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Community Page

Arthritis not just a disease of the elderly

By **STEPHANIE THIESSEN**
The Champion

When it comes to arthritis, many of us picture an elderly person hunched over a cane. And for some sufferers, that's an accurate depiction.

But it doesn't tell the whole story. September is Arthritis Awareness Month, and with that comes a desire of volunteers like Audrea Lear-Costigan to help the general public understand better the many faces of this debilitating disease.

Education is one of the main focuses of the Arthritis Society, said Ms Lear-Costigan, chair of the Milton branch of the organization.

And the first thing she wants the public to know is arthritis isn't just a disease of the elderly. It can start as early as three years old.

"There are four million Canadians with arthritis," she said. "Thirty-one per cent are women, 19 per cent are men."

The remaining 50 per cent, she said, are children with juvenile arthritis. There are 100 forms of the disease.

Milton resident Marjorie Powys, 83, might look like your typical arthritis sufferer. But 50 odd years ago, when she was first diagnosed at the young age of 30, she surely didn't.

Ms Powys is just one of many sufferers who defy the myth that arthritis is a disease only the elderly get.

A long-time volunteer with the Arthritis Society, she was diagnosed with osteoarthritis. It started in her fingers and spread to other joints, requiring constant care and treatment.

Both knees replaced

A couple of years ago, Ms Powys had both her knees replaced. Without the surgery, she would've been confined to a wheelchair. Now she can walk with the help of a cane.

"The doctors did a wonderful job," she said, adding she's grateful for the research from which she's directly benefited.

Fundraising for research is another branch of the Arthritis Society. If you haven't seen them yet this month, you'll probably encounter volunteers from the Milton branch of the society canvassing for the organization.

Staying educated about the various treatment options has been very important to Ms Powys. It's one of the reasons the

Arthritis Society is so necessary, she said. Many sufferers put off seeking treatment because they're scared or don't want to admit there's a problem, she said. But that's not wise.

"They may put it off too long." Henry Bartlett is another arthritis sufferer who doesn't fit the stereotype. The Milton resident is a 52-year-old truck mechanic who was diagnosed with arthritis six years ago.

The disease has had a huge effect on his life. But, he said, with the proper medication and some adjustments to his lifestyle, he's been able to live his life to the fullest degree possible.

The disease initially showed up in one of his hips. At the time, he said, he was at a job where he was "being worked to death."

After taking a much-needed three-week vacation, he said he began to get concerned when the pain in his hip was still there. Since several family members had arthritis, he knew he needed to see a doctor.

He was sent to a specialist for x-rays and his suspicions were confirmed. "Through my doctor, I started a drug program, which immediately started to help."

He also changed employers. If it weren't for research, Mr. Bartlett said he doesn't know where he'd be.

"If it weren't for modern day pharmaceuticals, then I'd be in a really different boat. I certainly wouldn't be working full-time and my life wouldn't be so nice. There would've been transplants almost immediately. Life wouldn't be fun at all."

It's the medication that's allowed him to continue working, Mr. Bartlett said. And he's fortunate to have a flexible employer that's allowed him to work slightly shortened hours. He's also modified his job so he's not standing for too long, and is working on losing some weight, which will lessen the strain on his hips.

Mr. Bartlett said he knows the arthritis will get worse, and will eventually spread to the other hip and probably other places.

"Eventually, I'll get a hip transplant," he said, adding as it worsens he'll probably take advantage of services offered by the Arthritis Society, such as physiotherapy.

Something new that's being offered to Miltonians by the Arthritis Society in the near future is a self-management course, designed to give tips and information to help make life easier for arthritis sufferers.

For more information on the course, call (905) 632-9390.

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Arthritis sufferer Marjorie Powys takes a fall stroll with the aid of a walker.

Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

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Cogeco Cable Channel 14

Programming Schedule - Tuesday, September 27 - Monday, October 4, 2005

Tuesday, September 27	Wednesday, September 28	Thursday, September 29	Friday, September 30	Saturday, October 1	Sunday, October 2	Monday, October 3
Midnight - 5:00am Plugged In! EXTRA	Midnight - 5:00am Plugged In! EXTRA	Midnight - 5:00am Plugged In! EXTRA	Midnight - 5:00am Plugged In! EXTRA	Midnight - 5:00am Plugged In! EXTRA	Midnight - 5:00am Plugged In! EXTRA	Midnight - 5:00am Plugged In! EXTRA
5:00am - 8:00am TVCogeco Billboard & Weather Radio	5:00am - 8:00am TVCogeco Billboard & Weather Radio	5:00am - 8:00am TVCogeco Billboard & Weather Radio	5:00am - 8:00am TVCogeco Billboard & Weather Radio	5:00am - 8:00am TVCogeco Billboard & Weather Radio	5:00am - 8:00am TVCogeco Billboard & Weather Radio	5:00am - 8:00am TVCogeco Billboard & Weather Radio
8:00am - 12:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am - 1:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am - 12:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am - 1:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am - 11:00am Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am - 10:30am Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am - 1:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA
1:00pm SportsZONE Live (Replay)	1:00pm Halton Hills Council Sep 19 2005	12:00pm Swap Talk (Replay)	1:00pm Milton Ambassador Competition	12:00pm - 4:00pm TVC Sports: HS Football - Nelson vs R.Bateman	10:30am TVC Sports: HS Football - Nelson vs R.Bateman	1:00pm Milton Council Sep 26 2005
2:00am - 6:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	4:00am - 6:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	1:00pm Milton Council	2:00am - 6:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	4:00pm TVC Sports: OUA Football - McMaster vs Queens	12:30pm - 6:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	4:00pm - 6:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA
6:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	6:00pm - 8:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	4:00pm - 6:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	6:00pm - 9:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	7:00pm TVC Sports: OUA Football - McMaster vs Queens	6:00pm Milton Council Sep 26 2005	6:00pm - 8:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA
6:30pm Optimist TV Bingo (Live)	8:00pm Swap Talk (Live)	6:00pm - 9:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	9:00pm - Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA	9:00pm - Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA	9:00pm - Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00pm SportsZONE Live
7:30pm Plugged In! EXTRA	9:00pm Milton Council Sep 26 2005	9:00pm Milton Ambassador Competition				9:00pm - Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA
8:00pm Auto Experts (Live)		10:00pm - Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA				
9:00pm Halton Hills Council Sep 19 2005						