at the very bottom. Below each vertebra is a nerve, which can be compressed, either by injury or a degenerative process (like osteoarthritis). The result is low back pain that can travel down the leg, and cause weakness.

The treatment of low back pain includes multiple strategies:

- Medication: acetaminophen, NSAIDs, muscle relaxants, some antidepressants, and opioids. Some medications can be given by injection (steroids, analgesics, anesthetics)
- Non-medication: exercise, cognitive behavioural therapy and meditation, chiropractic manipulation, acupuncture, massage, and physiotherapy
- Surgery: usually only for severe, disabling symptoms

Each of those options have pros and cons, and some of the non-medication options are not covered by OHIP.

I don't have a lot of experience with acupuncture braces or other devices. From looking at the literature about “lumbar supports”, these devices were not associated with major risks. I came across a few studies of the use of a sacroiliac or lumbar support belt, which trended towards less medication use and better function. I would caution though that in these studies the participants were under 65 and the numbers of participants was low (less than 200).

A physiotherapist would probably be able to evaluate your brace and advise if it's likely to help. I'm glad it's bringing you relief and I hope your back pain continues to improve!

For more information about aging and health, go to www.TheWrinkle.ca!

If you have questions for Dr. Didyk, please email them to embracingchangeinfo@gmail.com. You don't need to give any identifying information.

Disclaimer:

Any comments Dr. Didyk may make regarding an individual's story should not be construed as establishing a physician-patient relationship between Dr. Didyk and a caregiver, or care recipient, and should not be considered a substitute for individualized medical assessment, diagnosis, or treatment.



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Continued on page 32

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1-800-268-9017

Ontario Problem Gambling Helpline

1-888-230-3505

TeleHealth

1-866-797-0000

TTY: 1-866-797-0007

Waterloo Wellington LHIN

519-310-2222

Community Care Concepts

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Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority

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Interfaith Community Counselling

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519-743-4114

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- Stonecroft New Hamburg
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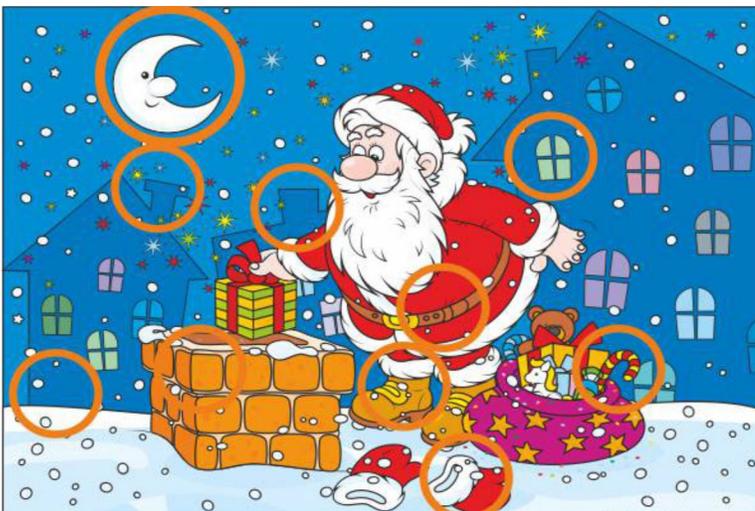
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Solutions

Concentration Puzzle: Batten down the hatches



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