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# COMMUNITY

## Arthritis slowly sneaks up on its victims

Sufferers, volunteers looking to raise awareness during Arthritis Month

By Stephanie Thiessen  
 CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

The arrival of arthritis can't be pinpointed exactly. It sneaks up on its victims ever so slowly, until one day they realize they can't do simple, everyday tasks.

Just ask Andrea Rowbottom.

In her forties, Rowbottom began experiencing pain in her hands when she turned doorknobs and started her car. But it wasn't until she was 50 and in the hospital after a fall that

Rowbottom was diagnosed with arthritis.

"They identified that I had osteoporosis and osteo-arthritis in virtually every joint," said Rowbottom, who's known around town as the organizer of the annual



Andrea Rowbottom

On the Way to Bethlehem pageant at Country Heritage Park.

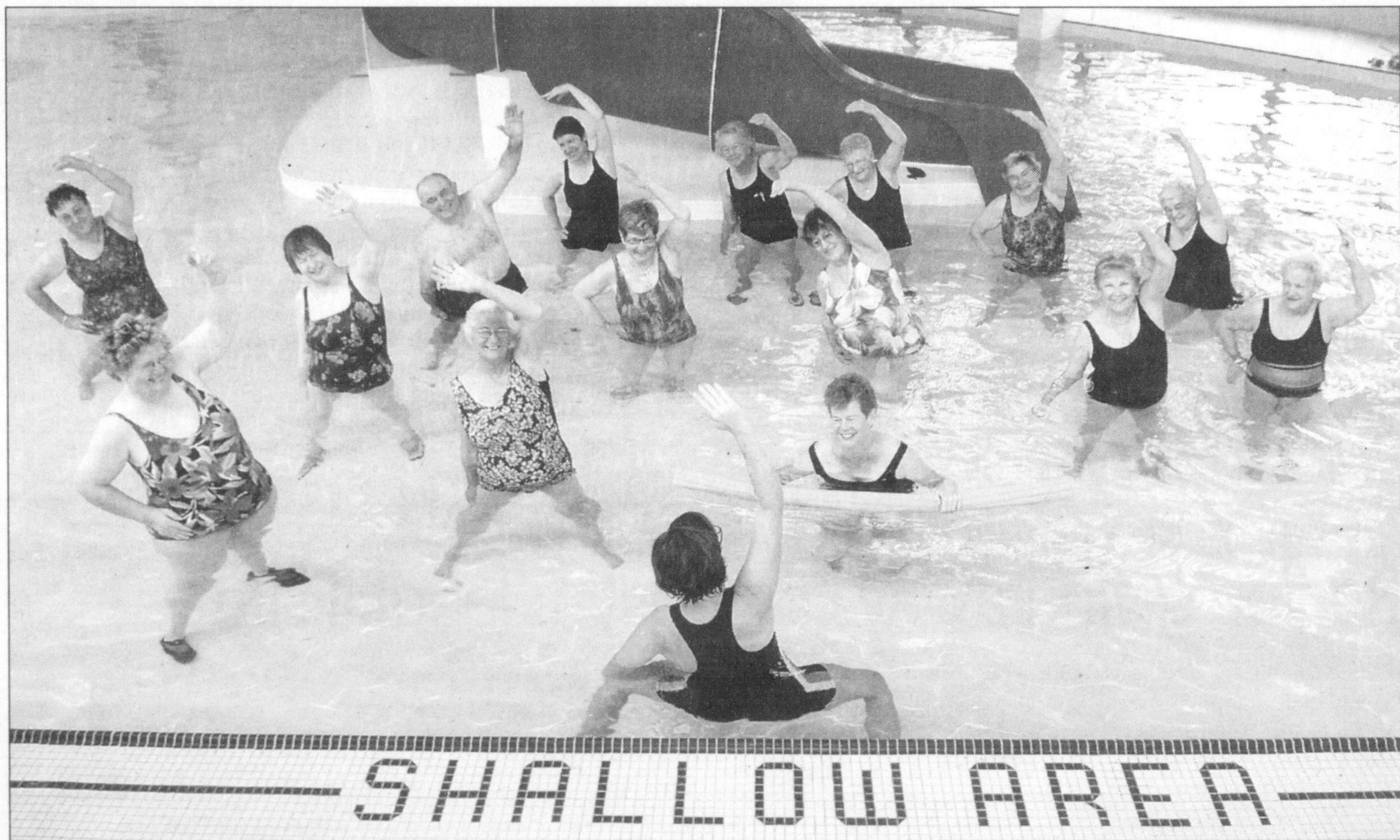
Wearing two hand braces, a leg brace and walking with a crutch, Rowbottom, 64, knows well the severity of the disease — although she's the first to say there are many worse off.

With September being Arthritis Awareness Month, the fiercely independent Rowbottom decided to do something she doesn't normally do — talk about the crippling disease and the pain she endures on a regular basis.

Arthritis isn't generally well understood, and in order for people to be motivated to give money toward research — canvassers for the Arthritis Society are collecting donations door to door this month — they have to first realize how debilitating the disease can be, she said.

"Research is huge. It's so important," she said from her living room.

According to the Arthritis Society, arthritis is an inflammation of the joints that consists of more than 100 different conditions ranging from relatively mild forms of ten-



Instructor Claire Dynan-Ford leads the Monday morning therapeutic pool program at Milton Leisure Centre. Ideal for arthritis sufferers, the 45-minute aqua program is so popular a Monday evening class has been added.

donitis to the more crippling rheumatoid arthritis.

It causes severe joint pain and affects people of all ages, including children. Nobody knows what causes arthritis, which affects four million Canadians.

Pain is something Rowbottom's well acquainted with. If she tries to turn a key in a lock, for example, she first experiences a sharp pain that shoots up her arm, she said.

"As soon as that jolt is over, it aches and aches until it settles down," she said.

Rowbottom isn't able to walk without a crutch, which she uses to help hold herself up. Standing in one spot is difficult, which makes even going to church difficult, she said.

Rowbottom was a teacher at E.C. Drury's School for the Deaf for more than 30 years. She continued teaching for a while after being diagnosed, but eventually had to give it up. "My hands simply couldn't sign anymore," she said.

Though teaching with arthritis was a challenge, it was a positive experience for her and the students, Rowbottom said.

"Perfect communication is a real plus, but to learn patience and understanding is a

real lesson too," she said.

As someone who doesn't find it easy to ask for help, living with arthritis is humbling, Rowbottom said.

Tasks she once took for granted are now a daily source of frustration.

"One thing that's really frustrating is using the little Interac key pads," she said, adding she sometimes needs help zipping up her coat.

Although there are effective medications for arthritis, Rowbottom hasn't had much luck with them, since they conflict with other medications she's taking for additional health problems.

Audrea Lear-Costigan, chair of the Milton Arthritis Society, said the face of arthritis is changing.

"Years ago, it used to be elderly people — 65 and up (suffering from arthritis). That isn't the case now," she said, explaining juvenile arthritis is rampant.

The Arthritis Society raises money for research and treatment, and runs a number of educational initiatives to make people more aware of what arthritis is and how it can be treated.

This year, the Arthritis Society is encouraging the public to take part in its Lifestyle

Makeover Challenge, a program designed to inform people living with osteo-arthritis and those who are at risk about the ways to prevent disability, reduce the chance of developing osteo-arthritis, and minimize its impact on day-to-day life.

This is done by adopting a healthy and active lifestyle through healthier food choices and making exercise part of a daily routine.

According to the Arthritis Society, moderate activity reduces disability caused by some forms of arthritis. Also, losing 10 pounds translates to a decrease in stress on the knees by 40 pounds.

One exercise many people with arthritis have found to be helpful are aquafit programs, in which exercises are done in warm water. "Warm water and the special exercises — the combination of the two give certain relief," Lear-Costigan said.

Aquafit classes are offered at the Milton Leisure Centre.

To take part in the Lifestyle Makeover Challenge, call the Arthritis Society at 1-800-321-1433 or visit [www.arthritis.ca/lifestyle](http://www.arthritis.ca/lifestyle).

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### Cogeco Cable Channel 14 Programming Schedule — Tuesday, September 19 - Monday, September 25, 2006

Tuesday, September 19	Wednesday, September 20	Thursday, September 21	Friday, September 22	Saturday, September 23	Sunday, September 24	Monday, September 25
8:00am - 6:30pm Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am - 1:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am - 1:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am - 1:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am - 11:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am - 10:30pm Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am - 1:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA
6:30pm Optimist TV Bingo (Live)	1:00pm Halton Hills Awards & Council (cc)	1:00pm Milton Council	1:00pm Halton Region Council	11:00am Niagara Wine Festival Parade (Live)	10:30am TVC Sports: Halton High School Sr. Football	1:00pm Halton Hills Awards & Council (cc)
7:30pm Plugged In! EXTRA	4:00pm - 7:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	4:00pm - 9:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	2:00pm - Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA	1:00pm - 4:00pm Plugged In! Extra	1:00am - 6:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	4:00pm - 8:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA
8:00pm Auto Experts (live)	7:30pm Simply Halton - Energy from Waste	9:00pm Halton Region Council		4:00pm TVC Sports: Halton High School Sr. Football	6:00pm Halton Hills Awards & Council (cc)	8:00pm SportsZONE Live
9:00pm Halton Hills Awards & Council (cc)	8:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	10:30pm - Midnight Plugged In! Extra		6:30pm - Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA	9:00pm - Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA	9:00pm Halton Healthcare Services
	9:00pm Milton Council				10:00pm - Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA	10:00pm - Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA