

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### *Sport activity - a key player in the good health of everyone*

The Editor

Physical activity and proper nutrition are the cornerstones of a healthy lifestyle for everyone, regardless of age. Unfortunately, less than 50 per cent of Nova Scotians are

active enough to reap the health benefits.

Physical activity can improve your health and help prevent, delay or alleviate diseases and conditions like cancer, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity and stroke.

### *Agricultural programs benefit all Nova Scotians*

The Editor

Budget cuts to agriculture programs and services are not the route to go when it comes to balancing the budget. Programs such as Farm Investment Fund are cost shared initiatives for agricultural innovation and environmental projects that benefit all Nova Scotians.

The Farm Investment Fund provides farmers with the capacity to institute things like food traceability systems, on farm food safety programs, manure storage facilities or animal handling systems. Projects like these help us to be competitive with other jurisdictions.

Another vital program we need to enhance is one for new entrants. We need new people entering the Industry to ensure long term viability of agriculture in Nova Scotia.

The Agriculture budget of \$60M is a minute piece of the \$8B provincial budget, but a major source of economic activity.

The benefits farmers provide, despite this fact, are incredible. Take a manure storage facility for example and think about all the contract labour, engineers, cement trucks and fencing needed – that is a lot of jobs and economic spinoff for one small project.

We understand the campaign commitment to get back to balance, but if we don't invest in our natural capital, there won't be food, won't be environmental sustainability, and won't be fresh air, good soil or healthy water in the future. We expect that politicians from all parties would agree that ensuring fresh, high quality food through a sustainable agriculture industry outweighs the rush to get the books balanced.

Tighten up some interdepartmental spending, but leave the Agriculture programs and services that benefit all Nova Scotians intact!

Beth Densmore, President,  
Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture

Children and youth need to be active in order to grow and develop properly and to have fun.

Participating in sport is one way for youth to be active. A well-planned sport program can improve a child's long-term mental and physical health. Sport increases self-esteem, helps children build leadership skills and reduces anxiety and stress. Physically active children are less likely to start smoking or drink alcohol, have more nutritious eating habits, and are more likely to become active adults.

Doctors do everything they can to help make sport and recreation a possibility for

youth in Nova Scotia. Programs such as the Sport Nova Scotia After School Program and KidSport™ provide unique opportunities for children to be involved in sport while learning about the benefits of physical activity.

Doctors in the province congratulate all of the Canada Games athletes for embracing physical activity and inspiring Canadians of all ages to adopt physically active habits, either through sport or other recreation. It's never too late to start taking care of your body – it's the only one you've got!

Jane Brooks, MD, PhD, CCFP,  
President, Doctors Nova Scotia

### *Flora Canning*

The Editor

Many years ago Flora made an appointment with me to tune her piano at 9 AM. When I arrived at her home and drove into her driveway, I noticed her clothesline filled with clothes from one end to the other. She told me that she got up at 6AM, did a major wash, baked a pile of biscuits, and journeyed to Baddeck to do errands. It indicated to me the enormous energy that was flowing thru Flora. That was the first three hours of that day for Flora. I'm sure for the rest of that day Flora worked tirelessly many of those hours volunteering at Alderwood.

Betty Mueller was the Activity Director at Alderwood, and Betty and Flora made a great team. Many a stormy winter's evening Betty would drive Flora home with her 1962 Valiant which could be described as a rattle-

trap without a cellphone or radio. Betty would depress the car's accelerator to the mat in order to make that horrendous climb up Hunter's Mountain finally delivering Flora to her Middle River residence. Betty would proceed home to Orangedale, turn on the radio, that her car wasn't equipped with, by "singing" *These Are My Mountains*.

I hope that our present day volunteers will aspire to fill, or attempt to fill Flora's gigantic shoes, thus following in her million footsteps. Put your best foot forward always thinking and remembering Flora when volunteering. I'm not aware if Flora ever played hockey, but in the circle of volunteers she was recognized as "The Great One", the reigning Queen of Volunteers.

Garry Watson,  
Baddeck

### *March is Liver Health Month*

The Editor

The liver is a resilient, maintenance-free organ that's easy to ignore - until something goes wrong.

The liver performs over 500 different functions including fighting off infection, neutralizing toxins, manufacturing proteins and hormones, controlling blood sugar and clotting blood. With so many responsibilities the liver often comes under attack by viruses, toxic substances (including alcohol), contaminants and diseases. Even when it's under attack, symptoms are often slow to surface.

In Canada, one of the leading causes of liver disease is fatty liver disease which is linked to obesity. Exercise and good nutrition are especially important in maintaining a healthy liver. Nova Scotians who are overweight or obese run a higher risk of developing a fatty liver which can lead to fatty liver disease. In some cases, fatty liver disease can progress to more severe liver damage or even liver cancer.

While there isn't a cure for liver disease, you can help prevent it by making healthy lifestyle choices. Introducing more activity into your daily routine is a great way to improve your overall health and can be as simple as taking a stroll around your neighborhood, parking farther away from an entrance, or taking the stairs instead of the elevator.

Doctors in the province encourage all Nova Scotians to eat healthy and be physically active. Choose a variety of foods from all four food groups of Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Living, drink six to eight glasses of water a day, consume alcohol in moderation, and consult your doctor if you are considering taking vitamins or herbal supplements.

For more information on liver disease and how diet and exercise can keep your liver healthy visit, [www.liver.ca](http://www.liver.ca).

Jane Brooks, MD, PhD, CCFP,  
President, Doctors Nova Scotia

#### *Letters to the Editor Policy*

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### *Chuck Thompson's "Along the Trail"*

## Yoga with me and the girls



It was our neighbor Susan who rallied us to the call. The conversation went something to the effect, "We (Middle River) have got a grant from the Community Health Board and I thought we might try yoga."

I'm not sure I was part of the initial "We" but I thought "Why not?" It's the dead of winter, you risk your life going to the bird feeder, and it is supposed to be good for my newly acquired Type 11 Diabetes. Also, these grants will become increasingly hard to come by and it is incumbent on all of us to participate or as they say "use it or lose it!"

So, in short order, Susan efficiently put up posters, contacted people, arranged for an instructor, and got it going. All the things you have to do in a small community to make things happen. They call it doing it yourself.

Well after a week's delay because of weather, the clarion call went out to assemble at the Middle River hall at seven o'clock for night one. I had no idea what to expect but decided whatever it was, it was going to include me. I was a little short on leggings so I opted for ratty blue jeans that in short order turned out to be a mistake as they were more binding than rabbit snare wire.

As I opened the door into the main hall I was greeted by a most impressive crowd of 39 people from all across the western end of the county. It was a mixed grouping, 38 women and me. I thought I was casting for a musical rendition of "Gumby."

I felt like Rooster Cogburn in True Grit. Undaunted and undiminished I decided if the "girls" would have me, I was in.

They did and I did.

The instructor was introduced, a talented Ms. Faye Chipchase, and the class began. I spent a good part of my initial lesson going, "What did she say" as the old ears were not tuning in real well.

I was struck by how much Yoga resembled "Relaxation Techniques" that I had been exposed to years ago while on course in Ottawa. My favourite part turned out to be the cooling down period where I got to lay down on the mat and just stretch. For a brief moment I wondered if it might be a "sleep-over."

About halfway through the session there were more moans and groans than a three-masted schooner crashing on a rocky shore. Actually, that is not true at all. I was impressed with how 39 people were led through a series of exercises, all trying with varying degrees of success to keep up, and there was not a sound. Just quiet. I guess that is one of the main objectives, relax, focus, get in touch with yourself. One part of me that I did manage to get in touch with was my toes. Weight loss and yoga re-introduced me to parts of my anatomy that I thought had fallen off years ago.

Well the session lasted nearly an hour and a half. It was pretty neat to see a group of people from 14 to 83, moving and swaying together and all still at it at the end.

Ms. Chipchase told me I did a great "Down Dog." It was probably just a bit of psychology to keep me at it but when you are sweating and your muscles are singing like a clothesline, you'll take any encouragement you can get.

Next week it will be me and the girls again. Good mental and physical health makes no gender distinction. I wonder if that applies to leggings?

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