



Spring 2021 Newsletter

Chair's Report: It was November 2005, when Stephen Lewis spoke to an audience in Oakville about what he had observed during his five years as Special Envoy for AIDS in Africa. A group of women in the audience were deeply moved by his word. They said that something needed to be done and they came together to form Oomama.

Several of the founding members are still active members of Oomama, but many have passed the torch to newer members and have gone on to form GASP (*Grandmothers Act to Save the Planet*). The energy that they gave to Oomama and the *Grandmothers Campaign* is now focussed on the climate crisis that affects everyone but most acutely, the grandmothers in sub-Saharan Africa. I would like to honour those amazing women, especially Carole Holmes and Lorraine Green, co-chairs of GASP.

Since the fall, Oomama has been functioning with just one chair (me), breaking with tradition of having two co-chairs. Sandy Milakovic's term as co-chair was to end in June 2020 but she continued in the role for a few more months, until Beverly Carr generously offered to help Pat in various capacities. We discussed what Beverly's official title would be and decided it would be "Web Goddess."

While I miss having a co-chair to share the responsibilities with, it is evident that our members are using their talents and passion to keep Oomama vital and raising money for the Grandmothers Campaign. Most notably, we have stayed an active group, learning new technical skills and gathering regularly over Zoom to give each other emotional support and to conduct our various meetings. The same cannot be said for all Canadian grandmother groups. Due to the pandemic, about ¼ of previously existing groups are currently inactive. So, I applaud our membership for being flexible and open to new learning and committed to continuing to support our sister grandmothers in sub-Saharan Africa.



Our original members in 2006:
Left to right, *Back Row:* Mary Lynn Carter, Donna Hall-Clark, Judy Henderson, Julia Roles;
Middle: Sharleen Halstead, Kathy Margoese, Wendy Merson, Sherry Ardell, Bev Lefrancois, Kathy Mason; *Front:* Doreen Johnson, Carole Holmes, Lorraine Green

Many thanks to Rita Hutton for organizing an education session for our **OMG Meetings (3rd Tuesday of month at 9:30 am)** that aligns with our virtual Stride walk through the countries where SLF provides support. (See pages 2-4 for information about Stride and the excellent Stride blogs by Anne & Tina.)

A year ago, we would not have thought it possible or effective to give presentations over Zoom, but in fact the opposite has proven to be true. Since November, our Speakers/Education committee has made presentations to three organizations. (See Presentations Report on page 5)

Just like the grandmothers in Africa who we support and admire, Canadian grandmothers have proven to be resilient and adaptable.



I wish you all continued good mental and physical health as we ride this third, and hopefully last, wave of the pandemic. Be kind to yourselves. ~Pat Mckee

~Check out our new website: oomama.org

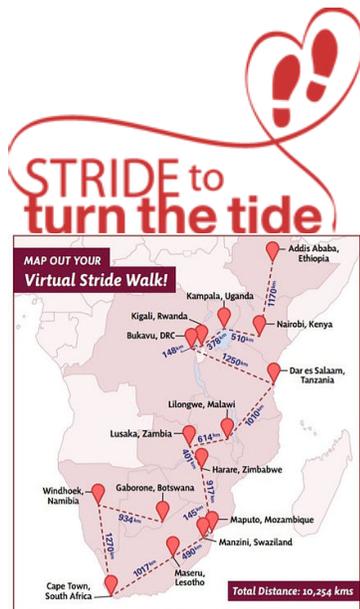


oomama.org
About Us includes "Our Story."
Marketplace, Presentations, and Fundraising sections are updated.
The Stride blog, by Anne and Tina, follows our journey through the countries we are striding through, as well as noting the projects SLF is supporting.
News & Advocacy is new.

Thank you to all the Oomamas who helped me develop the new site, especially Pat, Rita, Leslie, Wendy, Sandy, Lorraine, and our copy editor, Judy Pearsall. ~ Beverly



~ FUNdraising Report ~



From March 1st to June 30th, the **Halton/Peel Virtual Stride Team** (Oomama and Bronte Grans) are walking, exercising, doing yoga, gardening, biking, swimming, and collecting steps to virtually stride around sub-Saharan Africa, a trek of 10,254 kms to raise funds for the Stephen Lewis Foundation.

This year, we have 26 walkers, 19 of those walkers have committed to fundraising online. Not even two months in our team has so far raised **\$11,115**. So keep up the great work everyone.

As we do our virtual Stride, Anne MacKenzie -Thompson and Tina Agrell are blogging about what we are virtually seeing on our tour of sub-Saharan Africa, and giving us information about the SLF sponsored projects that we pass on our trip. We are also receiving information about these SLF projects from our Speakers/Education team at our monthly meetings. These blogs and speakers' events really help bring home who we are walking for and the importance of the money we raise for the Sub-Saharan grandmothers.

We are hoping to celebrate the conclusion of our Stride this year with an outdoor Barbeque lunch if the regulations around the pandemic will allow it in late summer. We will keep you posted. Meanwhile keep striding.

Donate to our Stride Halton-Peel Team here: oomama.org/stride2021



Marketplace

Marketplace: Masks Bags GoGreen Jewellery Miscellaneous

Not even the pandemic can keep down the **FUNdraising** crafty ladies who have worked hard to build up the wonderful array of merchandise for sale, to raise funds for the Stephen Lewis Foundation. Since last Spring, Oomama has sent **\$7,774.71** to the SLF, the amount we have made in the **Marketplace** (minus expenses). Given that we could hold no in-person events, such as our marketplaces or concerts, this is an incredible achievement!

The COVID pandemic has resulted in a steady request for our colourful masks which are definitely the most popular item being sold. However, we would like to remind our members and friends of Oomama that we have great gifts for sale in our **Marketplace**. Just click on www.oomama.org/marketplace and check out the wonderful jewellery, Go Green products, bags for every occasion and other miscellaneous products that make wonderful gifts for family and friends.



Leslie and Carolyn are sewing Stride masks from some of our extra Stride scarves and these are being given to our fundraising striders who have donated more than \$25 on their Stride page. Following a cross-country Grandmothers' campaign call, we offered to sell the Stride masks to any grandmother group across Canada who would like one. Masks have been sold to Rayanna's Hope for Africa; Stony Plain, AB; One World Grannies, Ottawa, ON; SAGA Grandmothers Group, Shediac, NB; Omas Siskona, Kitchener/Waterloo, ON; Canadian Grandmothers Group, Toronto, ON; and G.Moms, Port Perry, ON. What a fabulous response!!!!

For those of you who haven't bought a **mask** recently, they now come with nose pieces, polypropylene filters that fit in the mask, and adjustable ear bands! No more foggy glasses and completely washable but hang to dry. \$10 each or 3 for \$25



Sandy & Leslie

We would like to thank Beverly Carr for her hard work on our website and Marketplace which is now so easy to keep up-to-date with our changing products.

In February, Oomama held two virtual **Yoga** Sessions online with Bob Ryan generously donating his time for this fundraiser. We raised **\$535** for the SLF and as a bonus got in shape (somewhat!). Bob has said he would be willing to do another session in the fall, so stay tuned.

Finally, plans are still underway for our book event: **Barbara Dickson, the author of the *Bomb Girls*** will speak the afternoon of October 29. Mark it on your calendars and keep your fingers crossed that by that time we will be able to be together in person.

Stay safe and well, --Wendy Merson & Sandy Milakovic

Stride to Turn the Tide

Our poets have their hats on
The rhyming ones you know
To Blog our Stride thru Africa
SLF work to show

Botswana was our starting place
And then Namibia fair
We just went to South Africa
Cape Town bewitched us there

We've twelve more lands to visit
On our virtual enterprise
We hope the blog will motivate
Us all to exercise!

Addis Ababa is our goal
in June we should get there
En route we'll raise some money
Our sister Grans can share

Just when did our Strides all begin?
More than a decade ago
First one, do you remember?
Wasn't in December
Oh, for heaven sakes, No!
Grans don't like to hike through snow

On one bright and sunny day,
In the merry month of May
We met at a tent in a park
And walked before it got dark
Sponsors supported us: so much per mile
We walked, talked with a smile

Why do we do this? You ask
So African grans can do their task
Raising money and awareness
The campaign spread here and there
Across North America,
The UK and Australia

Grans are shaping Africa
HIV/AIDS: no replica
Now this COVID pandemic thing
Did a greater challenge bring
COVID hit Africa too
Hence, Grans' tasks harder to do

*~Anne MacKenzie Thompson
& Tina Agrell*

Learn about the countries we
are striding through and the
projects SLF is supporting.

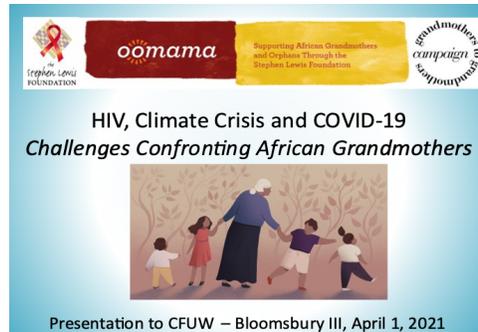
oomama.org/stride2021



~ Speakers/Education Report ~

Since November 2020, Oomama's Speakers/Education Committee have had 3 presentations: 2 to different CFUW groups (November 3, 2020 and April 1, 2021) and one to CARP (March 9, 2021). As always, the goals for these presentations are to increase our membership, as well as get donations, and sell items from our wonderful marketplace.

Pat, Bev and Rita developed the presentation using Zoom. We have received very good feedback from our audiences. This is introductory slide for the most current CFUW presentation.



The presentation was rehearsed during a Speakers/Education monthly meeting when members offered their well appreciated suggestions for changes. After each presentation, Bev, Pat and Rita reviewed and tweaked it for the following one. The presentation lasts about 45 minutes, allowing time at the end for a question period. The PowerPoint presentation includes the following videos: an interview with Stephen Lewis; a recent interview of Idah speaking from Zambia about the new challenges of COVID19 to the existing HIV pandemic; video created from Pat's photos of the last SLF gathering; and *The Disappearing*, a video from SLF.

Many thanks to Pat and her video editing expertise! On Zoom, videos tend to be hard to understand or be out of sync with the voice. She has added text and shortened them. Videos have greatly enhanced our PowerPoint presentations. We also show several slides of the Marketplace showcasing the products. Pat gives an entertaining 'shopping channel' sales pitch.

On our new website, the link to us from the home page is 'Presentations.' We wanted to highlight that because that is what we aim to do - give presentations. ~ Co-Chairs Rita Hutton and Beverly Carr



GRAN Grandmothers Advocacy Network

[Visit https://grandmothersadvocacy.org](https://grandmothersadvocacy.org)

A year living through COVID-19, we saw the curtain pulled back on another pandemic driven by ageism, age discrimination, neglect, and abuse of older persons. Across the globe, older persons have been subject to gross negligence, have been sequestered against their will, exposed to disease, denied access to health care, to essential services, and to social security. How did it come to this? While there are international treaties that protect the rights of other groups, the *International Declaration of Human Rights* does not have a word about age discrimination.

It's time for a UN convention on the rights of older people

#LessTalkingMoreDrafting



In 2045, there will be more older persons than children in the world. By 2055, a fifth of the world population will be older adults. In 2010, the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) established the *Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing* with a mandate to consider existing international framework of the human rights of older persons and identify possible gaps and how best to address them, including by considering the feasibility of further instruments and measures. Talks have been ongoing since 2011. In 2021, witness to the discrimination, abuse and neglect of older persons, the UN Secretary General advised the UN to expedite the adoption of a new instrument to protect the rights of older persons.

It's time to support efforts for the rights of older persons. Age with rights! Help older persons/grandmothers in Africa and around the world age with rights. Tell your Member of Parliament (MP) that Canada needs to support and lead the fight for a *Convention on the Rights of Older Persons*. Information to assist communications with your MP is available here...

<https://grandmothersadvocacy.org/issue/convention-rights-older-persons-crop>

~ Irene Clark

More from the Marketplace



Above are just a few of the many themed fabrics to make your gift personal, whatever the hobby -- nature, sports, food, gardening, travel, wildlife, art.

The fabric products are sewn by Leslie, Rita, Carolyn, and Zorica. Check out the **wine bags**, **jewellery bags**, **boxy bags**, **zippered bags**, **made to order bags**, and of course **masks!** The beautiful **beaded & netted jewellery** is made by Susan and Melanie. **Reusable wax covers** are by Sandy. **Jewellery repair** is another service from our crafty members. 'Miscellaneous' includes **games** to play with your grandchildren.

Please pass the Marketplace link to your friends and family. oomama.org



Editor: Beverly Carr, Copy Editor: Judy Pearsall



For those of you on Facebook: Remember to forward the Oomama posts to your friends. Just hit the 'share' button. This is a wonderful, easy way to get the word out to lots of people.