

# The Beacon

Fall/Winter 2015



## In this issue...

A Conversation Waiting to Happen .....	2
Cumberland County Retreats .....	3
The Importance of Exercise as We Age .....	4
Caregiver Communication Fraud: What is it and how can I protect myself? .....	5
.....	6
A Christmas Story .....	7

## Board of Directors

Kathleen Rothwell,  
President  
Mary Elizabeth MacLellan,  
Vice President  
Ruth deMolitor, Secretary  
James McRae, Treasurer

## Members at Large

Anne Corbin  
Dr. Marie-Claude Grégoire  
Dr. Heather Robertson  
Mike Sangster  
Bill Tait  
Jean Willison  
Dr. Clotilda Yakimchuk

## Greetings from Angus Campbell, Executive Director

Are you, like me, asking yourself, “Where did 2015 go?” If being busy truly makes time fly, then for those of us at Caregivers Nova Scotia the year seems to have passed in the blink of an eye.

Our organization continues to expand our support services and to extend outreach to unpaid family and friend caregivers throughout the province. From April to September, for example, we had 2,619 caregiver contacts involving support calls, support groups, and educational workshops. This is an increase of 16.1% over the same period as last year. We also attended seven health fairs and made 21 presentations to 236 health care providers, caregivers, and community organizations.

Similarly, our monthly in-person support groups have increased to 20. The “Caregiver TeleGroup Support” pilot research project we carried out also yielded very good results. The [full report](#) is listed under the Resource section of our website. We have applied to national organizations for additional funding for further research. If you are or know of a caregiver who cannot make it to an in-person support group, please contact us for more information.

All of us at Caregivers Nova Scotia are committed to providing quality programming for you, our caregivers. The support group surveys from this fall and the year-round workshop evaluations have been full of compliments for every staff member. I thank you for taking the time to complete them; we are always open to your feedback and I can be reached at [Director@CaregiversNS.org](mailto:Director@CaregiversNS.org).

On behalf of the Board and Staff of Caregivers Nova Scotia,  
Happy Holidays and all the very best for 2016.



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



for friends and family giving care

3433 Dutch Village Road, Halifax, NS B3N 2S7  
Tel. 902.421.7390 | Toll-free 1.877.488.7390  
[Info@CaregiversNS.org](mailto:Info@CaregiversNS.org) [www.CaregiversNS.org](http://www.CaregiversNS.org)

## A Conversation Waiting to Happen

By Jennifer Briand, Support Coordinator, Western Region

My dog and I would often go for walks on the trail or downtown early on crisp fall mornings. Bisou happily greeted every person and dog that we would meet along the trail during those walks. It never failed that one or two people would stop to have a conversation regarding my über-friendly border collie and then, of course, that conversation could carry into the weather, local news, etc. It became obvious to me over the years that our dog was, without a doubt, a conversation waiting to happen!

Often at our caregiver support groups, members discuss their pets with the same fondness as they reveal stories about the rest of their family. Stories of pet heroes or pet comedians abound, but the stories that touch everyone are those about the dog that stayed by his caregiver's side while a family member went to the hospital or the one that lay by a family member during an illness. Then there was the cat that woke the wife each morning so she could care for her husband, and there are the frequent stories about pets that act as alarms when a person has a seizure or wanders during the night.

Research tells us that pets are not only beloved members of our family; they also provide health benefits, just by being who they are! Here are some examples of how pet animals can improve our lives.

- Dogs respond to chemical changes in our bodies and can be trained to alert diabetic owners when their blood sugar is low.
- Dogs are also used in many therapy situations, as they are natural mood enhancers and can lower stress hormones.
- Dogs can also help children with sensory issues and can build self-esteem. You can talk to your dog all day; they listen unconditionally.
- Cats also have a natural calming effect and can help with the effects of isolation.

- Owners of dogs are well aware of the health benefits of spending time outside with their dog; even two short walks can improve your cardiovascular health, while the sun will provide added doses of vitamin D.

But we should also remember that dogs, like their owners, might appreciate a slower stroll since they too can experience arthritis.



**“My goal in life is to be as good a person as my dog already thinks I am.” (Unknown)**

There is a national organization available in our province that enables older owners to continue a relationship with their dogs by providing assistance and support. It is called **Elderdog Canada**, a non-profit organization dedicated to “aging people, aging dogs, and the important connection they enjoy”. This group will provide assistance with feeding, grooming, walking, and transportation to the vet. They will also help with re-homing if a dog's owner requires long term care or passes away. They truly understand the importance of keeping the dog and owner together as long as possible. The unbreakable bond can help many families deal with hardships in their lives. For more information visit [www.elderdog.ca](http://www.elderdog.ca) or email [info@elderdog.ca](mailto:info@elderdog.ca) or call 1-855-336-4226.

## Cumberland County Retreats

By Cindie Smith, Support Coordinator,  
Northern & Eastern Mainland

Imagine being spoiled, pampered, and waited upon for a whole day. No worries because someone else is giving care to your loved one. Even transportation was arranged for your day. Oh, my ... where do I sign up?

Caregivers Nova Scotia and members of the Aging Well Coalition hosted two Caregiver Retreats this fall in Amherst and Springhill. Planning began in the spring, when caregivers were surveyed and told us they wanted a day that was both educational and relaxing. The Planning Committee constructed a day that would fill those wishes, with a few surprises built in.

When our guests arrived, they were warmly greeted and offered tea or coffee and given a chance to chat with others before we settled into the program. Just prior to our first educational session, everyone was led in a morning stretch. There was a Healthy Communication session led by clinicians from Mental Health and, after a nutrition break, there was a discussion entitled "Continuing Care 101", where questions about the programs and services of Home Care and Continuing Care were explained and explored.

A gourmet luncheon provided by a local caterer was followed by a 30 minute guided walk or shorter sessions on chair yoga and music as therapy.

Then the real indulgence came in the afternoon. Each participant slipped their feet into a hot, lavender scented, Epsom salts footbath while they were taken on a 20 minute guided meditation (see photo above), after which they learned about how to care for their feet. All afternoon there were scalp, neck, and shoulder massages offered by massage therapists and hair care specialists to anyone wanting a deeper relaxation.

The guests were pleased to know the towels, basins, additional Epsom salts, and all foot care tools were theirs to take home as a giveaway.



Door prizes ranged from mobile hair care service gift certificates to gift baskets of personal products.

Knowing that only another caregiver can truly understand the challenges faced by our guests, there were lots of opportunities to chat with each other built into the day. New friendships were struck, we learned and relaxed, and caregivers left feeling how deeply appreciated they are.

Quotes from the evaluations expressed the gratitude of our guests.

*"Very pleased with the superb care and information."*

*"It was totally awesome!"*

*"So glad I came. Hope I can take this peace of mind home and pass it on."*

*"Your extended kindness made this day truly enjoyable. The rest of the journey is now bearable. Hope to see you all again soon."*

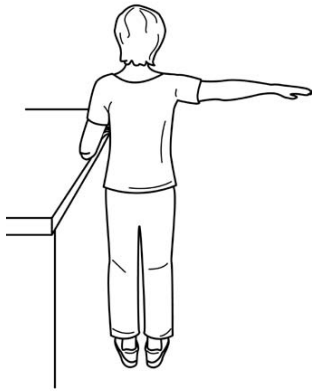
The Retreats would not have been possible without the cooperation and cheerful collaboration of a great team - Patricia Harrington, District Manager of Continuing Care, Cumberland County; Brenda MacKinnon, Regional Coordinator, Community Links; Dawn Ripley, Community Health Project Coordinator, NS Health Authority; and Colleen Dowe, CHB Coordinator. Funding for these events was made possible from the NS Department of Seniors Positive Aging Grant program.

# The Importance of Exercise as We Age

By Brenda Sangster, Support Coordinator, Capital District

Starting or maintaining a regular exercise routine can be a challenge at any time, but even more so as we get older. However, exercise can energize our mood, relieve stress, help manage symptoms of illness and pain, and improve our overall sense of wellbeing.

The simple exercises below are from the ***Fitness in the Kitchen Program*** and can help you achieve better health outcomes. Start with 5 repetitions per day and gradually increase up to 10-15 reps but first, check with your physician to make sure the exercises are okay for you. If you would like to have your own copy of all the ***Fitness in the Kitchen*** exercises, please contact [Community Links](#) at 1-855-253-9355. They would be happy to mail one.



Holding on to the counter for support, stretch arm out in front, raise and stretch arm to the side, raise arm above your head.



Pull your toes up toward your body as high as you can. Hold 5 seconds. Repeat with other foot.



Stand with your feet 12 inches apart. Rise up slowly on your toes as high as you can. Hold for 5 seconds.

---

## Nuts & Bolts

2-4 cups mixed nuts, to taste  
3 cups Shreddies  
2 cups Cherrios  
3 cups pretzel sticks  
1 cup melted butter  
2 tbsp garlic powder  
1 tbsp onion salt  
1 tbsp celery salt  
a pinch of cayenne  
½ tsp salt  
2+ tbsp Worcestershire Sauce  
a few dashes of Tabasco Sauce

- Melt the butter and add garlic powder, onion salt, celery, salt, salt, Worcestershire Sauce, and Tabasco Sauce. Mix well to combine. In a large roasting pan, mix the Shreddies, Cherrios, pretzels, and nuts.
- Pour melted butter with spices over the other ingredients and mix well so everything is coated.
- Place uncovered pan in the oven and roast in a preheated oven at 250 degrees for approximately 1½ hours or more, until browned. Stir well every 15 minutes.

**Note:** Although these snacks may taste bland when first prepared, the flavours develop over the first 24 hours. The exact proportions don't seem to matter too much. 4

## Caregiver Communication

By Lynn Butler, Support Coordinator, Capital District

How effective are you at communicating? How often do you feel as though you are just not being listened to or just not getting your message across?

We all know how important it is to be heard and to be able to communicate with one another. As a caregiver, good communication skills are vital. In any given week or month you will probably need to communicate with your family and friends, family doctor, specialists, care providers, pharmacist, and each day you will need to communicate with your care recipient.

Communicating is a combination of verbal and non-verbal communication skills, of listening, and of body language. Let's take a closer look at communicating and some ways in which you can make yourself a better communicator.

One of the most effective ways to communicate in a positive way is by using "I" messages as they allow you to take ownership of what you are thinking and feeling. They increase your chances of being heard and can help keep conversations going in a positive direction rather than coming across as judging or blaming the person you are speaking to. "I" messages also help you exchange information and find solutions to problems.

Let's compare the more positive "I" message with the negative "You" message: "I really enjoy when we spend time together and wish we could do it more often." "You never come over to visit me anymore." "You" messages often lay blame at other people's feet and make them feel attacked, angry, and defensive. These types of messages never resolve problems or issues and often lead to the other person withdrawing even further. "You"

messages can even escalate into major confrontations. Let's look at one more example of an "I" message versus a "You" message. "Mom has two appointments this week and I cannot take any more time off, is there a way we can work this out?" "Since I am working you will need to arrange for Mom to get to her appointments this week."

Listen to the way you talk to others. Try rephrasing your messages and see what happens. It takes practice to break old habits

but it can be done, and I bet you will be surprised by the reaction you receive. Give it a try and see.

If we are honest with ourselves, we know that many times we are not actively present when others are talking to us. We are merely waiting for an opportunity to chime in and

talk about ourselves, or our own experience. However, if we want to be better communicators, we need to learn one of the most important communication skills of all: that of listening. There is nothing more powerful than truly listening to another person, being present and interested in what they want or need to share. We all know how good it feels to be heard and given the opportunity to share stories, information, or even advice from time to time. Listening, really listening, takes work and it takes time. The next time you are talking with someone try focusing on listening to everything the person is saying. Ask questions for clarification if needed, try not to interrupt or bring the story back to your own experience. Just listen.

Communication is most definitely a two-way street. If you want to be heard then you first need to listen.

**"The biggest communication problem is we do not listen to understand, we listen to reply."**

[Unknown]

## Fraud: What is it and how can I protect myself?

By Carlye Stein, Research and Operations Coordinator

According to the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada, fraud is the most common type of crime committed against seniors. Both you and your care recipient may be vulnerable to fraud or know people who have been victims.

Fraud refers to any criminal wrongdoing or deception that is committed for personal or financial gain. The fraudster tries unfairly or unlawfully to get something of value by deliberately misleading the intended victim.

Here are some of the general tips the Consumer Agency provides as way to identify and protect yourself from fraudsters.

- Keep important documents such as your birth certificate, social insurance number, and your passport in a safe and secure place. Don't carry them with you if you don't need them.
- Never give our personal information such as your credit card number, bank account number, or social insurance number over the phone, at the door, or online unless you know and trust the person.
- Be careful when you get rid of old statements and bills; shred them first. Fraudsters can rummage through your garbage and recycling looking for old bank statements or bills from which they obtain your personal information to use for fraudulent purposes.
- Do not click on pop-up windows, respond to emails, open attachments, or go to website links sent by people you do not know. Your bank or credit union will not send you anything by email unless you ask them.
- Be suspicious if someone you don't know asks you to send them money or a cheque, or requests that you return money they "accidentally" sent you.
- Never feel pressured to sign an agreement or contact immediately, even if it's a "limited time offer". It's best to wait until someone you know and trust can look over the details of the agreement or contract.
- Before hiring someone or agreeing to have work done on your home, ask for proof of identity and references... and check them.

If you think you have or your care recipient has been a victim of fraud, it's best to report it. You may feel embarrassed or tell yourself that the amount of money stolen isn't worth bothering about. However, even if you can't get your money back, you may help to stop the person from scamming others. You can report fraud to your local police or call [PhoneBusters](https://www.phonebusters.ca) at 1.888.495.8501.

## Hot Apple Cider

For each can of apple juice, add  
1 whole cinnamon stick  
1 whole allspice  
1 whole clove  
a couple of orange slices  
a large handful of fresh cranberries

Simmer until the cranberries split. Delicious, healthy ... and it makes the house smell GREAT!



## A Christmas Story

By Maggie Roach-Ganaway, Support Coordinator, Cape Breton

This is not the Christmas story about a Red Ryder BB gun or a lamp shaped like a lady's leg. This story is about family tradition and how important it is, especially for Caregivers.

I have a large extended family and we all have busy lives. It is important for us to get together each year around the holidays, and sometimes this is the only time we can all gather at the same time.

While looking at some pictures from past years' celebrations, I noticed how many of the people in those photographs are no longer with us. At first it made me sad. Then I remembered all of the great times we shared during our family gatherings. It also got me thinking about how we can preserve these memories and create even more. It is important to carry such recollections about them with us when people in the photographs—some of whom may be family members or friends for whom we provided care—are no longer here.

Here are a few ways a Caregiver, thinking ahead, can create and preserve memories of their care recipient. Sometimes, this could involve doing things together during the time while you are caring for that family member or friend, things that you can later look back on that will evoke reminiscences of earlier times.

Planning ahead while your loved one is still living, you could make a special ornament to put on the tree each year to cherish the memory of them.

A journal can be a wonderful source of future memories. Create one together so you can ask them questions about family history that maybe only they would know. It can provide hours of pleasant memories in years to come, and it can also be useful to other family members as well.

For someone with dementia, create a memory book to help you communicate with him or her while they are still here and to have and cherish after they are gone.

Collect some of their favourite recipes to pass along, so that every time you smell what is cooking, a smile will come across your face in remembrance. How often do people comment, "Do you remember the delicious molasses oatmeal cookies Aunt Ellen used to make?"

Family chronicles of significant events that happened in the past year with each member of your family can also serve as a nice way to remember times and dates for the future.

Through pictures and videos we can preserve the memory of a loved one, but it is important to *do* something with the pictures once you have them. Maybe make a special scrapbook with reminders of who is in each picture to pass along to future generations who may not have had the opportunity to know personally these relatives or family friends.

I want you to remember however, this does not have to be another great chore that you feel you have to do. It is meant to remind us of the great value our loved one has in our lives.

---

**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) and sign up at the bottom of any page.**





## **Seasons Greetings to all Caregivers**

***For many of us, the holidays have changed over the past years. Priorities have shifted, circumstances have been altered, and energy has been redirected.***

***Whether you are a new caregiver or seasoned in the role, please keep this in mind as you approach Hanukkah, Christmas or Kwanzaa ...***

- ***Talk with family members about what is most important to them during the holiday season and scale back to a shorter list of priorities.***
- ***Among those priorities, delegate the work and share the load even if it won't be done exactly the way you would have done it. Others may be grateful for the opportunity to help.***
- ***Update family and friends who are visiting after an absence. Changes in your loved one may come as a shock, so helping guests prepare may make your time with them more relaxed and cheerful.***

***Above all, please be gentle with yourself.***

***We wish you a safe and peaceful holiday and the very best of the New Year.***

***Your friends at Caregivers Nova Scotia,***

***Angus, Brenda, Lynn, Jennifer,  
Cindie, Carlye and Maggie;  
and our Board of Directors  
(also doggies Winnie and Jemma)***

**Caregivers**  
Nova Scotia  
for friends and family giving care