

# The Beacon

Spring/Summer 2014



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Thank you to the Department of  
Health & Wellness – Continuing Care Branch  
for their ongoing support

## Greetings from Angus Campbell, Executive Director

Welcome to our second edition of The Beacon. May is Caregiver Awareness Month and that provides us with an opportunity to educate the public about caregivers and caregiver issues. It is also a time we recognize the valuable caregiving contribution that so many Nova Scotians make to our province. During May we will be holding Caregiver Appreciation Teas. Please see the back page of this newsletter or go to the Events tab on our website [www.CaregiversNS.org/events](http://www.CaregiversNS.org/events).

Caregivers Nova Scotia has been very busy in the last year with our expansion across the province, reaching out to new caregivers, offering new support groups, and developing and delivering new workshops. I welcome you to come to our Annual General Meeting to celebrate our accomplishments and learn about our plans for this year. If you are interested in joining our Board of Directors, please give me a call.

Congratulations Caregivers and Happy Caregiver Awareness Month!

## Notice of *Annual General Meeting*

Saturday, June 14<sup>th</sup> 10am - noon

Public Archives, Akins Room,  
6016 University Avenue, Halifax

Everyone welcome. This is a scent-free building.  
Please RSVP before June 12<sup>th</sup> by  
contacting the Halifax office.



**Caregivers**  
Nova Scotia

for friends and family giving care

#2 - 3433 Dutch Village Road, Halifax, NS B3N 2S7  
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Info@CaregiversNS.org [www.CaregiversNS.org](http://www.CaregiversNS.org)

## Honouring Appreciation

By Cindie Smith, Caregiver Support Coordinator,  
Northern and Eastern Mainland Region

When I speak to a new caregiver client, I often ask, “Do you feel appreciated?” It is amazing how much information comes from that one question. The responses range from an instant smile and quiet, “Yes, I do”, to stories about the sadness a caregiver experiences when they do not feel appreciated. And some caregivers are downright angry that their efforts are not noticed and, indeed, are often criticized. Whatever the response, it can often set the tone for the care given.

Whether you visit someone in a long term care facility regularly and help keep their spirits up or you give full time care to a loved one in your home, your efforts have huge impact on your care recipient. We seldom become caregivers because it may bring appreciation, still it is a powerful motivator.

Few people are naturally comfortable with accepting appreciation. Many will respond by minimizing our efforts, making a joke or a self-deprecating remark. Consider that perhaps we are not honouring the appreciation offered. It may be helpful to think of appreciation as a gift – when someone gives you the gift of saying thank you, perhaps we need to practice saying, “You’re welcome” or “That is very kind – thanks for noticing!”.

It is my wish that you have the good fortune to receive appreciation from others for the care you give. Or that you are able to find, within yourself, the knowledge that you are doing a good job and your care recipient’s life is easier because of you.

Thank you  
for all  
you do!



## Introducing Maggie Roach

Caregiver Support Coordinator, Cape Breton

My name is Maggie Roach, and I am happy to say I am the new Caregiver Support Coordinator for the Cape Breton Region. I am an LPN and a mother of two fantastic children. I was



widowed three years ago after my husband of 27 years lost his four-year battle with brain cancer. I thought my life was over, but now I can tell you I found the light at the end of the tunnel when I met Andy who will become my husband in June.

When Angus asked me to write about myself and what I would like to accomplish in my new role, the first thing I thought about was how I felt when I became a caregiver to my husband and what was important to me at that time. So in one word “Support”, that is what I received from my family, friends, co-workers, and the health care professionals. As I was already in healthcare, having worked in Long Term Care for 25 years, I was very familiar with dealing with people who were caregivers to their family member or friend, but when you become one yourself you truly understand the issues that they have to face.

So it is my goal to reach and support as many people as I can in the Cape Breton Region by going into the different communities with information, workshops, and support groups. But I will need your help too.

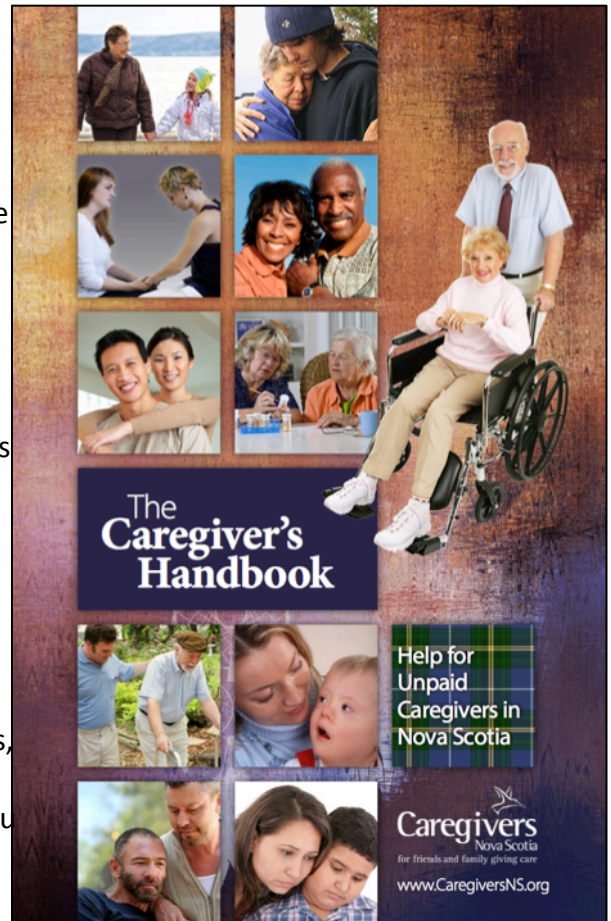
If you are reading this, you probably already know the great work Caregivers NS is capable of, so it would be great if you could refer someone who you think may need our help or contact me yourself if you need to talk. Remember it takes a village to raise a child; let’s be that village.

## The Caregiver's Handbook is Here!

By Carlye Stein, Research Coordinator

The *Caregiver's Handbook* is here! The long-awaited, updated edition arrived at our offices on Dutch Village Road just a few weeks ago. This new edition was made possible by funding from the Department of Health and Wellness, Continuing Care Branch. It contains valuable feedback from caregivers, community partners, and staff. Our dedicated design team worked closely with us to create the Handbook's new look; it has a very Nova Scotian feel. We hope you'll love it as much as we do.

The Handbook itself and four shorter sections from it are available to download from our website. The sections contain specific information on: communicating with friends, family, and healthcare providers; managing stress; legal matters; government programs, federal tax credits, and other financial support for caregivers and care recipients; and, much more. If you are looking for a specific topic or prefer to download and print smaller files, these sections can help.



Blank templates of charts, checklists, and the Schedule of Daily Care Activities are available on our website. The templates are 8.5" x 11" (larger than those in the Handbook) with lots of space to write. This will give you the flexibility to download and print additional pages at your convenience.

We have received many requests for copies of the Handbook from our caregivers, community partners, and allies. We're pleased that so many people are interested in this resource, and it's very important to us that the Handbook gets to those who need it most: unpaid caregivers in Nova Scotia. If you are a caregiver, call us to request a copy and we will be happy to mail it to you. If your organization provides healthcare or other services and you would like multiple copies, please contact us so we can discuss your needs in more detail.



[www.advancereplanning.ca](http://www.advancereplanning.ca)

## Because ...

- I care about my family
- You never know what's going to happen
- I want control over what happens to me
- I'm not too young to think ahead

**I've made a plan.**

**Have you?**

## The Stages of Caregiving: Stage 1 – In the Beginning

By Jennifer Briand, Caregiver Support Coordinator, Western Region

Not many people expect to become a caregiver. Like so many other experiences during our life journey, it just happens to us. And similar to other experiences, caregiving has a time period: a beginning, middle and an end. However, unlike other experiences, every caregiving experience is as unique and individual as every caregiver and the person they are caring for.

Although every person's beginning is unique, there are steps and plans that every caregiver should consider as they begin their new role. If you plan your role as a caregiver, you will recognize and understand your care recipient's emotional, mental, physical, financial, and health care needs.

- Research all your options, gather information and learn about their condition
- Consult with your family, friends, and recipient to consider everyone's feelings and input
- Consider what you need to remain healthy and fulfilled
- Learn about all healthcare options and become familiar with your recipient's healthcare professionals
- Develop a budget

As you begin your role as a caregiver, find the supports that you need, and the solutions that work for you and your recipient's situation.

### WHERE TO BEGIN

An Introductory Planning Guide for **Caregivers**



"My husband was a 'doer', he always looked after our home and family, however, shortly after his diagnosis he lost his mobility. For the first time, he felt vulnerable and really needed me to be there, for him. So I quit my job and made the decision to become his full time caregiver. In the beginning it was so overwhelming!"

The *Where to Begin* guide can help you plan for your care recipient's needs, identify supports, and guide you in your role as a caregiver. Again, most of us don't plan on become a caregiver; it is a new role, a new beginning, which includes rearranging our everyday lives. Once you begin, continue to learn! Learn about your recipient's condition and needs, learn caregiving techniques; consult appropriate organizations, attend workshops, find online resources, read books etc.

You can also learn from other caregivers - join a support group where you can socialize and learn from others, as well as, keep yourself from becoming isolated. Learn how to manage your time. Managing your time includes planning 'me' time; respite time allows you to rejuvenate and look after your own needs and health. You may want to start a journal of your caregiving experiences; it will help you keep track of any issues, changes, and special surprises. Have a backup plan for your backup plan! Always remember that you love someone, and are loved.

To be continued in the next issue of *The Beacon*.



If you would like to receive a colour copy of our newsletter by email, please subscribe by going to our website at [www.CaregiversNS.org](http://www.CaregiversNS.org)

## The “Joy” of Cooking

By Angus Campbell, Executive Director

When I was first caregiving, I found it challenging to come up with new ideas for relatively healthy, easy to prepare, reasonably priced meals. Life had changed dramatically after my partner Paul had suddenly become a paraplegic, and he had been our primary chef. But cooking, like many other activities, became therapeutic.

So we started with “coupon therapy” to see if there were any good deals that week. He may have been wheelchair-bound, but he would happily review the flyers to see where we could save money.

From there, we could formulate some meal ideas. Casseroles and recipes that made many servings gave us leftovers for the next day or allowed us to freeze unused individual portions. We tried all kinds of different things in the slow cooker. “Preparation therapy” was important too, as it allowed Paul to contribute when he was able.

To save time, we also had some regular weekly standards – grilled cheese sandwiches with tomato soup for lunch on Tuesdays, pork chops in Campbell’s mushroom soup sauce with mashed potatoes, carrots, and beans for Wednesday dinner and, if it was Thursday lunch, then we both looked forward to tuna melts.

And I’ll never forget our neighbour Jane who would call some days to tell me that she was cooking us dinner that night. She also provided me with a great tip for keeping things as healthy as possible – shop mostly on the outer aisles to avoid processed and packaged foods.

We both loved salads, so we tried all kinds of combinations. I’m including one from my friend Alice. It’s healthy, easy to make, and delicious. Bon appétit!



### Alice’s Watermelon Salad

Amounts will vary with number of servings; you can make this simple and refreshing salad for one person or 10. Allow three or four thinly sliced segments of watermelon per person. The ingredients can be prepared ahead of time, kept chilled, and then assembled just before serving.

watermelon slices  
drizzle of olive oil  
goat cheese, crumbled  
fresh mint

### Method

1. Slice watermelon thinly and remove the rind. Cut slices into segments.
2. Drizzle with small amount of olive oil.
3. Crumble some goat cheese on top.
4. Top with chopped fresh mint.



*Thank  
You*

...to everyone who generously donated china cups and saucers, creamers,<sup>5</sup>

## Self-Care for the Palliative Caregiver

By Lynn Butler, Caregiver Support Coordinator,  
Capitol District

When someone you love is dying, you do not want to leave their side. You are afraid they will need you, something will happen or, worse, they will die when you are not there. You want to spend every moment with them, afraid to leave even for a much-needed shower or rest. You feel that no one else can provide the quality of care your loved one needs and deserves. So, you stay and do everything in your power to be there and do it all.

I know this from my own personal experience. After we left the hospital and entered the palliative care unit, I can honestly say that I was able to breathe a little easier. I knew that my brother would receive the best care possible and that we, his family and caregivers, who arrived mentally, physically, and emotionally exhausted, would be welcomed and supported with open arms by both the staff and volunteers. And we were.

After speaking with caregivers who are now looking after loved ones who are dying, I can see their stress and feel their fear. Knowing now what I did not know then is that they are at risk of caregiver burnout. Some symptoms of caregiver burnout include:

- Being on the verge of tears
- Feeling helpless or hopeless
- Overreacting to minor nuisances
- Feeling constantly exhausted
- Decrease in work productivity
- Withdrawing from social contacts
- Change in eating and sleeping patterns
- Inability to relax
- Scattered thinking

Respite, even a brief break, is one way to make sure you take care of yourself during this most difficult time. While it is not easy to leave, even taking short breaks to take care of your



own personal needs and to re-energize yourself is healthy and necessary. Doing something for yourself does not mean you do not love your care recipient or that you do not care that they are dying. It simply means that you need to be healthy to be able to continue your caregiving. Try to take a respite break at least once a week by doing something just for you.

- Stop for a cup of tea or coffee with a friend
- Exercise, even getting out for a short walk
- Tinker in the workshop
- Read a magazine or one chapter of a book
- Enjoy a bubble bath or shower with music or candles
- Watch a movie or game
- \*Meditate, pray or self-reflect
- Visit with a friend

It is important to recognize when you may be close to experiencing symptoms of caregiver burnout. Once you burn out, caregiving is no longer a healthy option for you or your care recipient. Take steps to protect yourself so you can carry on doing exactly what you want to do, care for your loved one.

\*To access a 4-minute online guided meditation please go to [http://www.morethanmedication.ca/en/article/index/simple\\_meditation](http://www.morethanmedication.ca/en/article/index/simple_meditation)

## Tips for Downsizing a Home

By Brenda Sangster, Caregiver Support Coordinator, Capital District

For many of us, downsizing is challenging and stressful. It can be difficult to part with our possessions. Take a look around your home and think about the items you love and use – these are the first to go with you. Surrounding yourself with the things you love will help you feel more at home when you move.

**1. Sort through what you want to keep and be ruthless about what enters into your new space.** If you can't decide on certain items, ask yourself: "Have I used this in the past year? Am I likely to use it in the near future? Would it be difficult or costly for me to get another one?" Pick the best and let go of the rest!

**2. If possible, start thinning out your belongings *before* the move.** Take some time each day or one morning or evening each week.

**3. Never duplicate if you can help it.** Do you really need two blenders or coffee pots?

**4. Go through your home and clear every cabinet, shelf, and closet.** If you haven't used it in the past six months, out it goes. For financial papers, keep only what you need (the 'rule of thumb' is 7 years for income taxes). Remember to shred older files.

**5. Get a feel for the size of your new rooms.** Take out a measuring tape to measure your furniture's dimensions and pair them up with the amount of space in your smaller space. This will help you decide what to keep and what to give away.

**6. Bathrooms should have only what you use each day.** Do you really need those little bottles of shampoo and conditioner from hotels? Pull everything out and discard expired medications and unwanted cosmetics.

**7. Get organized.** Label three bins/boxes with – To Keep, To Sell, and To Charity. Limit your collection. Label the bins/boxes that you are going to keep and indicate where you want them to go in your new home (bathroom, master bedroom, kitchen, etc.)

**8. Move large items first.** Place furniture in the rooms as you go, according to the plan made earlier. This will give you a better idea of where the smaller items should go.

**9. Organize your space as you unpack.** Utilize closets and cupboards as you unpack.

**10. Earn money back while you move.** The most beneficial tip for downsizing your home is to sell anything you don't need, want, or have space for. As the old saying goes "one person's trash is another person's treasure"! This doesn't mean your stuff is trash but if space is scarce, what's better than seeing some of that money back?





# Caregiver Appreciation Teas

**May is Caregiver Awareness Month** and what better way of celebrating the unpaid caregiver than inviting everyone to tea! Please join us at one of the 10 Caregiver Appreciation Teas we will be hosting across the province. Everyone is welcome and there is no admission charge.

## **Digby**

Wed. May 7<sup>th</sup> 1:00-3:00  
Digby Curling Club  
27 Shreve St

## **New Ross**

Wed. May 14<sup>th</sup> 1:30-3:30  
Forties Community Centre  
1787 Forties Rd

## **Centreville**

Tues. May 20<sup>th</sup> 2:00-4:00  
Centreville Community Hall  
1951 Route 359

Please contact Jennifer Briand  
at 902-521-5592 or  
Western@CaregiversNS.org  
for more information

## **Antigonish**

Tues. May 6<sup>th</sup> 2:30-4:30  
People's Place Library  
283 Main St

## **Truro**

Thurs. May 15<sup>th</sup> 2:00-4:00  
Truro Fire Hall  
165 Victoria St (back entrance)

## **Amherst**

Wed. May 21<sup>st</sup> 2:00-4:00  
Trinity St Stephens United  
Church, Kimball Lounge  
1 Ratchford St

Please contact Cindie Smith  
at 902-324-2273 or  
Northern@CaregiversNS.org  
for more information

## **Inverness County**

Fri. May 16<sup>th</sup> 2:00-4:00  
L'Arche House of Welcome  
Iron Mines

## **Sydney**

Wed. May 21<sup>st</sup> 2:00-4:00  
Harbourstone Enhanced Care  
Great Room, Kenwood Building  
84 Kenwood Dr

## **Port Hawkesbury**

Wed. May 28<sup>th</sup> 1:00-2:30  
NSCC Campus, Ceilidh Room  
226 Reeves St

Please contact Maggie Roach  
at 902-371-3883 or  
CapeBreton@CaregiversNS.org  
for more information

## **Halifax**

Tuesday, May 13<sup>th</sup> 2:00-4:00  
Best Western Plus Chocolate Lake Hotel, 20 St. Margaret's Bay Road

Please RSVP by Thursday, May 8<sup>th</sup> to 902-421-7390 or Info@CaregiversNS.org