

OPINION

The Okanagan Sunday, February 21, 2010

You are responsible for you

A close call. A second chance. Some people are given another attempt to increase their health, some are not.

When our daughter was born with Down Syndrome 21 years ago, amongst an array of other issues we apprise of, we were told that she had a heart condition. This condition could repair itself in time or perhaps not, so we needed to stay on top of it and work with our GP and pediatrician to do so.

We did all stay on top of it, and because of her strength and health her heart did heal itself. Funny, even though her grandfather had a heart attack at 55, and survived, it did not occur to us that my husband's heart was not apparently as healthy.

February is Heart and Stroke month, and our recent loss to a heart attack seemed as good a time as any to give all of us a little reminder.

We all need to stay on top of ourselves. After all, we are responsible for ourselves in most cases and are the only one who is with us for our entire lives. Certainly, it is advisable to work with your GP or specialist but also to learn and listen to what other information we can learn and share with others.

From my experience, our medical community is second to none in the Interior, but it is not totally their responsibility to look after your health; it is yours.

When there is any condition that can be passed on genetically, you should be aware of that and bring it to your doctors' attention so they can take their training and help you be responsible for you. There is a reason your insurance agent and doctor ask questions of your lifestyle and your family history; it is what makes you what you are; healthy or with health concerns. You and they are much better off to know what is going on in your body in order to plan for as healthy a life as possible.

Many children and adults with developmental disabilities have some genetic or precondition (such as our daughter), which are usually flagged by the medical system and monitored. There is nothing stopping you as a person with a disability or a family member or caregiver, to look into other med-



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Whose Challenge Is It Anyway?

more appealing.

With my husband dying of a heart attack eight weeks ago, many people have asked me what my advice and outlook is on health in general and living. Here it is: Look after yourself so you can also look after others. You are in charge of your own life in most cases, so be in charge with a balanced life of rest, exercise, food and water. Investigate your family history so you can be aware of any risks that may come from your past. Be careful of your environment. Do not smoke or be around smoke that will defiantly kill you.

Try to laugh really hard every day. Cry when you feel like it. Sing in the shower and as you carry on your day, inside your head or outside. Take advantage of where we live; it is safe, thanks to our RCMP, close to nature, and has exercise and outdoor recreation right outside our doors thanks to proximity and our city's planning. Take daily walks in your neighbourhoods. It gives you a chance to say hello to your neighbours; ones you know and ones you soon will.

Take on the day, every day. Eat as well as you can. Reduce your stress in any way possible, it is not good for you. If you need to talk to someone about something, do. Don't wait until you are boiling mad about whatever it is, just politely let them know how you are feeling and ask for help. Respect yourself, your family and friends, co-workers and neighbours and love our earth. Love daily. Work hard and have fun doing it, then it's not work. Balance, balance, balance. Live every day as if it is your last day."

Exercise and diet are a huge part of all of

and agree to the recommendations and follow them through. If not for yourself, how about for your family and friends? Your doctor should be part of your health team.

Although I exercise daily, there are a variety of reasons other than the obvious. One is that it allows me to relax and therefore, I can sleep. It allows me to be by myself or with my dogs and be at one with nature, no phone, no computer, no music, just the sound of my feet on the ground and my dogs trotting along alongside me. I don't even consider walking exercise, it is peacetime. The simple act of walking or hiking has gotten me through more trauma in my life than I care to admit. Most people can walk, and it has no cost.

Some disabilities do not allow you to walk or run. Maybe swimming could be an option at one of our wonderful recreation locations. Most of those also have a discounted pass for card carrying folks with a disability as further incentive. Special Olympics have many adaptive programs with swimming being one which our daughter and many others take great glee in as well as the social and health benefits.

The French paradox which came out a few decades ago, touted having two to four glasses of red wine a day along with a vegetable rich, olive oil Mediterranean style diet to help you live longer.

Here we live in the Okanagan which has some of the best wines in the world, incredible vegetables and fruits, help yourself. Come up with a diet you can afford and enjoy and stick to it. If you are heavy and want to lose weight, how about a positive competition with others who are losing weight. If you live with or eat with someone on a diet, why not join in on their reductions that meal and encourage them by not consuming something they can not.

With February being Heart and Stroke month, perhaps we could all think of some way which we could make our lives and therefore, those around us that much better, healthier and happier by taking charge or our own lives in this positive manner. You have a second chance, consider taking it. You and your family will love you for it.

Special thanks to all of you who have do-

are usually flagged by the medical system and monitored. There is nothing stopping you as a person with a disability or a family member or caregiver, to look into other medical situations, intolerances or allergies that could be relevant in one's life. From my experience, if you bring forth your findings to your doctor, as a team approach, they really appreciate your research into your family member's situation. Why not spend a bit of time reading books going on the Internet or attending a seminar that could make you or your child's life much better or be aware of any concerns? You are worth it.

One may liken it to having your car tuned up and providing the mechanic with information relevant to the automobile. The same way you as the owner of the car look after the car when the mechanic is not there, by filling it with gas, making sure it is not getting clogged up and gets a good run which may clean out the engine. You look after sufficient liquids allowing it to run properly. You may even wash the outside every now and again, which may not make it run better mechanically but it makes it feel and look

daily. Work hard and have fun doing it, then it's not work. Balance, balance, balance. Live every day as if it is your last day."

Exercise and diet are a huge part of all of our lifestyles. Drinking six glasses plus of water a day is an option no matter what your food budget is; in most cases it is free. Take advantage of that, we have delicious water in the Okanagan. Many of our friends have taken the passing of Jack as a lesson learned; keep it up. We have a second chance now to be preventative in our own lives with our own body and therefore, help those who love and care for us. We have a chance to look into our family history and to share that knowledge with those who went to school to look after human kind. We have a chance to get out there and walk, run, swim, cycle, rollerblade or roll our wheelchairs and not just the typical recommendation of three to five days a week; how about daily? If you need help getting out, ask someone for help.

We have a chance to listen to our doctor when they say we need to exercise more, eat a better diet or cut down on our intake. We have a second chance to do annual checkups

our own lives in this positive manner. You have a second chance, consider taking it. You and your family will love you for it.

Special thanks to all of you who have donated to the Jack Acres Bursary. Our goals are outlined on the up and coming website www.jackacres.com. We welcome you to visit it starting March.

Upcoming and current events:

Cool arts at the Kelowna Art Gallery is on now through March 2010.

Self advocates Kelowna meetings Parkinson rec centre on March 2, at 11:30 a.m.

Community Living B.C. Interior Council monthly meetings contact 250-712-3609, 250-549-5490.

Seminars: You, Me and CLBC, Feb. 28 and Caring on Empty, March 6. Contact CLBC 250-712-3609.

Allison McNeill is a mother of four, one of whom has a developmental disability, and step-mom to two. She has a communications company and is Kelowna's woman of the year. E-mail: info@misscommunicating.com.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:

Volunteer with pride

I'm currently in Vancouver volunteering for the 2010 Olympic Winter Games. I am at the Pacific Coliseum where we are hosting two events: figure skating and short track speed skating.

Just wanted to let everyone know volunteering is something everyone should try in their lifetime.

The majority of people volunteering at the Olympics are over the age of 30; you don't find many young people.

I am honoured to be one of few volunteers under the age of 25. I would like to encourage all of us young people to get more involved and do something for our community once in a while. One thing I've noticed over the past week is the amount of people that collect pins. It's basically the newest sport. I received a nice parcel of over 50 City of Kelowna pins and have been passing them out to people promoting our beautiful city.

Karlen Bidwell
Kelowna

Citizens have heart

With all the recent negative press about the apathy of Kelowna citizens, I would like to share a positive story.

On Wednesday, Feb. 17, I was driving down KLO Road, and noticed the traffic was stopped on the other side of the road.

I looked, and saw an elderly blind gentleman, standing in the middle of the road, frantically moving his white cane all around him. He was disoriented and visibly afraid and panicking. I then saw a 17-year old youth running towards him from the sidewalk with a big, friendly smile on her face, to go help the man get to the other side of the road.

So, Kelowna, fear not! Your good and faithful citizens are alive and well!

I found it quite appropriate that this act of kindness happened on Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent, which is a time where we are to focus on doing good to others.

Christine Pineault,
West Kelowna

Complaints need action

Your paper has recently published reports of speeding on Springfield Road. I wonder why the residents who live on Springfield don't do something about it?

All they would have to do is get a couple of neighbours together, mark off a distance of 200 feet and record the time it takes a speeding car to traverse the distance. For example, a time of 2.74 seconds is an average speed of 80 km/h.

One, of course, needs an accurate stopwatch that measures to a hundredth of a second and a camera that can capture the licence plate number of the car.

Write out a report of the time and place of the speeding, the time to travel the 200 feet, a picture of the car and have the observers witness the report and submit it to police for follow-up.

Too much trouble? If so then live with your current method of solving the problem.

Laird Stovel,
Kelowna

Say no to CD 21

The advocates of the CD 21 zone (the Milroy Plan), would have us believe that it would revitalize downtown Kelowna. Unfortunately, it would not.

It would undoubtedly bring some energy to the four-block area it deals with, but it would do nothing for the rest of downtown.

In fact the development emphasis on

those four blocks would probably marginalize the rest of downtown.

What is needed—and this should be obvious—is a comprehensive plan for the whole downtown district from Richter to the parks and the lake, and from Harvey to Bernard or the Queensway.

The very high buildings should be stepped back from City Park and the waterfront and Kerry Park and the former Royal Trust property should be preserved

from commercial structures.

The Ministry of Transportation is requiring changes to the Plan regarding Lawrence and Abbott Streets. This will require that the Plan be amended.

That will provide the opportunity to make other amendments to correct these glaring weaknesses.

Everyone wants a revitalized downtown. But let's do it right while we can.

K. Campbell, Kelowna