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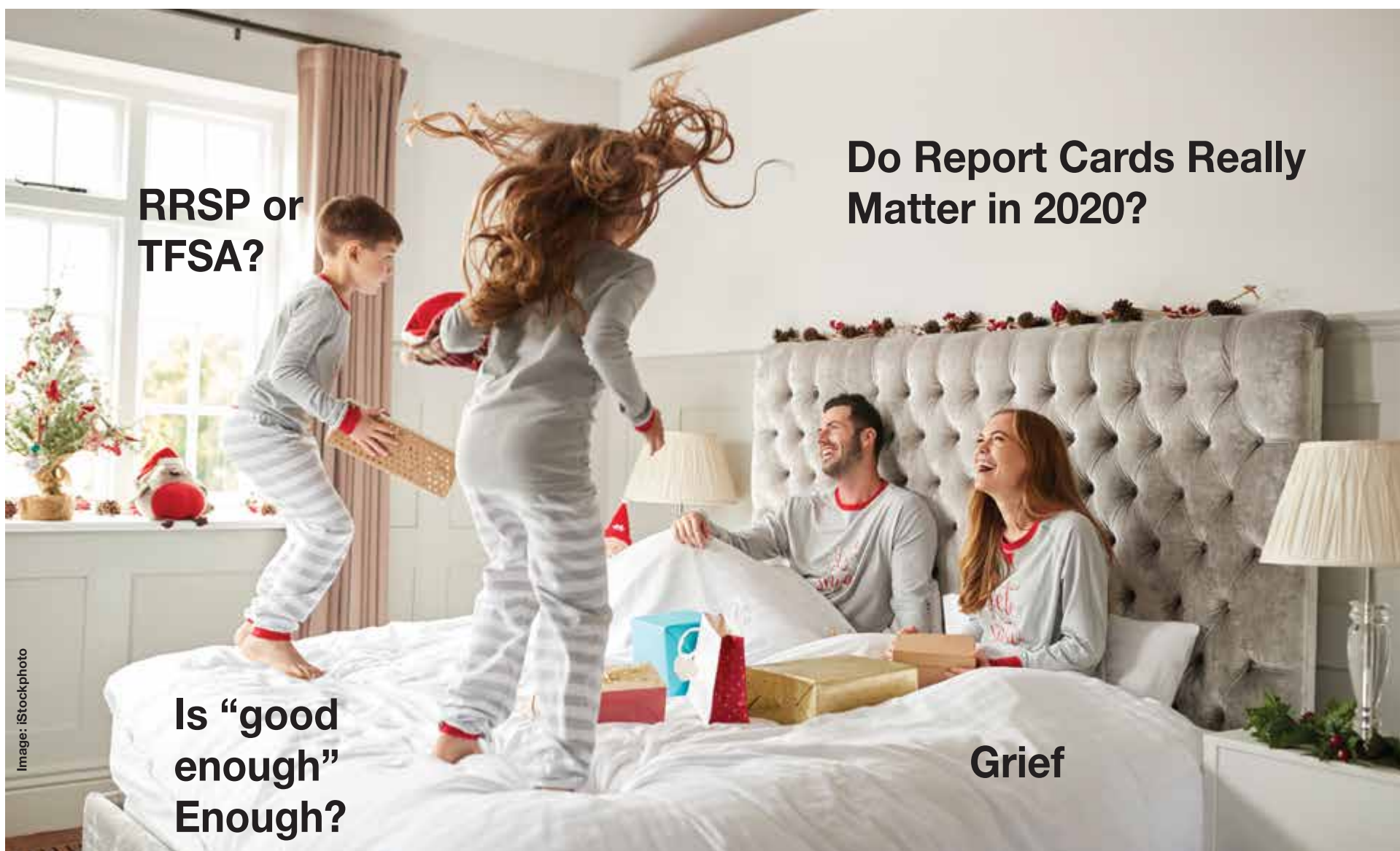
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The holiday season is here again. We are grateful and appreciative to all our advertisers whose continuous support has made our local HRM publication possible for almost 26 years. Thank you very much!

2020 has been a difficult year for everyone, due to COVID-19, but we never gave up our hopes to get through this year.

We hope that 2021 will be a much better year for everyone and that life will get back to normal.

On behalf of the staff of the *Parent-Child Guide* and all our advertisers, I would like to thank all essential workers who continue to provide essential services during this difficult time with COVID-19. **You are all our heroes!**

I would also like to thank our writers whose professional and interesting articles keeps the newspaper informative and helpful for our readers throughout the HRM area. And I want to thank all our wonderful readers for their kind words and interest in our newspaper for over the past 25 years.

We are thrilled about our upcoming 26th Anniversary and hope you will celebrate with us. Stay tuned for our Special 26th Anniversary Edition, printing April 22, 2021. We look forward to publishing for many years to come, providing helpful and informative information to our great readers.

On behalf of all of everyone at Parent-Child Guide, I wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

With appreciation,

Robert

Robert Rockwell
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Parent-Child GUIDE

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Grief

By Carol M. Shirley, Registered Psychologist, with ENIGMA

Grief, it is an interesting concept. It is commonly thought of as something we experience when someone dies, although it is much more than that, we are currently living in a world rampant with grief.

We experience grief when we experience a personal loss. Loss does include a loss of life, as well as many other losses; such as the loss of a dream, a plan, a way of being, loss of a job, and income. We experience grief when life includes divorce, separation, or abuse. The cluster of emotions typically include anger, disappointment, guilt, anxiety, sadness, and despair. Physical reactions can include over-eating, under-eating, sleep issues, lack of desire or motivation and can include physical aches and pains or illness. Unresolved grief often results in depression, anxiety, auto immune issues and physical illness.

I believe it is important to recognize our grief and allow ourselves to feel the losses. Too often we "stuff" these emotions pretending they don't exist. We move on to other things that create a distraction which may be effective short term but is not a healthy response.

Grief is a normal human response to loss, even if we knew the loss was coming. Healthy resolve involves exercising self-compassion which would include saying to

yourself the same truth you would say to a friend who experienced a similar loss. It involves "self-soothing", helping yourself feel heard, safe, and ok to be with the grief, the emotions you feel (cry, be angry feel these emotions but don't let yourself become them. While at the same time recognize this too shall pass and in time your life will find peace.

In this world of Co-vid we have all experienced significant losses, on top of what we might consider typical. It's been a challenging ten months with no end in sight. The one thing humans need to survive is Hope! What does hope mean to you? I've asked this question many times and the answers have always been found in the small things. Things like hearing a child laugh, seeing the sun rise, hearing the sounds of the ocean, or witnessing kindness. It is a time to look inward and to appreciate small moments. Get out of your head as much as possible and maybe even start a gratitude journal. As always you are writing your story. When you look back what will yours say about this time in our lives?

If your grief has left you unable to function in your daily life, please seek professional help.

For more information go to www.carolshirley.ca or phone 902-495-3181.



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RRSP or TFSA?

Submitted by The Sutherland Wealth Management Group

What is the difference between an RRSP and a TFSA?

Is it better to contribute to a Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP) or a Tax-Free Savings Account (TFSA)? As one does not replace the other, the best solution is to contribute to both. However, each option has its pros and cons, depending on your age and personal financial situation.

What is the difference between an RRSP and a TFSA?

These two savings vehicles meet different needs:

- An RRSP is a long-term savings vehicle intended for retirement.
- A TFSA is a complementary tool to help you save for short-term goals (e.g., travel, education, renovations). TFSAs can also be useful in saving for retirement as they do not affect the amount of

government benefits you receive, unlike RRSPs.

RRSP contributions can be deducted from your taxable income, whereas TFSA contributions are made with income that has already been taxed. Therefore, they aren't tax deductible. That having been said, if you withdraw funds from an RRSP, they will be included in your taxable income and taxed at the rate based on your current income, which is not the case with a TFSA.

Which one should you choose?

As with any financial portfolio, diversification should be a key aspect of your retirement savings plans. Essentially, RRSPs and TFSAs enable you to **build tax-sheltered savings**. Your financial advisor can help you determine which one would be more advantageous in your situation. However, we've gathered a few rules of thumb for you below. If your tax rate

is higher now than it will be at retirement, an RRSP is likely the better option. However, if you think that your retirement income will be higher than your current income, you're better off with a TFSA.

Do you expect to receive a significant pension? Your government benefits (e.g., Old Age Security and the Guaranteed Income Supplement) may be reduced as your pension income is considered in their calculations. Unlike with TFSAs, RRSP withdrawals are considered income. Therefore, a TFSA may be more advantageous as it enables you to better manage your total taxable income.

If you are nearing retirement age, you must also take into account that at age 71, all RRSPs must be converted to Registered Retirement Income Funds (RRIFs), which will impact your taxes. This is not the case with TFSAs, which have no age limit, so you

can contribute to them throughout your life. "In the case of RRSPs, your funds are tax-deferred, but the tax rate will likely be lower when you are 65 or 70 as your income is probably going to be lower," added Jean-Philippe Bernard. "As for TFSAs, you have already paid taxes on the funds invested, so you will not be taxed on them again when you withdraw them."

When it comes to estate planning, there are also major differences between the two vehicles from a tax standpoint. Both savings vehicles allow you to designate a beneficiary. However, all amounts invested in an RRSP will be taxed upon your death (unless an eligible rollover is applied), while TFSA earnings cease to be tax-exempt after death.

How to make contributions

The amount that you can contribute to your RRSP is based on your "earned income" from the previous year as well as any pension contributions made by you or your employer. The amount is provided on your income tax notice of

assessment. There are annual limits and any unused contribution room from previous years can be carried forward.

As for TFSAs, the maximum annual contribution may vary from year to year (\$6,000 in 2020). You will find the allowable TFSA contribution room from

previous years on the Canada Revenue Agency's website. Any unused contribution room, starting in 2009, can be carried forward indefinitely.

For more information check out Canada Revenue Agency's website or reach out to us at terry.sutherland@nbc.ca.

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To All Our Constituents & Friends Seasons Greetings & Best Wishes For The New Year

Looking forward to 2021

By Darrell Samson,
the Member of Parliament for Sackville-Preston-Chezzetcook

2020 has been a year like no other, with a global pandemic that has been compared to the Spanish Flu that ended over a hundred years ago. It was especially difficult for our province, filled with unthinkable tragedy and adversity. However, despite all that we faced, we remained #Nova Scotia Strong.

As we approach the holiday season, our traditional festivities and celebrations will be a bit different than previous years, but they also represent a fresh start, as we welcome a new year filled with hope. A vaccine is coming, and we could very well be on the home stretch with the end of the pandemic in sight. However, for the next few months, I ask that we all remain vigilant by following public health guidelines to protect ourselves and those around us. Patience and kindness helped get us through the first wave, and will continue to be key as we face this next one.

I am looking forward to 2021 and all that it holds in store for residents across the riding. From my family to you and yours, we wish you a happy holiday season and a prosperous new year!

don't really need your money. Local retailers do! It has been a very difficult year for small businesses, and they need our collective support to keep going and their employees on the payroll.

A closing friendly reminder:
This year more than ever, we must remember that for some members of our community, the holiday season can be especially difficult. Those who find themselves alone due to circumstances beyond their control, or maybe cannot afford to provide the holiday experience for their children that they wish for, this time of year can make them particularly vulnerable. Please take the time to check on your neighbours who might be struggling. If you find yourself in this situation and life is too overwhelming, please do not hesitate to reach out for help.

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Darrell

Shop local!

With holiday shopping about to ramp up to peak levels, I encourage everyone to shop local if you can. Online shopping is very convenient, especially during a pandemic, but companies like Amazon



DARRELL SAMSON

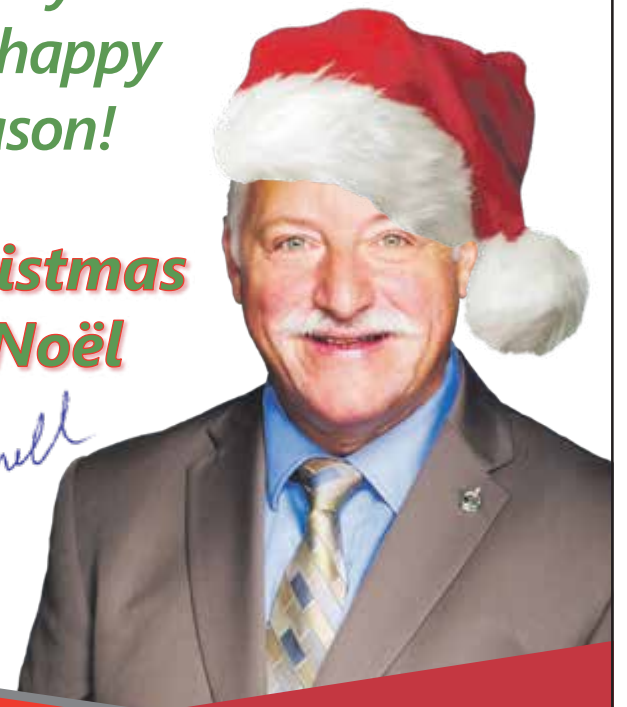
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*Wishing everyone
a safe and happy
holiday season!*

*Merry Christmas
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Darrell



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To All Our Constituents & Friends Seasons Greetings & Best Wishes For The New Year

Holiday wishes from Rafah Di Costanzo, MLA for Clayton Park West



I would like to wish all my constituents, and all Nova Scotians, a Happy Holidays, a Merry Christmas, and a safe, healthy and prosperous New Year.

It seems like with the blink of an eye, Winter has graced us with its presence; we are so blessed to live in this province where we get to experience all four seasons—and enjoy their beauty.

This time of year is filled with love and happiness—unfortunately, it has been overshadowed by the rise of COVID-19 cases. The pandemic has tested us as a community, and although we are still in the midst of it, I truly believe we have become stronger as a province. Some positives have come from our new normal; we have learned the true value of family and togetherness—that working together and respecting each other's space and health is at the forefront of importance.

With that said, Winter can be a

very difficult time for many people who do not have family around them—especially our seniors who live alone. That is why my office has started the: *Clayton Park West—Help for Seniors (CPW-HFS)* group. The CPW-HFS group is committed to becoming the center for communication, and connection to aid, for the most vulnerable members of our society. We will be assisting them socially and emotionally, and hope to reduce the loneliness they feel. Not just during the holidays, but all year round.

My casual staff member, Gail Scandola, and Clayton Park West constituents, Janice Mellish and Anna LeBlanc, will be heading this project with the help of my Constituency Assistant, Zeina Klayme, and casual staff member, Emily Williams.

Due to COVID-19, my office transformed the *Senior's Expo* that we had planned to do last Spring into our monthly *Clayton Park West—Help For Seniors* Zoom meetings

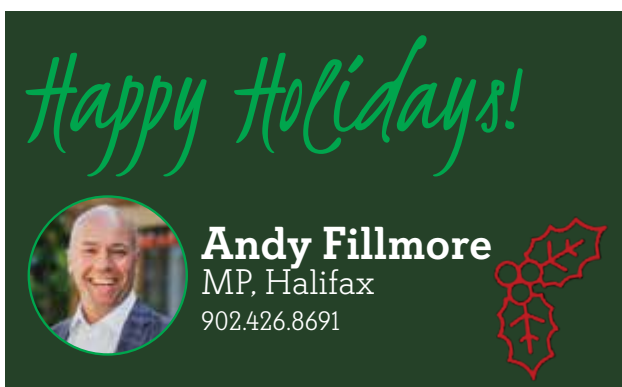
and telephone conferences. We ask all Clayton Park West residents, both seniors and non-seniors, who have ideas that can help to please reach out to the CPW-HFS group, in order for us to assist as many of our senior population as possible. Please email: claytonparkwesthelpforseniors@gmail.com for more information.

Thank you for a wonderful year—despite the challenges, we made it our own and handled our new normal with grace.

Wishing you all a Happy Holidays, a Merry Christmas, and a safe and healthy New Year! It is my honour to represent the resilient riding of Clayton Park West!

Sincerely,

Rafah Di Costanzo
MLA for Clayton Park West



A Message from Ben Jessome, MLA, Hammonds Plains-Lucasville

With this year coming to an end, I want to take the time to wish everyone a wonderful holiday season and a Happy New Year! 2020 has been a challenging year for Nova Scotians, but our strength and resilience has allowed us to persevere through difficult times.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many businesses were forced to adapt in order to adhere to public health guidelines. Local restaurants such as Vernon's Thunderbird Diner offered takeout and delivery so families could enjoy their delicious food at home. As restrictions in the summer loosened, businesses such as Woodhaven Park Campground welcomed residents from across the Atlantic Bubble to explore our beautiful province.

I know the holiday season can be challenging for many and I am sure this year has caused even more hardships for families going into the holiday season. If this year has taught us anything, it is the importance of checking in on our neighbours and giving back to our community in any way we can. If you are able, I encourage you to check out ways you can volunteer in our community, whether it be delivering food for Square Roots or serving dinner at your local church.

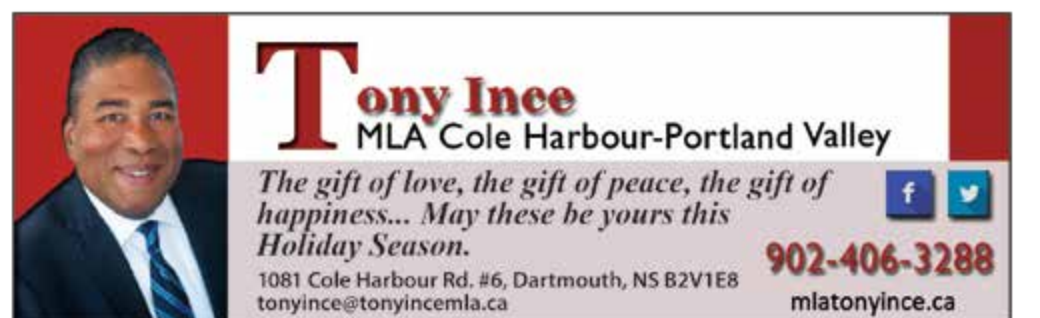
This year I was unable to connect with constituents as I normally would at community events. As I know this is a difficult time for many, I want to assure you that my office remains open and ready to serve you. As we begin a new year, I want to hear from you on how I can best serve our community. Please

feel free to call or email my office at any time to share your questions, concerns, and ideas. It is a priority of mine to continue to stay connected, especially during these uncertain times.

While we may not be able to celebrate this holiday season as we normally would, I hope that we are able to connect with our loved ones as we head into the New Year.

Best wishes,

Ben



To All Our Constituents & Friends Seasons Greetings & Best Wishes For The New Year

Reflecting On A Challenging Year

By Hon. Lena Metlege Diab, MLA Halifax Armdale

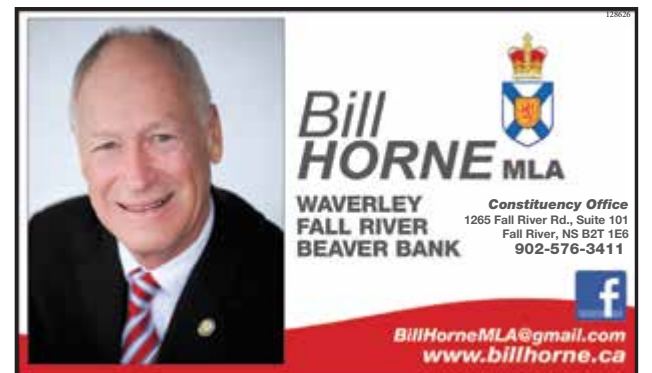
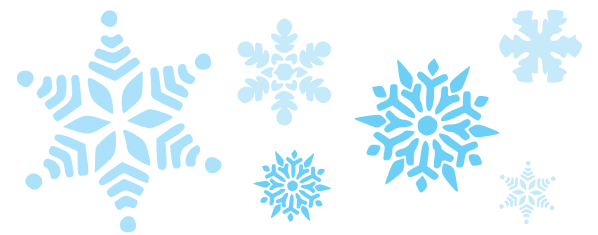
As 2020 ends, I want to wish every Nova Scotian a Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays, and all the best in 2021. This past year has been challenging for all of us. The pandemic continues to impact our lives, restricting what we can do and who we can visit. It's important that we continue to follow public health's safety protocols. Doing so will allow us to get to a point where we can be together once more, and I know that will be a joyous occasion for many. I am hopeful that the holiday season will offer your family a moment for quiet reflection on the many wonderful people and positive things in your lives.

As the MLA for Armdale, I am grateful for the care and resilience that our communities have shown this year, helping us get through the tough times. I also want to send a special thank you to all our local organizations, small businesses, school communities, health and long-term care teams, and selfless volunteers who stepped up in 2020. You all have reminded us what is so special about our people and the place we call home. In the coming weeks, continue to be kind, be cautious, be grateful, and look to the future. We have many bright moments ahead of us, together.

Even with the pandemic response consuming much of our energies this year, 2020 still saw some major

accomplishments for our province: We introduced our largest ever Capital Plan, invested massively to further expand internet access, and advanced transformative infrastructure projects in HRM, like the QEII Redevelopment, the Bayers Lake Outpatient Centre, and the new Art Gallery of Nova Scotia and Waterfront Arts District. The province also brought forward the largest minimum wage increase in a decade, introduced new programs to connect youth with meaningful job training and employment, and made the largest increase ever to the Nova Scotia Child Benefit while expanding eligibility. Furthermore, Nova Scotia committed millions in funding towards physician recruitment and retention through the 2020 Doctors' Master Agreement and helped support more families by completing the final phase of the rollout of our free, universal pre-primary program. These are investments that will contribute to our physical and economic well-being for years to come, and I know they will make a difference as we chart our course for recovery in a post-COVID world.

Thank you again for all the kindness and support you've shown me since 2013. Wishing you and yours a bright holiday season.



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Places To Go!

Winter fun in Rosebank Cottage

By Pete Cullen, Executive Director, Ross Farm Museum

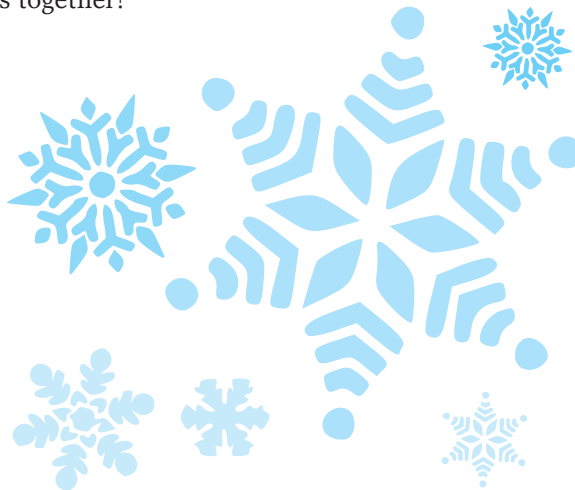
In the 19th century winter meant much more home time than today, so families counted on each other's company to see them through. It was a great time to play games, pick up an instrument, or turn to pen and paper!

When Ross Farm was still young, winter past times included playing card games, such as Five and Forty, of backgammon while listening to Mary play the piano while George played the fiddle. Or the whole family came together for a game of charades. Also wrote letters and Edward Ross kept a diary.

With 2020 hindsight, these activities were highly social and creative and fairly cheap. A piano may cost a lot, but many barn parties were carried by someone playing the comb and somebody "playing the spoons". Fold a piece of wax paper over the comb, hold it between your lips with one hand and hum! It sounds like a kazoo and tingles a bit. Playing spoons were regular spoons and the rhythm could be anything you can make happen! Hold the lower spoon tight between your middle and ring fingers—handle snug toward the palm of your hand and "bowl down".

Hold the other spoon between your index and middle finger and keep it loose—"bowl up". Bang them together between your knee and other hand without losing grip. Now to the barn party!

Sometimes staying in, staying at home, staying with family can bring out the greatest creativity and bring us together!



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Health & Wellness

Is "good enough" Enough?

By Dr. Sarah Davidson DDS, MSc (Ortho) FRCD (C), Halifax Orthodontic Specialist Group



I recently had a very open and candid conversation with a friend and fellow parent about the need for braces and while we looked at his son's teeth he uttered the phrase: "I think they are good enough." It is a phrase I hear time and time again during consultation with parents as I examine their child's teeth. It comes from many different types of parents from all walks of life. Some look at the teeth from an aesthetics-only perspective and think things look "good enough", some are not in a position financially to invest in braces, some don't place an importance on teeth and oral health, and some, on principle, feel that braces are a frivolity. As an orthodontist and as a parent I understand. I can appreciate that it seems every teen you see is sporting braces and that many young kids these days are excited to get their braces if for no other reason than that all of their friends have them. Some people even call braces "a right of passage." While I disagree with the notion of braces being a right of passage, there are some very solid reasons why braces are so widespread these days.

There are two main reasons braces have become so prevalent. It is a fact that malocclusions, or the deviation from a normal bite, are on the rise. Genetics and a host of other factors have ensured that bite and excessive crowding or spacing issues are here to stay for the time being. The second reason is that oral health has finally received due recognition for its importance to overall health. With this acknowledgement there has been an increased value placed on teeth and their surrounding structures. There is an awareness that teeth can be maintained throughout life and that maintenance means that today's youth should never need to wear dentures, which were commonplace in the elderly not so long ago. The reason you see more braces is because more people are choosing to set up their children or themselves for future oral health and the improved self confidence that comes with a beautiful smile.

Any orthodontist will tell you that braces are never "needed." True needs in life are few: food, shelter, water. Braces are almost always elective in some nature but that does not mean that they are "just cosmetic" and are not indicated to improve function, decrease breakdown and wear of teeth and to prolong a healthy bite and smile. Most orthodontists are focused on the occlusion or bite first and aesthetics second. The truth is that teeth that are aligned and in a proper bite look better and last longer. Minor rotations or deviations in tooth position can have a large impact on the health and prognosis of a tooth.

So I would ask is "good enough" enough?" For all that we do to set up our youth for the future, oral health should not be neglected. It is not the place to cut corners. We get one permanent set of teeth and we need to protect them to maintain them for a lifetime. Given the opportunity to do this at an early age, when damage to the teeth can be minimized and a young person can reap the rewards of having a beautiful and healthy smile for their lifetime, is invaluable.

Dr. Sarah Davidson is a Board-Certified Orthodontic Specialist with the Halifax Orthodontic Specialist Group. She is a co-owner of The Brace Space in Bedford (Larry Uteck and Sackville) and Stuart & Davidson Orthodontics in Dartmouth, offering conventional braces and Invisalign for children, teens and adults. For more information, contact 902 455-7222.

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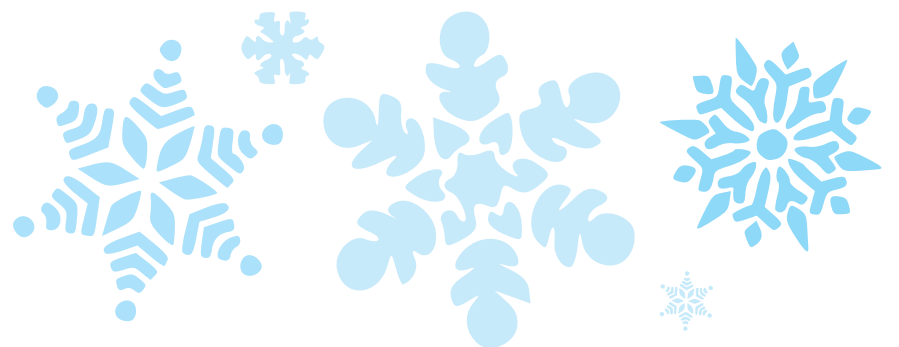
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Seniors' Living Care

Community Support Can Ease the Mental Stress of COVID

Submitted by The Berkeley

In the first wave of the pandemic, our course of action at The Berkeley was to keep residents safe and healthy, both mentally and physically. We considered them a 'family' or, as it is now coined, a 'bubble'. We felt strongly about keeping residents active and engaged while also safe from COVID. We closely monitored staff and caregivers coming in and out of our buildings. Most importantly, we established safety protocols within our buildings so residents could live happily and safely within their community. That is not to say our residents were not concerned about COVID nor that they were unaffected by the inability to see family and friends. Times were tough and we were working to create a best-case scenario for everyone. Our approach helped both staff and residents feel a semblance of calm during a chaotic time.

With all the recent discussion around increased cases in Nova Scotia and community spread, it is easy to feel an ominous sense of foreboding especially as the holiday season approaches. It was tough the first time our lives were shut down, but now we know what we did not know the first time. The extreme and prolonged isolation felt by many was a reality none of us wish to experience again. It challenged the state of everyone's mental health

to have life change so dramatically in the blink of an eye.

Our mental well-being is paramount, and we need to be proactive. Self-care and staying connected to the one's we love as well as things we enjoy is crucial. Recognizing the struggles of others and helping them find ways to cope is one approach family, friends, neighbours, colleagues, and even strangers can take to be supportive. As a community we must be kind, understanding and compassionate. Not everyone possesses the tools to cope mentally and emotionally through this unprecedented time and every day is different for each of us without undue stress. We must remain mindful of the various ways this pandemic is impacting people.

If we are plunged into another lockdown, The Berkeley will take the same approach as in the first wave. We will work diligently to keep our residents safe while encouraging them to stay active and engaged, upbeat and positive. This pandemic has not only taken lives but has also created an unbearable sense of loss. As a community, we have an obligation help each other through this period.



Redefining Family Connection

By Bayshore Home Health



photo: benralexander/Pixabay

Being separated from family and friends can be very stressful—after all, humans are social creatures, and we depend on our relationships and social networks for support, friendship, and fulfillment. Loneliness among seniors is also a serious concern.

To stay connected while social distancing, many people are finding alternatives to in-person visits. Here are nine ideas to try:

Regular phone calls. For many seniors, this is the easiest way to stay in touch with friends and family.

Texting and more. For seniors who are comfortable using technology, you can also connect with text mes-

sages, emails, video chat, and social media.

Hold a virtual dinner party. Everyone prepares their meal at home and joins a video chat. The nice thing about video chat is that you can see each other's facial expressions and body language.

Email and blog updates. To keep senior loved ones in the loop about what you and your kids are up to, create a short e-newsletter with photos and text, and send it out every few days. A family blog is also a good way to share updates, and visitors can add comments.

Read bedtime stories together. If your senior loved one can use video chat, see if they'd like to read aloud to their grandkids in the evening. If using the phone is

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easier, try using speakerphone.

Get crafty. Invite the kids to create digital greeting cards, photos and artwork to email to their grandparents.

Play online games. There are free online versions of classics like card games, chess and backgammon, or newer multiplayer games that kids will also enjoy.

Watch a movie together. Netflix Party allows people in different places to watch a movie or TV show together.

Arrange home care services. If you live far away from your loved one and are concerned about their well-being, consider hiring a professional caregiver. Home care services include companionship, house-keeping, meal preparation and more.

Taking advantage of different ways to connect that can help us feel closer and support each other.

For more information call Bayshore Home Health at 902-580-2221.





Wishing everyone a safe and happy holiday season!

We continue to do our part to keep residents safe and healthy during the COVID-19 pandemic. Equally as important to us, however, is finding ways to stay active and engaged, upbeat and positive. Maintaining physical, emotional, and mental health is our priority now more than ever! Despite, and perhaps in light of, our challenging circumstances this season, we hope you find creative ways to celebrate safely and enjoy the holidays. At The Berkeley, we will enjoy the music, the décor, the food, the movies, the crafts, and all the spontaneous fun that comes our way, because we believe in enjoying life to the fullest! Visit Facebook and Instagram to see what happens at The Berkeley or book a tour to see for yourself!

For more information, please call **Jenn Walker** at (902) 802-0346, email jenn.walker@theberkeley.com, or visit our website at theberkeley.com.


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Education

Do Report Cards Really Matter in 2020?

Submitted by Oxford Learning

Reports cards are usually the ultimate say on the topic of student academic performance. But, the coronavirus pandemic shut schools down last March. Educators froze grades when schools closed. Students eventually transitioned to online learning, but school work submitted after March did not affect final report card marks for the year.

When students went back to school this fall after six months away, they returned to a completely different school experience. In elementary school, teachers arranged classrooms to promote social distancing. In high school, teens returned to the new two classes per day schedule.

With a considerable gap missing from reporting requirements and so much change to adapt to in terms of learning expectations, how will report cards capture how well students are progressing academically this year?

Report Card Limitations

- **Standardization.** Report cards are often standardized: teachers select from a set of pre-selected comments

or choose from a range of available options. However, we all know that these options are often limited and cannot fully capture the full range of student experience. It's important to remember that *report cards only capture a snapshot of a student* at a moment in time.

- **Different Paces.** Students progress at different paces. Report cards only record a child's ability to reach a performance benchmark in a specific timeframe. Just because your child doesn't understand how to multiply fractions by the time the unit is over does not mean that they never will, only that they didn't on the particular schedule of the school curriculum.

- **Influencing factors.** There are many factors at play in capturing a student's achievement. Different students learn better at different times of the day or learn subjects at different rates. Some students are good at taking tests and writing essays, and others are not.

Report cards' primary purpose is to measure and track a student's academic performance. *cont. next pg.*

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Education

cont. from previous pg.

demic progress for the school year. But, language and reporting techniques can make report cards *confusing and stressful for both parents and students*.

- **Provide Feedback.** Report cards are to be the most important tool for tracking student progress. Report cards often serve as an opportunity for parents to check-in with teachers during parent-teacher interviews. But, report cards shouldn't be the only time parents check-in on their children's learning journey.
- **Insights into Learning.** For many parents, the most crucial part of the report card is the teacher's comments. Comments are the focus because a single letter mark or grade cannot capture a student's learning journey. Based on observations in-class and online, teachers' comments are, for many parents, the most valuable part of the report card.
- **Predictions of Progress.** Whether it's the first progress report or final report card, report card grades provide a clue as to how a student is handling the material and how well they are prepared for the next term's challenges or the next grade. Be prepared is especially important in high school; research shows that *teens are more concerned* about marks as they prepare for college and university and rely on high grades for the university application process.

This year and every year, it's essential to have a *report card chat* together as a family. This past year has not

been like any other; keep in mind that learning results may look a little different this year as students adapt to the various education circumstances.

The one thing that parents should focus on this year in terms of their children's learning success is how much effort students put forth. Adapting well to changes such as online learning, showing enthusiasm about different subjects, and learning about topics not covered in school, real signs of your child's school progression are evident in many factors not captured by report cards. Discipline, focus, and work ethic will continue to carry students forward in their education, even if report card grades are low.

This year and every year, the real mark of learning is how much effort students put into their education. Focusing on the effort students put into learning—rather than the achievement of grades—will be the driver that helps keep students learning on track, no matter what 2020 throws at them.

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Activities to do with your children during the winter months

By Aileen Sullivan: Assistant Director/Inclusion Coordinator, The Growing Place

As the winter months approach, we often tend to stay inside more. There are many great outdoor activities you can do with your children to keep active during the winter months as well as activities to do inside when it's too cold to go out and play. Here are some activities you can plan with your children to keep them active and engaged during the cold months.

Have a scavenger hunt: Make up a list of different places and objects throughout your city. Take your children on an adventure throughout the city to find all the objects.

Build an igloo: You can use dif-

ferent materials to make the snow bricks such as bowls and pans to make different shapes. If the weather is too cold, you could always make a sugar cube igloo inside.

Make pine cone bird feeders: Winter can be hard for the birds to find food. Have your children make the bird feeders and help hang them in different areas. You can also keep an eye on how many different birds you see eating from the feeders.

Bring the snow inside: If the weather is too cold, gather up a tray of snow and bring it inside. The children can enjoy making snowmen or sculptures.

Do some baking: Baking is a great way to pass time. You could make some gingerbread cookies, and have a cookie decorating contest.

Your children will enjoy making up games to play as well.

Have fun and be safe in the snow!

Aileen is currently the Assistant Director at The Growing Place (Pleasant Street location). She also serves as Resource Coordinator where she specializes in supporting children with special needs as well as offering support, and advice to parents on a variety of child, and family related issues. For more information please visit our website at www.thegrowingplace.ca

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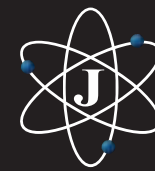


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CRAFT CORNER

Keeping it Cozy

By Jenny Joan Larisey, Craft Consultant for Maritime Hobbies Crafts

Winter makes me think of things warm and cozy. A cup of hot chocolate after being outside, fuzzy slippers, and curling up with a cup of tea & book under a woolly blanket are just a few of the things that keep me cozy. I also love hand warmers and keep them close through the season.

You can create so many versions of hand warmers. Once you know the basics of putting it all together, it's just a matter of preference. There are so many great ideas and they are small enough that you can stitch them by hand if you don't have a sewing machine.

To make one warmer, you will need just a few supplies:

- scissors, needle and thread
- two pieces of fabric squares cut into 5 inch squares (I find the warmers have a nicer weight and hold the heat longer when using a heavier fabric; and if you are trying to use up scraps, you can always double up the layers.)
- about a cup or 2 of uncooked grains of your choice (I like to use jasmine rice for its pleasant fragrance and it also holds essential oils and mixes well with tea and herbs.)

Start by mixing the rice together with herbs or oils. Set aside. Sew the squares by placing the right sides of the fabric together. Stitch a 1/4 inch seam around the outside edge, leaving a 1 1/2 inch opening. Remember to backstitch at the beginning and end. Turn the square right side out and fill 3/4 of the way full. Fold in the opening edge of the hole and using a long pin, block the rice from falling out. Sew closed.



Note of caution:

When researching this post, I came across many people complaining of their hot packs burning or smelling badly after heating. It's absolutely essential to put a glass of water in the microwave at the same time as you heat your pack to prevent the cloth and grains from burning. When heating a new pack, heat it in 20 second intervals, testing to see how long it takes to heat up the pack. It's not only the volume of the filling that affects the heating

time, but also the type of filling. Be sure to use 100% cotton or linen fabric and thread, you should not be heating synthetic fibers in the microwave. If giving as a gift, attach a note with instructions.

With pocket warmers walking the dogs, shoveling driveways or commuting to work will keep you warm and cozy all winter long!

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HOME Decor

Holiday Decor

By Bea Doucet, DWD Interiors Inc.



The exciting season of joy and happiness is around the corner! We embrace it every year with enthusiasm.

Is this year any different? Let's hope not!

The holiday season is filled with tradition. Decor frequently from our early childhood brought forward...treasures to us.

Items tucked away for a year, their reappearance making us smile. It is definitely part of the magic!

Perhaps you like to keep your decor simple, which is wonderful but, if you want...this is a season when you can go totally over the top!

Whichever your choice...you can't be wrong. Do what makes you happy!

Remember...it is the season of joy!

Your front door is the beginning of your welcome and your theme. Beautiful wreaths are available, anything from natural to glittery!

Color wise you obviously don't have to stay with classic red and green, there's white, silver, pink, blue, aqua, even black! Be adventurous!!

Today many of us live in smaller spaces. For years instead of a tree we lavished our fireplace mantle with spruce and cedar branches, embellished with spectacular ornaments. We never felt deprived!

Another option is to use a table tree, always wonderful and easy to manage.

Of course, a full sized tree is simply glorious!

Throughout your home the Christmas decor can be simple

and classic or it can be created with designs outside the box!

Introduce a twist, something unexpected and you can have a decor that is extraordinary!

Then there is the Christmas dinner table! In my opinion, the main event! Family and friends together with delicious food...it just doesn't get better.

Whether you set your table with your best china and all the bling that goes with it or if the place settings are simple, you want it to be special...just like the day! And dress up for the event...did I mention it should be special!!

I remember our Godchild joining us for Christmas dinner one year and he said, "is someone getting married?" Maybe I went over the top!

Most importantly is to enjoy putting your holiday decor together and have fun while you're doing it!

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