

The Beacon

Fall and Winter 2022

Volume #16, Issue 2



In This Issue

Falalalal!	2
Practice What You Preach	3
Caregiver Guilt	3
Accessing Resources	4
Benefits of Virtual Care	6
Self Compassion	6
So Long, Farewell	7

Board of Directors

Executive Officers

Patricia Murray - Chair

Ruvi Nora Magara
- Vice-Chair

Mary Elizabeth MacLellan
- Treasurer

Anne Corbin - Secretary

Members at Large

Sherri Mitchell

Paula Blackmore

Kelli MacDonald

Catherine Morley

Kimberley Chretien

Nancy Day

Brittany Keough

Wendy Menczel



3433 Dutch Village Road
Halifax, NS B3N 2S7

Tel. 902.421.7390
Toll-free 1.877.488.7390
Info@CaregiversNS.org
www.CaregiversNS.org



Thank you to the
Department of Seniors
and Long-term Care
for their support



Hello Caregivers and Friends,

We have had a very busy past six months since the release of our Spring Newsletter. We started two projects funded through the Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care. We are partnering with the Nova Scotia Centre on Aging to do a Strategic Review of Caregiving in Nova Scotia. Caregiver focus groups were held throughout the fall around the province and an online survey is available at www.NScaregivingproject.ca. We are looking forward to hearing feedback from Nova Scotian caregivers. The second project is looking at education and training needs and gaps and what currently exists for caregivers. Both projects will wrap up in the summer of 2023.

We are very excited to be releasing a new workshop in 2024 – Understanding Dementia Behaviours for Caregivers. This workshop was developed by JoAnne Connors, Caregiver Support Coordinator, Capital Region with assistance from Nicole Byers (South Shore) and Leanne Taylor (Northern). All staff have been trained and will be looking for opportunities to present this workshop in communities around the province.

We are sadly saying goodbye to Maggie Roach-Ganaway, Caregiver Support Coordinator, Cape Breton Region who is retiring. Maggie has been with Caregivers Nova Scotia for 9 years and has served and supported caregivers in Cape Breton tremendously. She will be greatly missed (read more on page 8). We wish her the very best in retirement.

On behalf of the staff and board I would like to wish all caregivers and our partners the very best for the holiday season and the new year. We are honoured to support caregivers in Nova Scotia and look forward to being of help and service in the new year ahead.

Warm regards,

Jenny Theriault
Executive Director



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
and sign up
at the bottom of any page.



Got Feedback?

We're listening. Give opinions
and provide feedback on
services, newsletter, programs,
... everything CNS.

Please contact us.
1.877.488.7390
or www.CaregiversNS.org

Falalala!

Therese Henman-Phillips, Caregiver Support Coordinator, Capital Region



Did I really suggest writing an article on decreasing stress around the holidays? This is wishful thinking perhaps. The most wonderful time of the year? Maybe not! No matter your cultural background or practices, the holiday season adds a layer of stress to caregiving as we seek to replicate magical images we see in popular media. In reality, the holidays are complicated with big feelings, family dynamics, obligation, expense and an expanded “to do” list. Just what a caregiver needs, right? How do we find calm in this holiday chaos?

Remember the holidays are going to happen in spite of our wishes. Firstly, it’s important to let go of some of those images we hold and enjoy the holidays in whatever format they arrive. Adjusting our expectations is important. That’s within our control. Realistically, it is impossible to do everything we would like to do to celebrate especially when other responsibilities and obligations are inevitable. Instead of trying to create the perfect holiday, pick a few things that are representative of your traditions and incorporate where possible. This may include honoring your care recipient’s values in some way.

Instead of accumulating debt with elaborate gifts that require your time to locate, invite family to share in a new ritual or alternatively, invite someone who may be less fortunate to join your meal or collectively provide for someone in need. It’s never too late to make new traditions and acts of service have so much more meaning than commercial gift giving.

There is no more precious gift than time they say; especially for caregivers. Encourage others who want to know what you need to give you gifts of time for your caregiving journey and in return, your time could be something well appreciated by another - perhaps a baking lesson with a grandchild while their parent sits with Dad? Negotiate to do away with gifts, draw names, create or shop online.

If you are the one who prepares the holiday meals, encourage a potluck with family participation where others can share their favorite recipe. Ask for help if you need it. Don’t assume others know what you need to get you through the holidays. There is no shame in delegating to others.

Emotions are high during holidays. Shared family histories and grief can be difficult. Be kind to each other and recognize and accept each other’s limitations. Unfortunately, there will always be a few grinchies to share in the holidays.

Pick a date when you are going to say you are as prepared as you can be. Then it’s time to let go of the dread and allow the holiday to happen. Did I just say that? I’m learning too.

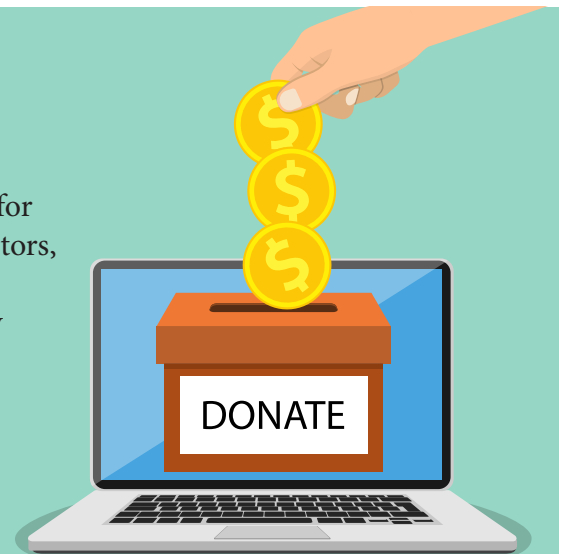
If you have some creative ideas on how caregivers can bring cheer to their situation this holiday season, join us on facebook and share your suggestions. We would love to hear from you!

Donate Today

Caregivers Nova Scotia provides programs, services, and advocacy for caregivers. With ongoing support from our funders, Board of Directors, allied organizations, and caregivers themselves, we’re dedicated to providing recognition and practical assistance to friends and family giving care.

Donate today by visiting www.caregiversns.org.

Registered Charity No. 87932 1420 RR0002



Practice What You Preach: How are we prioritizing self-care?

Nicole Byers, Caregiver Support Coordinator, South Shore Region

Everyone always talks about the importance of self-care. But what does self-care actually look like? I took some time to ask the staff of Caregivers Nova Scotia that very same question.

Our executive director, Jenny Theriault, is an introvert and thrives when she has lots of rest and downtime. She is intentional in leaving her evenings free from too many commitments. Jenny knows she isn't her best self when she doesn't prioritize self-care, so it comes fairly naturally to her. Jenny's go-to's: curling up with a cup of tea and a good book, crafting, and Sunday afternoon naps.

Office Administrator, Brenda Sangster, has experienced some health issues lately and is realizing that she needs to take care of herself first. She is learning how to prioritize her self-care. She says, "If I slip, tomorrow is another day to start over again." Brenda's go-to's: taking her breaks throughout the work day, walking, and enforcing an 11:00 pm bedtime during the week.

Support Coordinators

JoAnne knows that if she isn't practicing self-care every day, she will not be okay. JoAnne had to work at incorporating self-care into her daily life and now she recognizes when she is getting stressed out and can self-correct with some extra self-love. JoAnne's go-to's: being in nature, laughing, listening to music, practicing gratitude, and watching the birds in her yard.

Maggie has been struggling with her self-care since the pandemic. She tends to put others' needs ahead of her own and has to work at maintaining her self-care regimen. Maggie sets the mood for each day by bringing positivity into her morning routine. Maggie's go-to's: long walks, listening to podcasts, taking Epsom salt baths, and going for long drives with her better half.

Self-care can be cringe-worthy for Therese. It is something

that she encourages, but as a working caregiver with parenting responsibilities, it is challenging to balance these roles with her own needs. Self-care isn't always a spa day rather, it is taking time for yourself to quiet your mind and body. Therese's go-to's: a brisk walk, time on the treadmill, and a hot bath.

Leanne is a caregiver and often puts others' needs ahead of her own. She has experienced burnout and knows how vital self-care is for her physical and mental health. She is learning to steal a few moments for herself when she can. Leanne's go-to's: yoga, time with animals, gardening, time with family and friends, long car rides, and listening to music.

Catherine's self-care comes fairly naturally to her. She dedicates the first hour and the last 15 minutes of each day to herself. She schedules mini breaks from technology and engages in passive physical activities to maintain her mental and physical well-being. Catherine's go-to's: enjoying her morning coffee outside, practicing mindfulness, gardening, beach time, practicing gratitude, and prayer.

Jennine prioritizes self-care by believing that a focus on herself is a good thing. To her, self-care is doing anything with the intention of kindness toward self. She is continuously working on her self-care, which includes checking in with herself, acknowledging her feelings, and setting strong boundaries. Jennine's go-to's: making good food, yoga, swimming, walking, not isolating, laughing, dancing, and practicing gratitude.

My self-care is a work in progress. I used to believe that self-care looked like sitting in a hot bath at the end of a hard day and it can be that. It can also be about the things I don't do; like not spending too much time on social media or watching television. My go-to's: reading, baking, and spending intentional time with my partner.



CNS en collaboration avec FFANE et leur excellent projet de soutien aux aidants acadiens et francophones en Nouvelle-Écosse, nous avons maintenant un nouveau Guide de la personne aidante en français.

Vous pouvez accéder à ce Guide de la personne aidante, en le téléchargeant sur CaregiversNS.org ou www.FFANE.ca, ou en demandant une copie papier auprès de nous à Halifax@CaregiversNS.org ou en nous composant le 902.223.6790.



Caregiver Guilt: Helpful or Harmful?

JoAnne Connors, Caregiver Support Coordinator, Capital Region

Often, caregivers talk about guilt, and how it can lead to a sense of powerlessness. They also report that guilt contributes to the stress they experience. Changing how guilt plays a role in our lives can be one small step that can have a profound impact on our caregiving journey.

We often see guilt as a bad feeling; but those feelings can often affect us in a positive way through growth, feelings of responsibility and wellbeing. It is when guilt runs our lives that it can become negative. Guilt is a powerful emotion that can lead to feelings of shame, grief and anger – feelings that are internalized, isolating and can be destructive. Guilt can also be an emotion that moves us to action, empathy and compassion.

When caregiving uses up the majority of our time and we feel unsupported, it can lead to a cycle of exhaustion, anger and guilt which tends to repeat itself. It can cloud our judgement, be all consuming, and can lead to focusing on our feelings of failure, rather than on our achievements.

Guilt can also be positive if it moves you forward, motivates you to do better, forces you to pay attention to your body and mind, and acts as a warning sign to take care of yourself.

Coping with guilt is a good exercise in doing a personal inventory of where these feelings stem from and identify where you could use support. Reframing our negative self-talk when we get deep into those feelings, can also be helpful. So guilt can be an opportunity to pay attention to where those feelings are coming from.

There are some suggestions on how you can cope well with feelings of guilt;

- Identify the situations that you feel guilty about.
- Look for the causes of guilt. It can occur when there is a disconnect between your thoughts about your “ideal you” and the real you.
- Be aware of your unrealistic expectations of yourself.
- Make changes in your life to reduce those uncomfortable feelings and reframe your thinking from “should” and “must” to “I choose to” language.
- Ask for help! Do not close yourself off or feel ashamed of accepting help.
- Adjust your expectations to the situation at hand.
- Revisit the “ideal you.” Think about what your strengths are. Be gentle with yourself.
- Make self-care a priority. You are important and have needs as well.

At Caregivers NS we have Support Groups and you can contact us for one-on-one support via phone. We look forward to hearing from you to assist in navigating these feelings and connect you to supports in your community.

Adapted from <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/blog/guilt-dementia-how-manage-guilty-feelings-carer>

La culpabilité des personnes aidantes : utile ou non ?

Les aidantes parlent souvent de la culpabilité et de la détresse qu'elle peut provoquer. Elles disent que la culpabilité contribue au stress qu'elles ressentent. Changer le rôle que la culpabilité joue dans nos vies peut être un petit pas avec un impact profond sur notre expérience d'aidante.



On considère souvent la culpabilité comme un mauvais sentiment, mais ce sentiment peut aussi avoir des effets positifs : le développement personnel, le sentiment de responsabilité et l'amélioration du bien-être. C'est lorsque la culpabilité a le contrôle sur notre vie qu'elle peut devenir un sentiment négatif. La culpabilité est une émotion puissante qui peut provoquer des sentiments de honte, de chagrin et de colère - des sentiments qui sont intériorisés, qui isolent et qui peuvent être destructeurs. La culpabilité peut aussi, par contre, être une émotion qui nous pousse à l'action, à l'empathie et à la compassion. La culpabilité peut être quelque chose de positif si elle fait avancer, motive à faire mieux, oblige à faire attention à nos corps et à nos esprits, et agit comme un signal d'alarme pour prendre soin de soi-même.

Lorsque la prestation de soins occupe la majorité de notre temps et que nous ne nous sentons pas soutenues, un cycle d'épuisement, de colère et de culpabilité peut se développer. C'est un cycle qui a tendance à se répéter. Cela peut obscurcir notre jugement, être très intense et nous amener à nous concentrer sur notre sentiment d'échec, plutôt que sur nos réalisations.

Faire face à la culpabilité est un bon exercice. C'est l'occasion de faire un inventaire personnel de l'origine de ces sentiments et identifier où il pourrait y avoir un besoin de soutien. Notre discours personnel négatif peut être destructif lorsque nous nous enfonçons dans ces sentiments - la culpabilité nous donne l'occasion de prêter attention à l'origine de ces sentiments.

Voici quelques suggestions pour gérer les sentiments de culpabilité de manière plus positive :

- Identifie les situations dans lesquelles tu te sens coupable.
- Cherche les causes de ce sentiment de culpabilité. Cela survient lorsqu'il y a un décalage entre tes pensées sur ton « toi idéal » et le vrai toi.
- Prends conscience de tes attentes irréalistes envers toi-même.
- Fais des changements dans ta vie pour réduire ces sentiments inconfortables et recadrer tes pensées en passant du langage « je devrais » et « je dois » à « je choisis de ».
- Demande de l'aide ! Ne te renferme pas et n'aie pas

honte d'accepter de l'aide.

- Adapte tes attentes à la situation actuelle.
- Revisite l'idée du « toi idéal ». Réfléchis à ce que sont tes points forts. Sois compatissante avec toi-même.
- Prioritise le temps pour prendre soin de toi-même. Tu es importante et tu as aussi des besoins.

Chez Caregivers NS, nous avons des groupes de soutien et tu peux aussi nous appeler pour un soutien individuel par téléphone. Nous sommes prêts à t'écouter pour t'aider à gérer ces sentiments et te mettre en contact avec des soutiens dans ta communauté."

Tapping In... Accessing Resources of Support

Catherine Parent, Caregiver Support Coordinator, Eastern HRM Region

You may have heard about or be facing personal challenges from (and throughout) the Covid19 pandemic. These include food insecurity, housing insecurity, mental health wellness, and social isolation. There are a multitude of factors that contribute to these challenges, however the good news is: help is available. There are resources that may be beneficial for persons affected by these challenges. Organizations, communities, and businesses have focused on these concerns, and in many situations, have collaborated to provide ongoing support. It is magnificent to see how Nova Scotians are assisting and supporting their neighbours, friends, caregivers, and community members. The Nova Scotian spirit at work!

Below, are a few of the many resources that may be able to help. Additional support options can be found on the Caregivers Nova Scotia's website www.CaregiversNS.org, or through the organizations listed below.

Food Security:

Foodbanks

feednovascotia.ca/about/network-of-agencies 902.457.1900

Family Resource Centers

novascotia.ca/coms/families/prevention-and-early-intervention/family-resource-centres.html

Mobile Food Markets

<https://www.mobilefoodmarket.ca/> 902.802.7152

Local Library Programs <https://library.novascotia.ca> 902.424.2457

Housing/Shelters:

Nova Scotia Housing Authority

<https://housing.novascotia.ca/contact-housing-nova-scotia>
1.844.424.5110

211 Nova Scotia <https://ns.211.ca> 211

Canadian Mental Health Association

novascotia.cmha.ca/project-hope/ 1.877.466.6606

Financial Security:

Department of Health and Wellness

<https://novascotia.ca/dhw/ccs/> 1.800.225.7225

Department of Community Services

novascotia.ca/coms/departement/contact/index.html 1.877.424.1177

Canada Revenue Agency

<https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/corporate/contact-information.html>

Veterans Affairs Canada

<https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/financial-support> 1-866-522-2122

Mental Health Wellness:

Community health teams

<http://www.communityhealthteams.ca/>

Local recreation centers

<https://www.recreationns.ns.ca/> 902.425.1128

Caregivers Nova Scotia

www.CaregiversNS.org 1.877.488.7390

Well-Being Hubs

<https://www.theoldschool.ca/wellbeinghubs> 902.889.2735

Canadian Mental Health Association

<https://novascotia.cmha.ca/> 1.877.466.6606

Computer/Technology/Literacy:

Family literacy organizations

<https://www.literacyns.ca/index.htm> 1.800.255-5203

Family resource centers

novascotia.ca/coms/families/prevention-and-early-intervention/family-resource-centres.html

Local libraries

<https://library.novascotia.ca> 902.424.2457

Community health boards

<https://www.communityhealthboards.ns.ca/find-your-chb>

Voices For Change

We know that being a caregiver – especially for a loved one with cancer – is a selfless act and a big job. From juggling appointments to managing side effects to administering medication, caregivers play a vital role in cancer care, but they are often undervalued and overworked.

We hear from caregivers, like you, about what needs to change in cancer care in Nova Scotia. Access to timely



screening, and prioritizing cancer procedures and eliminating the surgical backlog are priorities for you. So is access to affordable prescriptions and financial supports, so that no family faces hardship. And better access to end-of-life hospice palliative care.

We raise these and many of your other concerns with the government every chance we get. But the truth is, the person best placed to talk about how cancer care can get better is you.

Join our network of advocates who are committed to preventing cancer and improving the lives of people living with cancer and their caregivers through government action. As a Voices for Change volunteer, you'll be the first to know about our work and receive exclusive access to volunteer opportunities. This includes attending meetings with elected officials, building your own advocacy campaigns and raising awareness at signature events.

Your experiences that can inform and inspire change.

Visit cancer.ca/voicesforchange to get involved and help cancer care get better.

The Benefits of Virtual Care for Caregivers

Leanne Taylor, Caregiver Support Coordinator, Northern Region

I am a Caregiver Support Coordinator, and the primary caregiver for my young adult daughter. As a working caregiver, I have to coordinate attending medical appointments for myself and for my daughter, while working a full-time job, along with the other caregiving responsibilities, and maintaining a home. Health care appointments are one of the items on my list that I struggle most to prepare for, as they never fit in well with my daily schedule.

Many appointments are only available during day time hours, and before the pandemic, were only available in-person. Since many appointments are limited to one issue at a time, it can be inconvenient to have to go in person to multiple appointments. In-person appointments are important when they are needed but take more time to attend. When attending an appointment in person, time is required for traveling, parking, waiting, and time to meet with the health care provider.

When COVID began, health care appointments were delayed and to reopen services many appointments were offered over the phone and some had virtual options. This was the

first time as a caregiver that I didn't have to worry about rearranging my hectic schedule to take my daughter to her appointments. Before COVID, I would need to either take half a day or more off work to take her to the appointments. With the virtual appointments, there was no need to leave home which reduced stress on both my daughter and me, and the amount of time that was required to help her was reduced significantly.

Residents of Nova Scotia that do not have a family doctor can access a virtual doctor by contacting 811. Most medical insurance companies offer virtual doctors. Anyone requiring assistance using technology for virtual appointments can request support from public libraries to learn more about accessing virtual care appointments.

Hopefully, moving forward Nova Scotians will have the option to access health care appointments in-person, on the phone, or virtually. Virtual Care has given me back valuable time for caregiving and for myself.

To find a virtual doctor: <https://www.nshealth.ca/content/virtualcarens>

Self Compassion

Jennine Wilson,
Caregiver Support Coordinator, Valley Region

Caregiving is a difficult. We often feel inadequate and judge our actions harshly. We say things to ourselves that we would never say to a friend. I hear this harsh criticism and the guilt that comes with it in support groups and find myself reminding people we are human, and to please be gentle on themselves. I ask caregivers to entertain speaking to themselves like they were speaking to a dear friend in the same situation. I hope folks will explore giving themselves the compassion they show others.

Dr. Kristin Neff, a caregiver and researcher, describes self-compassion;

“Self-compassion is simply the process of turning compassion inward. We are kind and understanding rather than harshly self-critical when we fail, make mistakes or feel inadequate. We give ourselves support and encouragement rather than being cold and judgmental when challenges and difficulty arise in our lives. Research indicates that self-compassion is one of the most powerful sources of coping and resilience we have available to us, radically improving our mental and physical wellbeing.”

I also hear people say “I have nothing to complain about, others have it so much worse than I do.” It makes me sad when people push their sorrow down thinking theirs does not compare or is not worthy of compassion. I believe be-

fore when can extend our compassion out in the world we first need to hug it in. We need to break down our barriers to receive so there is also nothing in our way to be able to give. It is from this felt experience of deepened compassion that we can extend it to the world without reservation or expectation other than creating space to connect and hold all suffering with the gentleness of compassion.

According to Dr. Kristin Neff there are 3 main components to self-compassion;

1. Notice your own suffering
2. Be kind and caring in response to that suffering
3. Imperfection is part of the human experience, something we all share.

To learn more about and begin a practice of self compassion see Dr. Kristin Neff’s website <https://self-compassion.org/> MindwellU also has self compassion training you can access virtually <https://www.mindwellu.com/mindfulness-self-compassion>

Brene Brown says “imperfections are not inadequacies; they are reminders that we’re all in this together”

Accepting our imperfections with kindness can free the softness of our hearts. Hug the compassion in everyone then you we can extend it out with soft intention.

Recipe

Whipped Shortbread Cookies

By Brenda Sangster, Office Administrator
Servings: 36 Cookies

Ingredients

1½ Cups (3 sticks) Butter at Room Temperature, salted
¾ Cup Confectioners Sugar
2¼ Cups All Purpose Flour
¾ Cup Cornstarch

Flavourings and Toppings: (optional)

2 tsp Pure vanilla extract, or Lemon extract or Orange extract
¼ Cup Sprinkles (of choice)

Instructions

1. In a large mixing bowl, beat butter and confectioners’ sugar for 3-4 minutes. Don’t skimp on the beating time for lightly textured cookies. Add flavourings at this point.
2. Next, add sifted flour and cornstarch to the bowl and beat until combined.
3. Chill the dough for about 2 hours in the fridge, or until it’s firm to touch. Roll into 36 cookie balls, press their tops with cornstarch-dipped fork and top with sprinkles.
4. Set the cookies on a lined baking tray and allow them to chill in the freezer until you preheat the oven. I usually bake 12 cookies on a tray at a time.
5. When ready to bake, preheat the oven to 300F and bake cookies for 19-20 minutes, or until their tops look set.
6. Allow to cool on the baking tray.

Heighten the Flavour!

These cookies are not super sweet to taste.

1. Top them off with melted chocolate or a Hershey’s Kiss on every cookie or even Candy cane Kisses taste so good.
2. Place a cherry in their center.
3. Make a dent and top with jams and preserves before baking.

So Long, Farewell

Maggie Roach-Ganaway, Caregiver Support Coordinator, Cape Breton Region

For anyone that hasn't heard yet, I would like to announce that after much soul searching, I have decided to retire from Caregivers Nova Scotia at the end of 2022.

I came to work at Caregivers Nova Scotia on Jan. 27, 2014 after working in Long Term Care for over 25 years and I can honestly say that it is the best place I have ever worked. As

an LPN in LTC I was trained to care for the care recipient, so although I was kind and courteous to the caregivers who would visit, they were not my concern, it was the resident that I cared for. It wasn't until I came to work at Caregivers Nova Scotia that I realized that the caregiver is the unsung hero who deserves to be supported just as much. Since

coming to Caregivers NS I have put my heart and soul into trying to make the journey of caregivers I have come to know, as easy and less stressful as possible. Although, we don't have all the answers and can't perform miracles for them, we at Caregivers Nova Scotia do everything we can to help them in every way possible.

This is what makes this type of work the best work I've ever done, as it gives me back just as much as I give. To have caregivers tell you that "you saved my life" is the best feeling in the world. Although I wouldn't have gone that far in a com-

pliment, I do believe that everyone at Caregivers NS has the greatest empathy and best personality to do this kind of work.

You couldn't ask for a better group of people to work with as they give as much to other staff members as they do to the caregivers they support.



I'm sure I will miss everyone very much, but there comes a time when you have to make the best decision for you and your family, as we all know, life is way too short so you have to grab every ounce of joy when you can.

I want to thank Jenny and all the staff, the board members and the caregivers that I have encountered these past 9 years as you have given me the best way to finish up my career.

My greatest hope, is that all caregivers continue to get the most support they can and that they recognize that their role is the most valuable gift they can give to someone they are caring for.

Editor's Note: We will miss Maggie deeply, but wish her the very best in her all her adventures in retirement. She was a bright light on our team and for all caregivers in Cape Breton.



Caregivers Nova Scotia acknowledges that we live and work in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded lands of the Mi'kmaq People. This territory is governed by the Treaties of Peace and Friendship. We are continually learning more about how to engage and move forward with the work of truth, reconciliation, and equity. We recognize that without action, an acknowledgment is empty. It marks the beginning of the work ahead of us, not the end. We are all treaty people.