ONE THOUSAND TREES



FEBRUARY 2019

ONE THOUSAND TREES

FACILITATING WELLNESS THROUGH CONNECTION, CREATIVITY, AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

PUBLISHER Lisa Browning

ACQUISITIONS EDITOR Lindsay Brant

REGULAR CONTRIBUTORS

Cheron Kovacs, Christine Nightingale, Kayleigh Radatus, Maureen Trovo, Sandra Wilson

One Thousand Trees is published monthly. Submissions for Feature Articles (based on the monthly theme) or Regular Departments are due on the 25th of the month prior to each publication. Full Production Schedule, including summary of monthly themes, can be found at

www.onethousandtrees.com/magazine.html

Please submit by email, as a Word doc attachment, by the above-stated deadlines. Please do not send PDFs. First-time writers for One Thousand Trees are asked to send a brief (two to three sentence) bio, and a head shot in JPEG format.

NEW: Because of difficulties with some articles sent in the body of emails, we are no longer accepting submissions in this format. Please sent a word doc attachment.

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Cover Photograph by Sandra Wilson *Quite a Character*www.quiteacharacter.ca

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS



Shaima Alam *e-interview: Roots & Wings*

Shaima is a first-year student studying biochemistry at the University of Guelph. She loves to be involved in the community, and firmly believes that the best way to feel good is to make

others feel great. She is hoping to bring this belief to action by working with Lisa on her Roots & Wings project, which is highlighted in her interview.



Lindsay Brant *Just a Dream*

Lindsay is from Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory, closely aligns herself with her Mohawk identity, and embraces the incredible power and strength that come with owning and standing in

one's true identity. In addition to writing and editing, she works full-time as a Curriculum Development & Knowledge Sharing Specialist, and part-time as a professor. Lindsay is a storyteller by blood, and believes that holistic living and happiness are keys to optimum health and wellness, and contribute to her remaining on a positive, good path in life.



Scott BrownRunning with Purpose and Meaning

Scott is a mental health advocate, chef and innovator who lives in Halton Hills with his wife Barb and their 2 dogs Jilly and Boo. You can find him on Instagram @harpo1264, Facebook

@Scott Brown and Twitter @devchef.



Colleen Heighington *Reflections on the Theme*

Colleen is happily married to a wonderful husband named Ken. They have been blessed with three beautiful children, and four te grandsons. She enjoys reading, writing

stories and poetry, and she keeps fit by walking 3 to 4 kilometres every day. Her summers are spent at their trailer in Orillia, and she really enjoys the time she spends with family and friends. She has been a volunteer with Hospice Wellington since 2015.



Cheron Kovacs Self-Love is Just a Heartbeat Away

Cheron was born and raised in Zimbabwe, Africa. She is the oldest of 7 children. She is married with three beautiful daughters aged 21, 5 and Cheron came to Canada in 2001 with

her oldest daughter. Her purpose in this life is to humbly serve others through love and encouragement, by sharing her story, so others can learn to love themselves for who they really are, and so that they can pass their blessings onto others.



Lisa Lindsay *What is Here*

Lisa loves to write. She enjoys taking time to go within and reflect on life an all its wonders. She loves the inspiratio gained through reading, and hopes to be

able to help bring inspiration to others throug writing. She is passionate about animals, and working outside landscaping and dog walking. She's much more interested in hearing what makes you tick what it is you do in life. Mindfulness, nature, and inner exploration help to make her tick. She currently live Guelph, Ontario.



Andrea Lines-Botell
As the Night Fades

Andrea offers gentle support to others through her coaching company, Mandalia House of Healing. Many modalities are available including a mindfulness techniques and

supportive tools for change. With a vast background in conflict, crisis and mindfulness, Andrea's passion is to help others find their own solutions for inner peace and betterment. For more informati www.mandaliahouse.com.



Tanya MacIntyre The Story Behind the Story

Tanya spent 22 years being immersed in bad news every day, working as a broadcaster in mainstream media. She packed up negative news for pc

media, and founded The Good News Only in 2010. She teaches people to be their own guru by hosting regul workshops and seminars on how you can create and maintain clarity, purpose and mindfulness in your life, and make peace with your stress. Visit her website at www.GottaLoveLOVE.con



Maureen Malone Heart Fire

Maureen loves to heal, and to empower others to know that they are their own healer. She uses the channeling gift she received over three years ago, believing that the heart,

mind and spirit are all integral parts of the process. She has always loved the concept that there is much more out there than any of us can imagine. Miracles do abound everywhere, and we must trust our heart to go where we are guided. She also has recently started to practice restructuring work, believing that some of t root cause for illness is a result of our earlier traumas and stresses. Email her at heartfireheal@hotmail.com



Christine Nightingale Spirit Babies

After studying Hypnosis for Fer Christine found that while wor with clients, she would get very clear messages from their miscarried or not yet conceived babies. Her speciality

has become getting messages from thes explaining their difficulties in coming in, and suggestic for making it easier. She has worked with over 400 couples, facilitating communication and pregnancy. Fo more information please visit her www.nightingalehealing.com



Kayleigh Radatus
The Music of Life

Kayleigh is a Certified Life Coach & Certified Level 2 Reiki Practitioner, helping you feel the music of every day. She uses intuitive Spirit guided readings, Groovy Reiki, and personal

development workshops to help her clients remember what life on Earth is for, and create a life that feels as awesome as their favourite playlist. Learn more by visiting her online at www.ThisGroovyLife.ca, and on facebook at www.facebook.com/ThisGroovyLife.



Clay Williams

Monarch Ultra: Project Update

Clay is a 58 year old father of two living in Elmira with his wife of 37 years. In 1982 Clay lost his oldest brother to suicide, and then in 2007 another older brother took his own life. Clay's

wife, his oldest sister and his daughter all struggle with mood disorders and he has recently found his voice as an advocate for mental health awareness and educat speaking to middle school and high school students and encouraging conversation about mental health



Sandra Wilson My Adventure Called Life

e-interview: The Kindness Kangaroo Project

Sandra is a writer, photographer and educator with a passion for fun and learning. She holds a BA in English and History, and has continued to courses online throughout her adult life, deeming

herself a life-long learner. She believes that life is a learning experience, and continues to find lessons every day, which she applies to her writing, her photo-graphy, and lessons she can share others. Connect with Sandra at www.quiteacharacter.ca.

Life is about circumstance and choice.

Michael J. Fox



PUBLISHER'S PONDERINGS

I struggled with this month's theme, and actually changed it slightly, several times. I know that the issue of childlessness, for whatever reason, is a difficult one, and can often stir up some very raw emotions. I also am aware that there can be two very distinct positions, and I didn't want to stir up controversy or conflict in any way.

But just because a topic is difficult, it doesn't mean we should avoid it. On the contrary ... talking about difficult situations can bring about understanding, and even healing.

And so ... Childless -- by Choice or Circumstance is this month's focus, and there are several articles written on this topic this month, from varying perspectives. It is my hope that these articles will bring you understanding, healing, or both. Our February Sharing Evening is on this topic as well, and we have three wonderful speakers who are bravely and authentically talking about their experiences. See the next page for details.

January was a very busy month! I am grateful to have had so many opportunities to facilitate the telling of stories and speaking of truth. Some of those, such as my Sharing Evenings, Sharing anthologies, and of course this magazine, are not new, and have been going on for months if not years. There were two new projects, though, which I am so excited about.

The first is Roots & Wings, the branch of One Thousand Trees that focuses on mental health awareness and empowerment through creativity. I am excited to be taking focused steps towards getting this project off the ground, and am thrilled to include an interview this month with Shaima Alam, a University of Guelph student who is helping me out with this project. There is also an interview with Sandra Wilson, who talks about the Kindness Kangaroo project. Through Roots & Wings, I am excited to be partnering with Sandra on this initiative!

Last but not least is momondays Guelph. I am so excited to have taken over responsibility for this monthly show, together with Rob Osburn, who is the host. Momondays Guelph (and the "mo" stands for motivational!) happens on the fourth Monday of the month, from 6 to 9pm, and brings together storytelling, entertainment, networking, and lots of fun!

I know I say it a lot, but only because I feel so strongly about it. Regardless of the choices we make, or the circumstances we face, there is value in sharing our stories and speaking our truth. If this resonates with you, and is something you'd like to investigate, feel free to contact me. I am always here to help.

Lisa

The power of storytelling is exactly this: to bridge the gaps where everything else has crumbled.

An Evening of SHARING



Childless – By Choice or Circumstance

Featuring:



Roxanne Allaston-Racek



Brian Hawker



Heather Embree Warren

Thursday, February 21, 7-9pm

Harcourt Memorial United Church 87 Dean Avenue, Guelph ON

free admission (reservations recommended)

For more information visit www.onethousandtrees.com. To reserve your spot email lisa@onethousandtrees.com.

JUST A DREAM by Lindsay Brant

From a very young age, I have always felt compassion and empathy towards others, and especially those who might not fit within the very narrowly socially-defined box of what is considered "normal." I have always sided with those who have been silenced, outcast, or preferentially exist on the edge of 'norms.'

Perhaps this deep desire to help others, also came from a sense that I, myself, struggled to feel accepted, worthy, and capable of connection or understanding, and did not neatly fit into any sort of box or label.

I wasn't the type of girl that dreamed of her wedding day, or pictured a white picket fence and the perfect family. My aspirations were always to be a writer, live a quiet but extraordinary life, and have children to love and raise. The husband was always just optional, or a bonus maybe. I honestly thought maybe I'd be the stereotypical loner writer type, with a few cats and some children. I thought I'd be too determined and focused to ever fall for, or in, love. In a strange and unexpected plot twist, it would seem that I was never meant to own cats, as I am allergic; I did fall in love, and nothing truly turned out the way I had envisioned.

My path in life has taken me on some pretty bumpy, crazy and unexpected rides. I have lived and learned well through those experiences, and I maybe wouldn't even change things much, even if I could. The two things that remained from my initial childhood vision for how my life might go are that I did in fact become a writer, and I've been blessed with two beautiful boys of my own. I'm extremely happy, my boys are incredible, but now that I am a single parent, divorced, and not in a relationship at this moment, I feel a bit

like perhaps my family may be incomplete. I don't know if I'm only meant to have my two boys, or if more children will enter my life at some point. I just know that if I were able to have an opportunity to welcome more children in some way, shape, or form, that I most definitely would. I don't know if my future partner will have children that I might then be able to embrace and love as my own, or if I might even entertain the possibility of having more biological children if the circumstances were in my favour. I do know this, though: I have always wanted to adopt.

The realization that I wanted to adopt came to me at age 13 when I read a very pivotal piece of literature. It was a book called, "Awake and Dreaming" by Kit Pearson.

This book completely hit me, struck me, shook me, awakened me to my very core, and it still resonates with me now, twenty years after I read it. It is about a young girl named Theo, who lives a poverty-stricken life with her young and irresponsible mother. She longs for belonging, acceptance, and a family to call her very own. She gets her wish when she is mysteriously adopted by a loving family, but then as quickly as this family comes into her life and her vision, they fade away, and she finds herself back with her mother and living that lonely existence again.

Readers are left wondering if it was all just a dream. Did she really meet that family or was it all a fantasy that played out in her mind and echoed through her heart and soul?

I felt so deeply connected to Theo. Pearson did an incredible job with character development, and weaving this hauntingly beautiful tale throughout the book. I felt that Theo was real. I wanted to adopt her. I wanted to hug her. I wanted to welcome her home. I was only 13, and in fact, she was older than I was, but I wanted her. I wanted

to know her. To hold her. To love her. I think maybe I wanted her to love me too.

This book inspired the following poem, which I wrote in 1998:

Just a Dream

Just a Dream...
Will I ever
Escape
This pain of feeling
Unloved in every way or is it
Just a dream...
Could I ever be
Accepted
Into a loving family...
What a feeling that would be
To be accepted as
Me
I'm determined to find that family,
Then will it be
Just a dream...

I wanted to contribute my thoughts and my story about being in flux, being unsure of how to help, who to help, or why I want to help. I know that eventually, when the circumstances are right, or when a child is in need, I will be there for him or her. I will welcome more children into my life because I truly believe that we should all do our part to uplift and help others in any way that we can, should, will, or are able to.

Right now, it is not my time or place to help in such a huge way as adopting, but I most certainly always take children under my wing, encourage them, love them, and help support their growth and success in life. Maybe that is the way I will continue to help, or maybe I will eventually adopt like I want to. I just know that right now, circumstances are aligning and pointing me in different directions, but at the centre of it all, is my huge heart, my love, my desire to help, to uplift and to guide others.

* * *







The Power of Telling Our Stories!

Left: Tanya MacIntyre, Steph Van de Ven, and Cindy Owen ... the three amazing speakers at our Evening of Sharing about Mindfulness and Meditation.

Right: the first new momondays Guelph show! Left to right: Bob MacLean, Lisa Browning, Dominic Mitges, Justin Sytsma, Jaya James, Elaine Uskoski, Rob Osburn.







THOUGHTS ON THE THEME by Colleen Heighington

Childless: By Choice or Circumstance. This is a topic that I do not know too much about, but by writing and thinking about it, I hope to understand it better.

The thought of being childless by circumstance brings to mind a lot of mixed emotions. When we were young, we would daydream of the day that we would marry our Prince Charming, have children and live happily - ever - after. One finds out sooner or later, that sometimes this is not the case especially when one wants to start a family and has been told that they cannot, perhaps due to medical issues. This would be devastating news to anyone.

For some, a therapist might be sought out to provide the support and the compassion needed but more so, to have a good listening ear to help, understand and give them the best available treatment.

For others, adoption is the answer giving much joy and happiness into their lives or being involved in Family Services such as becoming foster parents who will give and provide love, care and stability to children in distress or need. Also, volunteering, becoming a teacher, getting involved in children or youth groups, helping out or working in daycare are only a few of the many options that are out there to choose from. Unfortunately, some may become childless by losing their children from accidents, illnesses, drugs or even during childbirth or from some other source and my heart goes out to each and every one of those who have suffered this tremendous loss.

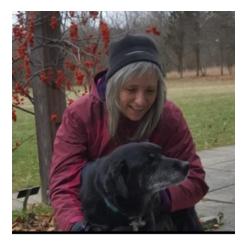
On the other hand, many decide to be childless by choice for reasons of their own. I know a few of them, and they live happy, normal and productive lives and have great interaction with children.

Being childless by choice or circumstance is just one of the many things that can happen to any of us during our life time and regardless of any situation that we may have to endure, we must try to remain positive and hold onto hope. However, some days that will be easier said than done. So in closing, I have written a saying that I thought of while struggling with one of my own situations. It is my hope that it helps you out as it has for me...

Sometimes, things in this life
Do not go as we may wish them to be
For God's Plan is the Perfect One
With that Dear God...
"I'll leave to Thee."

WHAT IS HERE by Lisa Lindsay

My dog and I were out for our morning walk. A cloudy but beautiful morning nonetheless, with a crispness to the air, but not that bite that makes you want to run through your dog walk. Sadie was enjoying her sniffing breaks and I gratefully was able to tolerate them too, with the slightly warmer day. The bustle neighbourhood activity was increasing, with people trying to get to work and school as the clock moved closer to nine.



As we came to the corner, there was a small group of children waiting for their school bus with their parents. As I crossed the street, I saw the bus approaching as the children grabbed their surprisingly heavy knapsacks for their size, from the ground where they lay. I looked back over my shoulder as the bus rolled to a stop at the corner. A little boy gave his mom a hug and went up the tall steps into the bus as his mom stood there waving even before the bus pulled away. I felt this tight pang in my chest and burning behind my eyes as I turned to continue my journey up the street.

I love watching the school bus pick ups and drop offs. There's a romantic in me that sees the simplicity of life in those moments while families stand and wait for the big yellow bus to arrive, and as kids hop off at the end of the day in excitement to be home and met with a hug. They are a gift to my life, but also a sorrow. They are something I yearn to experience and probably (I say probably as I strive to sit with the unknown and never say never) won't have the opportunity to in my life, as I seem to keep aging in this body of mine.

I haven't been blessed with children of my own. That is a grief I will carry for my lifetime. Sometimes it wrenches my heart so tightly. At other times, I get a glimpse of how it's expanded my heart to open to a larger family. A family that includes a world of people, creatures, even plants and places.

As I continued my walk that morning, that pang guided me to a reflection within on all the things that I so desperately wanted to a give a child. The things that I didn't receive growing up in a more dysfunctional setting than maybe the average home. I imagined giving my daughter hugs for just being her beautiful self. Helping her to feel safe and cozy as she snuggles into bed at night and to show her how exciting it is to awake in the

morning with a new day shining for her to share. To share teachings on self-acceptance, self-confidence and 'already' belonging. To let her know how valuable she is and that I believe she can do it, whatever 'it' may be. To have the opportunity to share and practice loving unconditionally. To support her interests and introduce her to mine. To let another little being know that she is loved and that she has a place in this world and in my heart.

Now, it's not lost on me that these are also gifts that as an adult I can now give to myself and my child within, to change the script I've had written for the story of "my life" in the past. I did sit with that a minute, but the epiphany that did sneak up on me, as I crunched through the snow that morning, was that what it all boiled down to, my desire to have children (aside from experiences I imagine that I would have), is to love them and be love.

I desire desperately for children to know that they are loved and that they have love inside of them to turn to. I want that for all humans, all beings, no matter the age!

This epiphany sounded so much simpler to me to understand, to live with and embrace in that moment without getting lost in a story of how things should've been and what am I to do about it. I need to grieve a loss of no children in my life, of a storyline that may never come to be, and to honour that loss.

What I can do now is fulfill the underlying desire to love. To place my focus on what is here. Why have it attached to a certain definition or way of being in the world that I can't control? Why continue to feel like an outsider and even feel 'wrong' in this world for not having what others have in their lives? Why can't I love another mother's child as he steps onto the

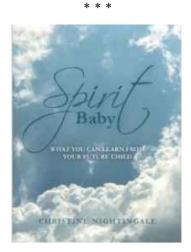
bus? Why not be present and appreciate moments I'm honoured to witness and love, especially if at times others aren't able to in that moment, when they may be rushing to a future moment or caught in one of Life's to do lists?

I've often focused on what I think I've missed out on with not having children, but what about what I haven't missed out on? I read a magazine article a few years ago titled the Fear of Missing Out, and "Fear" was crossed out and above it "Joy" was written. I felt excitement and relief both rise inside me as I read "The Joy of Missing Out." This line has always stuck with me. What joy can be discovered in taking time to stop, be present with what is; in this case, no children? What if joy is possible even when I may feel I'm missing out? What if love is possible just the way things are? Enjoying the wonder, beauty and children that are already in this moment!

I have over the last couple years found volunteer and mentoring opportunities with children, and I've been thoroughly enjoying the gifts of their presence in my life, and hopefully have been sharing some of my own. I have celebrated the births of others' children, even those I may not know as well, with welcoming gifts that I haven't been able to buy for my child.

I enjoy buying Christmas gifts, children's clothes and toys for families I don't even know, for Adopt-a-Family programs. The activities and love I've yearned for are manifesting in ways I couldn't at one time see or imagine as I held onto a story of how things should be. The more I focus on being here in the moment, the more I can accept and honour a dream, a storyline, that didn't happen for me.

By holding both the grief and the joy, not just one or the other, the more I can enjoy, embrace and love the reality that is here, the children, the child in everything from four leggeds to a tree! The more I allow myself presence in the here and now with what already is, the more I live 'the joy of missing out!'



CHILDLESS
BY CHOICE OR CIRCUMSTANCE
by Christine Nightingale

My take on this issue is probably a little unusual.

Most people would assume that the choice involved is that of the parents or parents to be.

Not so!

In my spiritual work with 600 couples who are TTC, this is what I have learned.

If a person wishes to become a parent, it is because a spirit baby (or more than one) has chosen the person. In almost all cases they choose the mother (which is directly related to most women being far more invested in parenthood than most men.)

If a woman does not want a child at all, it is because there is no spirit baby in her aura. I noticed this years ago, before I embarked on my specialty. I had about 1000 clients before 2012 who came for all sorts of issues.

Hypnotherapy, Aromatherapy, Reiki and channeling were the modalities I offered.

One of my clients, a young woman, was highly unusual. I pinpointed the reason...she had no spirit baby in her aura! She also had zero interest in becoming a mother ... both highly unusual situations.

The clients who come to me for infertility/regret over termination/ repeated miscarriage /inability to get pregnant, in all cases, have at least one spirit baby. This being is almost always found in the woman's aura, sometimes in that of the man, sometimes apparently attached to both (with two silver cords.)

(A similar phenomenon of two cords can occur with adoptive and birth mothers, as I will explain later.)

As to the circumstances which make a couple unable to bring a baby successfully to term, they usually have spiritual rather than biological causes. I say this because virtually all my clients have been to a great many expensive doctors, without a solution to their problem being found.

But when they learn to communicate with their spirit baby, it is surprising and heartening how many of them are able to successfully become parents. This communication is something every woman can do ... with encouragement, with awareness of what is involved ... sometimes with hypnosis, during which all future moms(and every dad who is willing to try) experience what is widely known as "woman's intuition" ... that is, the ability to know what one's child needs no matter whether it is a toddler or pre-verbal baby, whether it is too far away from the mother for her usual senses to operate ... and even when the baby is only a gleam in the father's eye.

(For example, maternal cravings during pregnancy are a universal phenomenon. They are evidence that the baby is letting the mom know what is needed for its optimum development.)

Suppose the "circumstance" is apparent inability to conceive?

The best solution for this is conscious conception.

When a couple is able to make love with the intention of making a baby, they should plan on assisting in the important part of conception ... the attachment of the spirit baby to the embryo.

When a couple has made love and the woman's face is glowing with love, this creates a conception cradle above her head ... a halo which indicates the crown chakra (connection to Spirit) is fully open. This will be a beacon welcoming the baby home ... for the Spirit Baby enters through the mother's crown chakra.

Suppose the circumstance is regret over a termination?

Stress is a very important reason for infertility. Stress due to guilt can be reduced when the future mother forgives herself, with her spirit baby's help. The spirit baby cannot be destroyed by the death of a fetus. The spirit baby is usually understanding of the mother's decision. For example, she may not be with the right partner. The spirit baby is always aware of the mother's feelings, so they can empathise much more than most mothers understand.

Suppose the circumstance is repeated miscarriage?

Doctors like to say there was something wrong with the fetus. This is not the whole story, as there are plenty of spirit babies who are willing to take on the challenge of a defective body (otherwise no child would be born with a disability). But if their own spirit baby has a life task which requires good health, then it is true the parents may have to wait for a healthy body.

It is also true that some spirit babies come from a traumatic past life in which, for example, they were killed after birth for being female. This was quite a common situation in parts of China until very recently, and in maledominant India (and the South Asian diaspora worldwide. In my years of teaching Grade One in a predominantly South Asian neighbourhood, I had 20 boys and 5 girls in my Grade one class for six years in a row).

There were about 20 million missing girls over the last decades in India and approximately the same number in China, causing a huge lack of available wives for young men, with subsequent unrest and social problems.

But these spirit baby souls need to be mourned in order to have a healthy life. So they may choose to come to new parents who dearly want a child of either gender. And then be lost, maybe more than once. When they finally come to stay, to these new parents who were not part of their original soul group, they will be dearly loved and valued.

Suppose the couple have done everything right and still cannot make a baby themselves?

Well, the parents must be willing to accept the child or children who have chosen to come to them through another woman who has no intention of keeping the baby she is already carrying.

One couple I worked with had spirit babies who told them they were coming through the bodies of a couple who were not fit to be parents. It was the job of the ones who wanted the babies to jump through the hoops of an adoption agency. This would not be easy ... but the two children had chosen the adoptive parents (attaching silver cords to the real mother who would raise them, and also to the unfit mother who would give them up). When I gave this message to the chosen parents, they were willing to go through the steps of getting the children who were actually 'their 'children, but who would come through adoption.



THE MUSIC OF LIFE: SILLY LOVE SONGS by Kayleigh Radatus

Welcome, to The Music of Life. Some of the most important connections of our lives, those we form with ourselves throughout life, as well as those we form with our families and friends, are being lost in this modern world of "social" media, minimalism, and keeping up with society. I hope, through this column, to remind my readers of all that matters, and help them re-establish their bonds with life, memories, mementos, and traditions.

Ah, Valentine's Day. Convenient, isn't it, that here in Canada, where I live, Family Day falls super close to Valentine's Day. Valentine's Day is fun in our house, but I know it isn't fun for everyone. I think, it's all in how you choose to celebrate it. We celebrate with our daughter, who feels any day that celebrates love is a great day. And

I quite agree with her. This column is titled after the Paul McCartney song, Silly Love Songs, for good reason.

My ten year old girl loves Paul McCartney's music. She recognizes his voice the minute she hears it, even in songs from the Beatles. Remarkable really, when you consider that her connection to his voice has mainly occurred through one of his personal greatest hits albums.

Silly Love Songs is a favourite of hers, and mine as well. For her, I think that while she loves the basic concept, as far as her 10 year old self understands anyway, the song has a truly lovely lift and flow to it. Watching her, hearing her sing along; it makes her happy.

For me, the song reminds me of hope. The song speaks of a very simple part of our existence; the need to share love. Despite the pain and heartache, the violence and devastation that occurs in this world, or perhaps because of it; people are still out there writing Silly Love Songs. They're pouring their hearts out - reaching, connecting, finding love in all the right, and sometimes wrong, places, but finding love all the same. And when someone chooses to write one of these songs, pouring all that love and excitement and energy out and pairing it with the vibration of music notes and words, the love that is carried with it spreads. That love spreads to all who hear the song, and from them it radiates out and touches everything that surrounds them. Ripples on a pond are vibrations too and are a perfect visual for the way these invisible vibrations of love and music spread and touch others.

I love the Silly Love Songs musicians gift to us every day, and I hope more of them are written to keep this live vibration happening. Because I believe the world needs all the Silly Love Songs it can get.

Coming In March's issue....Let's Get Physical.

I'd love to hear from you!

Chat about The Music of Life column
by visiting my blog:

www.thisgroovylife.ca/blog/themusic-of-life-column.

* *



RESOLUTIONS by Sandra Wilson

It stresses me out trying to remember to do something each day, or each week just because I set this resolution. What if I am sick, too busy, or don't want to? Some days life just gets the better of me and I don't accomplish the things I have set out to do. I start to feel bad about falling behind and will often try to compensate by doing more in one day (to the detriment of something else). In the end I usually get too frustrated about trying to make this change and I give up. Some years I refused to make any resolutions just to avoid the stress, frustration and giving up. But then I didn't feel like I was moving forward with self-growth and ended up feeling I was in a rut.

This year I made plans for improvement, set goals to accomplish through the year, but what I didn't do was create the guilt about getting the things done. My focus in not on the individual acts but on the intention — growing and moving forward. It is not about what I do every day, instead the

focus is on the overall goals and the choices I make towards those goals and an improvement in life.

When you intend to do something every day To help improve your life But gaps are formed and days are missed Don't worry or give yourself strife The intent is not about quantity of work But simply about giving things a try Focusing on making changes As each day goes by It indeed is the thought that counts And applying it when you can So don't worry, and don't give up Just keep moving forward with the plan.



RUNNING WITH PURPOSE AND MEANING by Scott Brown

As I write this, it is February 2nd and we are amid a cold winter. It can be a difficult time for those of us living with mental illness. At this time of year, I deal with Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). I say 'deal' because I am aware of it while I take actions to manage it. For example, my morning routine consists of drinking 24 ounces of water while gratitude journaling. I follow this up with a reading meditation and an insight meditation. I end with a provided final meditation lesson from

Sam Harris. While doing these forms of self help, I sit in front of a therapy light, and all before I hit the shower. This is a vital role of my mental health management and It is really effective!

In January I like a little something else to keep me motivated. I am the type of person who needs to set goals to keep me focused, moving and inspired. This is my time to set a vision for the year. What do I want to achieve spiritually, mentally, physically, emotionally and professionally? One key thing that fuels my motivation is physical activity. The endorphins produced through exercise continue to be a literal life saver for me; my go to medicine. Exercise is what initially got me sober and healthy in 2010. Engaging in exercise also enabled me to cease taking anti depressants in 2012. It works for me!

As I reviewed my goals for 2019, I decided to go BIG, bigger than anything I've ever done before. The plan needed to be meaningful and purposeful.

Being an avid runner, last year I discovered a great group called Happy Trails Racing, managed by Jeff Rowthorn and Heather Borsellino. They put on great trail racing events, surrounding themselves supportive and caring people. These folks ensure that the purposeful nature of each event supports a meaningful charity. I love this because it allows us to use our strength and inspiration to help others! When I'm exhausted and feeling deflated during a distance event my thoughts can become negative. But these thoughts can be replaced with why you're running and who you're running for. The strength that you garner from this is hard to explain, but its all MENTAL and SPIRITUAL. This is precisely why I love running; It is mainly for my mental health, and the physical benefits are a bonus.

Back to the goal! This year I chose the Sunburn Summer Solstice race. I love the name – these guys have a real sense of humour!

Jeff and Heather describe the event like this:

The Summer Solstice represents the longest day of the year with 15hrs, 26minutes, 31 seconds of sun. That's certainly a long time for the sun to be gloriously sending light our way. Do you think that you can shine for that long as well? How far do you think that you can run in 15:26?

Don't feel like racing for the entire solstice? No problem, we have plenty of different options for you:

- Full Solstice: 15:26 (Starts at 5:39am Ends at 9:03pm)
- Half Solstice: 7:43 (Starts at 1:20pm Ends at 9:03pm)
- Quarter Solstice: 3:51 (Starts at 5:12pm Ends at 9:03pm)
- Eighth Solstice: 1:55 (Starts at 7:08pm Ends at 9:03pm)

The charity that I am raising funds for is the C.Y.O. "One-to-One" camp program which is an incredible cause (http://cyo.on.ca/?page id=162). The money raised go towards sending children with disabilities to Marydale Park, where they experience an incredible week with 1:1 support. The camp is fully accessible, offering campers an experience to be forever cherished. The C.Y.O. 'One-to-One' program is available to families who have children with special needs. Having a brother with Downs Syndrome makes this especially personal for me.

I've chosen to run the full Solstice 15:26 running 100 km. This is three times longer than my longest run which was just under 5 hours. This means serious dedicated training with a different strategy. I anticipate my mind will need to go into a very

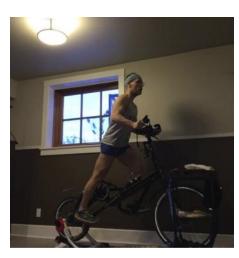
different place. battling self limiting beliefs and excuses when hitting those walls so familiar to me. Acute mindful awareness will be what will push me to train 6 days a week for 20 weeks with the body simply following. This mindful practice forces me to be proactive, to plan wisely and stay positive. Staying focused on the goal and not daunted by it, I align myself with strong athletes, activists and change makers in this world, with the commonality to continually seek growth. I view this as another layer to finding out more about myself.

Further adding to my goals, I created the challenge of raising \$1000 for the CYO one to one program. I'm hoping to surpass this total. Training begins February 4. I welcome all best wishes. It is going to be a wonderful journey, simply because I'm choosing the road less traveled!

If you're so inclined to donate, here's the link:

https://raceroster.com/events/2019/2 0363/the-sunburn-solstice-trailrun/pledge/participant/ 5186491?fbclid=IwAR3yz6NNbRQCD8 waO40rlCjd5PQp8d3UnkbUOfOZgmN 4Rc4GzXhikzCv79g

Stay warm, stay focused, love yourself and do what you love! Peace.



MONARCH ULTRA:
PROJECT UPDATE
by Clay Williams

The Monarch Ultra is a 4300 km relay run, on foot, from Peterborough to the Sierra Madre mountains in central Mexico to follow the migration path of the beautiful Monarch butterfly. The population of these butterflies and many other pollinators is declining at an alarming rate, and like the canary in the coal mine they are seen as an indicator of the condition of our environment. The Monarch Ultra is an effort to spur individuals into "citizen action" to help support these pollinators and take action to help our planet. We'll talk more in future issues about the impactful actions that individuals can take to support our pollinators, and why.

In November, three of us took a road trip along the running route and made a ton of connections along the way. We met a bunch of runners and conservation-minded people and wanted to figure out ways to work together to make this project a success. One of those ways is to encourage every runner in the relay to do a fundraiser in connection with their part of the run, and we've chosen three organizations to support: Bee City Canada and Monarch City USA which promote habitat creation and conservation for pollinators by municipalities engaging and promoting citizen action, Monarchs And Their People in Mexico which pays for staff to patrol the monarch sanctuary area to discourage illegal logging and habitat loss, again citizen action.

We've created a Monarch Ambassador program and recruited more than a dozen Ambassadors in all three countries to help us recruit and support the runners, spread the word through social networks and traditional media, and promote

8

conservation efforts all along the route. We will be introducing the ambassadors on social media over the next few weeks; it's a very diverse group of athletes and conservationists.

We have fine tuned the running route in a few areas to include running through most of the major cities that are along the way. We will be running past more than 12 million people just in those major cities, through 113 counties and municipalities, 14 states and provinces and 5 major ecoregions. We'll be running over countless bridges, including the Wabash Cannonball Bridge, and bridges over the Mississippi River, the Ohio River and the Rio Grande.

I've prepared the course map with markers for each of the daily start and end points, and transferred them to my spreadsheet along with GPS coordinates that can be shared with runners and support crew members. This spreadsheet will be my working document for keeping track of the runners and the segments they will be running, along with time estimates at each point of their run so that we can invite media and politicians to specific locations at specific times. I've also begun the work of going through the course to add markers every 10 km to use as aid stops for the runners, and to ensure that these aid stop locations are safe for a runner to meet a car, such as at a mini mall or private driveway.

A participant guide has been put together to give the runners some guidelines for the event. It includes things like informing runners that a documentary film is being made in conjunction with the run and they should be prepared to be on camera, they will need to carry a gps tracker so the crew knows where they are at all times and they will need to have their own travel medical insurance if they will be running outside their home country. Registration for runners has

not yet started but we already have 75 runners who are interested in taking part in the relay.

We are working on a collaboration with Monarch Joint Venture to use their peer-to-peer fundraising platform as a registration page for our runners, as well as starting a "mini monarch ultra" at as many elementary schools as we can in order to help educate our next generation about monarchs and pollinators.

Our web page (themonarchultra.com) has been populated with information about the project, including a great video about our recent road trip and background information about all of the team members. We have prepared a "pitch deck" which is a slide presentation that can be used when we "pitch" our project idea to potential sponsors in the running industry, and a video is in the works for potential sponsors in the conservation area.

At a recent community information session in Peterborough we connected with the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority and made the decision to reroute the course through downtown Toronto and include the Meadoway on the course, a hydro right of way that is being reclaimed and converted to park lands.

Funny, we're eight months away from starting the run and it seems like we've already done so much, but there is so much that remains to be done; insurance, runner registration, sponsorships, organizing support staff and volunteers. It seems that every week we have some new offers of help and support from places along our route and across three countries. Eight months may be a long way away, but we have no time to spare.

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INTERVIEW WITH SHAIMA ALAM: ROOTS & WINGS

I first came to know Shaima when she sent me an email over a year ago, after hearing about the Roots & Wings project from one of her guidance counsellors. The project had to be put on hold for several months, but when it was once again operational, I contacted Shaima, who had since graduated from high school and was now in university, but just as enthusiastic as ever to get involved! Following is my interview with Shaima.

How did you first hear about Roots & Wings?

While I was in high school, I was always looking for ways to get more involved in my school and community. Because of this, I frequently visited the guidance office to check on the bulletin board that posted ads for student jobs, and extracurriculars. That's where I saw a posting from Roots & Wings asking for a student to help set up a newsletter distribution system for mental health awareness. I was already involved on the mental health committee in school, so I thought this would be a great extension to my work. Unfortunately, nothing was finalized before I graduated; however, after I got to university Lisa and I were able to think up some great ideas for the University of Guelph.

What attracted you to becoming involved in this project?

When I was talking to Lisa, her enthusiasm was contagious. The idea itself is awesome, making anthologies of mental health stories for students, from students. I had a feeling that this was exactly what students needed. Students in university, including me, are usually going through a lot of stress from the work load, the extracurriculars, and the pressure of not knowing what to do; sometimes, it makes you feel alone. I felt that by having a little book to keep, filled with stories of their own peers fighting through the same experience they're going through would empower them to feel better, and maybe take steps towards finding a balance. This project will provide a community for students to share, understand, and fight through their issues.

What do you feel are the most crucial mental health issues existing today?

We are in a society that has become very fast. Everything is at your fingertips, so it is expected people will become just as smart and quick. At least from my point of view as a student, this creates a lot of competition amongst us to be better, at anything and everything. Because everyone knows what's out there, and what the potential can be, they expect a lot more from us. Due to this, there's always a pressure to be even better, and that we're never enough; unfortunately, we fall into a panic, and we get anxiety. This could also lead to depression when it all gets too much, and one starts to feel stuck and that there's no way to move forward.

How can the Roots & Wings project help with these issues?

As mentioned before, sharing each other's stories will help us all understand that we're going through this together. It also gives people a

chance to learn from their peers' accomplishments and mistakes ... peers that are going through the same thing as you are.

What are your hopes for this project?

My hope is that we can reach out to everyone who needs it. That it'll be a much-needed outlet for us where we can express our issues, and identify it with others.

What are your goals in terms of a career, once you are finished your university studies?

Currently I am studying biochemistry with co-op, so I am very interested in research, specifically in the medical field. Currently I am working at a lab where we conduct research on physical diseases, but I also want to research on mental issuers, and how social factors affect our health. I specifically have an interest in geriatrics: diseases, and mental health issues involving seniors. Hopefully after completing my studies I can gain admission into a MD/PhD program, where I can move further on and research how aging works, and how it has so many detrimental effects.

What are your interests and activities, outside of your studies?

DANCE! I love dancing, I teach Bengali dancing to youth, and I have been performing since grade three. However, I also joined a dancing class that teaches other forms of dancing like jazz, ballet, and contemporary. Dancing is an exercise, it is an expression, and it releases a lot of stress. I would recommend it to everybody. Other than that, I like volunteering around the community a lot, specifically at a retirement residence, at a hospital, or teaching science in classes. On campus, there's just so much to do, I've been trying out a lot of different clubs and groups and have become quite active in them. This includes Project Serve Reading Week, Global Medical Brigades, and Students Offering Welcome. I just realized that all three are about empowering people. So empowering is a huge interest of mine!

What does wellness (overall, not just mental health) mean to you?

Overall, it means to feel that you are the best you can be, whether this means physically, occupationally, intellectually, mentally, emotionally or socially. I achieve overall wellness, when I am comfortable with where I am in all of these dimensions.

For more information about the Roots & Wings project, visit www.ottrootsandwings.com.

Self-Love Is
Just a Heartbeat Away
by Cheron Kovacs,
Teacher of "Self-Love"

ALLOW

Learning to love myself and be kind to myself are some of the lessons I AM deeply grateful for.

For the first time in my life, I chose a word for 2019. Actually, I believe that word chose me! The word is "ALLOW!"

I thought I chose this word for myself, because I believed that this is the year I need to "ALLOW" myself to fully step into the role of a "Teacher of Self Love," amongst other goals I've set.

As I'm learning to "ALLOW" myself to be who I need to be, I understand this

word chose me. It was not me who chose this word.

I AM learning to let go and allow my children to be responsible for their chores, without helping them, or dictating how they should be doing them. This in turn, has done wonders to reduce the conflict in the house – something I desired.

I absolutely love having my children help, as it not only eases the load for me, I believe it teaches them great responsibility, and a sense of self worth! We are now having fun doing things together! Fun is something I'm learning to be too!

On Saturday morning Caylee woke up and served me by giving me coffee and breakfast in bed. She also took care of the younger ladies by giving them breakfast and lunch. For the first time, I "allowed" her to do this, without trying to get involved. I in turn, "allowed" myself to relax and enjoy being spoilt and have someone take care of the household responsibilities for a while.

Then, we had a snow storm and Kera helped me shovel the driveway. Again, I practiced "allowing," by letting her help in her own way. I didn't try to control how Kera did her part, as I would have done in the past. I simply "allowed" her to do what she could, and have fun while she helped me!

After this weekend of "allowing" my children to help and "allowing" myself to relax, I understand there is so much more to "Allowing!" I not only need to "allow" myself to succeed, I also need to "allow" others to help as best as they can, without needing to control everything, or everyone. "Allowing" my children to help their way, was way more fun for all of us. I was also able to appreciate the blessing of working together, and have fun with my children.

I see how not getting involved when Caylee served me, gave me the time I needed for myself. It also showed me how our need to control others creates chaos, anger, misunderstanding and discord. Whereas, "allowing" creates freedom, peace and harmony. "Allowing" gives others the confidence they need to be their beautiful unique selves!

I AM Grateful for the powerful lessons "allowing" is teaching me. "Allowing" is powerful, especially when you are able to include others in the process!

This is Your Canadian Sister signing off. Remember: "Self Love is just a Heartbeat Away."



There are some days that change your life forever, some days are just kissed by the universe and spread out like stardust. In hindsight this was certainly one of those days.

I found out I had cancer on March 26/15, from a doctor in Toronto. I called it irregular cells. I refused to give it the name that creates fear. It was 4 cm tumor that had to be removed. It was a day that changed my life forever, in many more ways than I ever could have imagined.

You know those moments in life, where time actually stops. Somewhere deep down, I was not surprised when the words coming out of the doctor's mouth were "Yes, the tumor is positive" and I was actually calm. Or I suppose I pretended to be, as time and space stopped.

It's amazing how your mind works when hearing news that traumatizes you. Or maybe you just go into a state of shock; your body goes numb. and you rationalize with yourself. I've always tried to see the glass half full, and I remember actually trying to smile and make small jokes with the doctor. One of our biggest fears is hearing we have that cancer, is it not?

I was told my options, I went home and googled what my choices would look like. It was not a good idea to do this, but who wouldn't?

The internet is full, as you know, of all the pictures and situations and remedies you can imagine. I made an appointment for surgery, then I cancelled and said I was going to look at other options. They mentioned that no one had done this before. I went to see two more doctors, and then was going to call in a surgery date with the third doctor I had met with. I called back a week later and cancelled. I said I was going to leave it for now. "Leave it for now?" they said. You can imagine what they were thinking.

Every medical person I saw was nice to me. My own family doctor was concerned of course, worried about it spreading, as it was invasive.

I saw him regularly, to talk and let him know my course of action. He had not seen anyone do this before, so I'm sure it was hard to accept.

My sister-in-law called me after that 5th week, and told me about a woman she knew, who went to a mother and son who worked together, who had amazing healing gifts. The woman she knew was given 3 months to live, 15 years ago, and was still here, alive and well.

I talked to that woman who gave me their number. In hindsight, it was the news I was waiting for. They never advertised, word of mouth only. They lived about two hours from my house. I had found out before I called them that the mother had just passed away in March, 2015.

I called the son on April 28th, and he said he would see me Monday, May 4th, 2015.

The first time I went to his house, he felt oddly familiar. He later said the same thing to me. When I went inside the house and into the room where they had done their healings for years, I saw a picture of his mom on the wall. She too looked so familiar to me. I sat down, and the first time he touched my foot, I could feel a tingling sensation go up my whole right upper side where the cancer was, and all down my right arm. This tingling lasted all the way on my drive home, and happened every time I was driving to see him. He said that didn't usually happen to people. I went to see him every Monday at 10:00am or 11:00. I was there for usually 1.5 hours. I would say that by July 2015, 11 weeks later, I knew that something had changed. I would get ultrasounds and the tumor was shrinking and shrinking.

In October 2015, I was away on a course in the U.S. for 4 days. On the Friday night we did a meditation, then I went to bed. In the middle of the night, I awoke with very hot palms. I had never experienced that before. It was like a fire in my hands. When I got back home I slowly started touching people, and then somehow knew I could send them this energy through distance, and it did not matter where in the world they lived.

It will be four years in March 2019, and to be honest, I never really think about it much anymore. I believe the cancer brought me my gift, and the ability to share this with others, which I now do.

My hands and arms heat up when I start, and I channel beautiful energies.

Sometimes I am guided to scan the person I see in front of me with my hands. It was hard to explain at first, but then I realized what was happening. This beautiful energy comes through me and goes to the client, no matter the distance.

The fire has never left my hands since that first day. I feel it in different places in my body; sometimes, my legs, my head, my back and always my hands. I get used to it, and find it very comforting that this divine energy never leaves me. I want to help others overcome their fear of any disease and realize that they too can be their own healers. The most important aspect, though, is that the client must want to heal, believe in miracles, and help themselves take charge of their heart, mind and spirit.

I never know what is going to transpire, as we never know where the healing needs to go. Everything is a leap of faith after all, isn't it? We need to go deep down and believe in ourselves, believe in the unknown, and travel those paths less taken.

* * *

AS THE NIGHT FADES by Andrea Lines-Botell

As her body sank deep into the mattress, each cell of her body responded to the well-awaited rest. Tendrils of the day teased her mind testing it not to settle into the vacuous bliss that she desired. As she turned into the pillow many of the masks that she had worn to hide her true soul gradually started to fade as if being wiped gently with motions of the moonlight. But the mind, oh the mind ... how it wouldn't let it be that easy. She turned and welcomed the everchanging view out of her bedroom window. As the night dusted the trees she noticed the slight swaying of the branches. New stars seemed to appear with occasional blinks of her eyes allowing slight tears to ease towards the pillow. The edge of her nostrils could still detect the slight scent of her dinner and with that, her stomach gave a nudge in response.

It had been an undulating day filled with her ego operating in response rather than her heart. A lesson she thought that she never seemed to learn from. Each day being triggered yet again into self-loathing and discontent. This always seemed to lead without fail to going to bed and feeling empty and alone. Her friends had become more distant and her job something to be dreaded. Each day getting up with new resolutions to be true to her heart, to not care that she was more than a few pounds heavier than society said she should be and also that she would never get back the years that have gone by. Days and months of not being true and years of trying to find a purpose to be more than she was.

At this rate, she thought, she was going to be on her deathbed wanting to have one more chance to redo it all. Why was it so very hard to change now and truly be at peace? Why was it so hard to be affected by everyone and everything? What was the purpose anyway?

Her one point of pure peace was this very moment each day. The slightly heavy feel of her duvet, the gentle squeeze of the pillow whenever she turned her head, the view out of her window and the caress of the darkness that allowed no one to see her and for her masks to fall. This very

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- About mental health
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time each day was where her perfect version of peace existed.

As she closed her eyes and tried to call in the void of the night her toes rubbed gently on the soft worn sheets. Feeling the comfort of the touch she pushed a little more into the pillow. "Sleep," she called in her mind. "Sleep come and take me away so I cannot hear my mind any longer." Thoughts and memories of the day started to merge with manipulations of the past. The dance of dreams started to take her and fact and fictions began melding into a story to be told.

The dream took her hand and led her to a path where each step felt a little more like home and her body felt easy and light. She was led to a chattering flow of water that seemed to effortlessly swell and fall with her breath. Reflections of natures delight waltzed within the water and she was soon pulled into the motion. Here there was no ego and no thought. Here was now. Beauty, movement, touch and sound. Behind each movement was a connection to the

source itself. Tears of injustice and rage of heartbreak seemed to seep from her being and were taken away by the pool in its infinite wisdom. When she looked at what was left it was a sight that was so unimaginable, so beyond beauty that her heart fell away into golden light. She felt such love that her breath was almost unbearable. Not love for anything or anyone just pure love. Love for this life, this body, this heart and all of existence and beyond.

As the morning light tiptoed onto her resting skin she opened her eyes. Tears still apparent and her pillow was wet and warm. She reached over her head stretching to call in the day's fresh light and then clutched her heart. "Thank you," she whispered. She stepped into the new day and with each step it became her perfect moment of peace. Each breath the soft duvet and each heartbeat the surrender of the peace of night. She was no longer hiding in the darkness of night, and each moment became the gift of new beginnings.







PHILOSOPHER DAD by Tanya MacIntyre

One of the most challenging things in my life was losing my father – a man who was my mentor, my hero, my best friend – a man who stepped up to the plate back in the 60s to become a single parent to me and my baby sister, and showed us by example what it meant to be an extraordinary human being.

My father was a special person for countless reasons, but one that always impressed me the most was that he never spoke negatively about anyone ... not even my mother – a woman who:

- abandoned her 2 children to have5 more failed marriages
- became a chronic alcoholic
- lived with a shit load of emotional baggage and heartache that she unloaded on us at every opportunity

I wrote a book dedicated to the memory of my father because I wanted to immortalize his memory and pay tribute to the wonderful person he was. It was also my way of processing my grief, and it was instrumental in helping me to finally forgive my mother and myself.

It took me 10 years to finish *Philosopher Dad* because every time I sat down to write another chapter I was consumed by sadness, so it was easier to walk away that day; and that day then turned into a week, and the week turned into a month, and the process would repeat itself until the months turned into another year!

I used to joke with people that if you looked up the word "procrastination" you'd likely see my picture in the definition.

But this was more than just procrastination. This was my unwillingness to sit with the sadness and feel the pain of grief. Instead, I would just avoid it - and I would selfmedicate with booze to numb and deaden the emotions. Oh yes, I was a "high functioning" drinker for a long time. For most of my adult life I imbibed alcohol as an anaesthetic to endure the operation of life! I had been socially conditioned by all the experts who say I'm genetically predisposed to the "disease" because I had descended from a long line of addicts - so it became easier to live in that reality for many years.

"Pain is inevitable because it touches all of us eventually. Suffering, however, is optional." This was a quote from the mother of Sean Stephenson who imparted that wisdom to me during my interview with him several years ago. Sean lives with a brittle bone disease that leaves him 3 feet tall and using a wheelchair; but, his condition and that reality didn't prevent him from becoming a psychotherapist, motivational speaker, and self-help author.

Sean is among the most inspirational people I am honoured to have interviewed in my long career as a broadcast journalist — a career that initially consumed me with negative news and all that's bad in the world to one that transcended to positive media and all that's good in the world.

The path of self awareness, self acceptance, self forgiveness, and self love is demanding and gruelling at times, but it's a journey worth taking to experience a lasting spiritual comfort.

It was a blend of effort and surrender that resulted in the completion of Philosopher Dad, and it feels great to be healthy, sober, and finally have it finished.

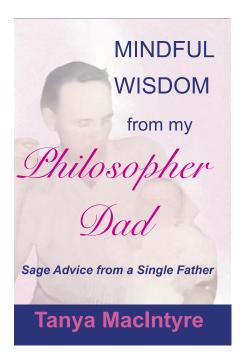
I am grateful to countless people who became my community of supporters on this path to published author, many of whom are named in my book's dedication page.

I intend to now make *Philosopher Dad* the first in a series of self-help books that will encourage people to love themselves exactly as they are right now... today, regardless of how much they weigh, how old they are, how much they earn, how much they owe, and how much people label them!

Today is a gift that holds the miracle of our lives, and you will experience lasting comfort and contentment when you start expressing gratitude for each miracle you unwrap in your life every day.

My wish for you is to always ...

- Live Well
- Laugh Often
- Love Always
- Be Mindful.... And
- Stay Positive!





INTERVIEW WITH SANDRA WILSON: THE KINDNESS KANGAROO PROJECT

One Thousand Trees, through our Roots & Wings project, is happy to partner with Sandra Wilson of Quite a Character on this exciting publishing project. Following is my interview with Sandra.

Where did the idea for the Kindness Kangaroo Project come from?

I was in a store where there was a man wanting a discount he felt he qualified for. When the cashier tried to explain he did not qualify, he got angrier and louder. I realized I had a coupon in my purse that might help and so I gave it to him. He got his discount and thanked me for my kindness. On the way home I thought of having something in my pouch that I gave in kindness just like a kangaroo might and then the idea for Kindness Kangaroo started. I worked with a friend – Brenda Geddes – on the Kindness Kangaroo story and together we came up with characters and emotions for the entire alphabet. This is when the Emotional Animal Alphabet was created. I wanted to see what kids felt kindness was, to help with the story so I went into a kindergarten classroom as a visiting author to get some ideas. Then when I was thinking who could illustrate the book I thought about going back to the classroom for drawings. It was then that the Kindness Kangaroo Project came to be.

How does the process work for each book?

For each book I go into a classroom and discuss the idea of the emotion with the students. They share ideas with me about how certain scenarios make them feel, how they can help others who may feel a specific way and what they think our character should do in the story. I then take their ideas home and write the story, then send it back to the class to have them illustrate it. Once they send me the illustrations it is formatted into a book and once the book is printed I return to the school (with a bit of fanfare) to launch the book and acknowledge the kids who took part.

What do you hope to accomplish with this project?

I want the kids to know they are being heard, that their ideas are great and important. I want them to feel famous because their work is featured in the book, to feel accomplished about something pretty big in their life. I want the kids that read the books to be able to relate to the characters and feel like they too could be the star of the story.

How many books have you done so far?

Right now I have 8 in print, one at the printer, one at the publisher (One Thousand Trees) and one ready to

send to the publisher. I just received drawings for one more and am awaiting drawings for yet another one. I am booked into 11 classrooms in the next couple of months to get ideas for more books! My goal is to complete the project – all 26 books, by the end of 2019.

What is your biggest challenge?

The biggest challenge I have is the financial strain. I personally pay for the printing of each set of books — and although some of that money is recovered in the sale of the books it is a lot of money upfront. I have been trying to collect sponsors to help with printing costs — their business or family dedication is advertised in the



book – but it hasn't been easy to find people to help out when there are so many books to do. I don't charge to visit the classrooms and have travelled from Chatham to Cobourg with many stops in between. I don't expect the project to make me money; I just don't want to go too far into debt doing it either.

What has been your most heartwarming moment?

There have been a few but the first time I realized how my books were impacting the kids was when I left a classroom and headed back to the office. I had little feet rushing down the hall to catch up to me and when I turned around this little girl, with a great big smile, handed me a paper with some hearts drawn on it. In the book Kindness Kangaroo one of the lines reads "Kindness can be easy to start like giving someone a paper heart." As I held the paper heart from this little girl I knew that the story was connecting.

What can people do to help?

People can support the Kindness Kangaroo Project by sponsoring a book, purchasing a book or donating in support of the project. Word of mouth is also very powerful and so telling people about the project and the books is also helpful.

Where can they purchase the books?

Books are available through my website www.quiteacharacter.ca/store You can also get information on the website as to when there are public book launches or events where the books will be available.

For example, I will be at the Renew You Holistic Fayre on February 24 in Cambridge and will have copies of the books ready to sell.

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

I would also like to say something about the importance of the characters.

Most of the characters in the book have differences that are not usually given to main characters. I hope that this will allow these differences to seem 'normal' because they are getting the exposure in a book. I also hope that children with these differences can feel like a star instead of having something wrong with them because they are just like the main character. For example: Anxious Alligator has autistic tendencies, Determined Dog is dyslexic, Unique Urial is adopted and Jealous Jaguar is small for his age.

One very important point to this was with Timid Turtle – I was asked into the classroom to help the children understand Tourette's Syndrome which one of the students had but had not yet told the class. So I made Timid Turtle having trouble with this tics and all the kids in the class helped give me ideas on how we could help Timid come out of his shell and not be bothered with them. Once the book was written the boy told the class that he suffered with tics and they were all excited that he was just like Timid Turtle. It added new meaning to the project.





NEXT MONTH IN ONE THOUSAND TREES

Our focus for March is Letting Go.

"Accept yourself, love yourself, and keep moving forward. If you want to fly, you have to give up what weighs you down."

> Roy T. Bennett, The Light in the Heart

Do you have an inspiring story you'd like to share?

If you know of any community wellness or charitable events taking place in March, please complete and send us the Event Listing form found on the magazine page of our website.

Articles are always welcome for any of our "regular" departments ...

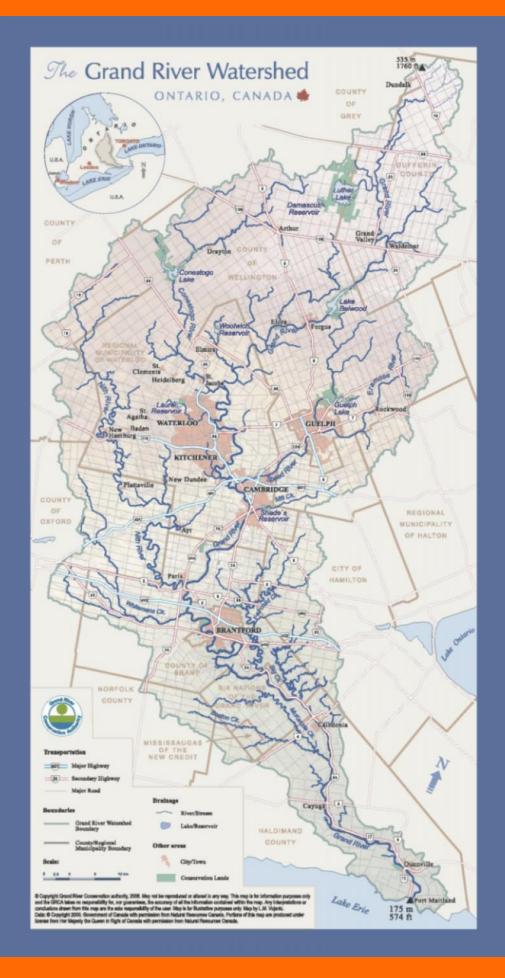
Connections
Creativity and the Arts
Food and Nutrition
Giving Back
Health and Wellbeing
The Library

Deadline for submissions is February 20.

As always, we look forward to hearing from you with any feedback or article ideas!

lisa@onethousandtrees.com





The Grand River flows 300 kilometres through southwestern Ontario from the highlands of Dufferin County to Port Maitland on Lake Erie.

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