

## Editor's notes:

May 2008, Volume 23-8

Are dogs really man's best friend, and is laughter really the best medicine? These are just two titles out of many talks and lectures that are offered by the London Public Library throughout the year. And what's more, most of these are free! In addition, there are lots of other programs such as art exhibits, shows and concerts, author readings, and help sessions for using the computer or job searches. Not only are most of these free (the ones that do have a charge are very reasonable), but they are also geared for a wide range of age groups. These sessions are also held at various library branch locations.

These are a few ideas where one can still enjoy some family bonding without spending a bundle. One of our readers has contributed the following suggestion: If you prefer outdoor activities, you can contact The Thames Valley Trail Hikers Association or Upper Thames River Conservation Authority for trail maps.

If you have other suggestions for low-cost or free venues, please send them our way and we will share them in future newsletters.

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Looking forward to this month-- Here are a few dates that make this month so special:

**May Day, May 1** -- In olden times, this was a date to mark the transition from the colder to the warmer season and has been observed for centuries in various ways.

The most famous May Day tradition: putting up a May pole, originally a live tree brought to the village to commemorate the beginning of summer. Townspeople would also forage in the woods for greenery to decorate their homes.

Hundreds of years ago, May Day focused on fertility, but that aspect and the rather bawdy practices that went with it came under attack by the puritans in the 1600s.

Today, many European countries officially recognize the day as a worker's day and have designated it a legal holiday.

**Canadian Tulip Festival, May 1 - 18** -- This is the 56th anniversary of the festival which began in 1953 after the Dutch royal family gave 100,000 tulip bulbs to Canada in gratitude for sheltering the family during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands during World War II. Today, the city of Ottawa boasts beds with 3 million tulips and hosts more than half a million visitors when the flowers come into bloom.

**Kentucky Derby, May 2** -- The first jewel of the Triple Crown thoroughbred stakes is run at Churchill Downs in Louisville, Kentucky. The race is rich with history and tradition: The grand-

stand, distinct with its two spires atop the roof, was built in 1895. The Mint Julep, an ice drink consisting of bourbon, mint and sugar is the traditional beverage of the race. The University of Louisville band plays Stephen Foster's *My Old Kentucky Home* as the horses parade in front of the grandstand and everyone joins in the singing.

**Mother's Day, May 10** -- Observed the second Sunday of May. This year, get your mother something more than a generic card. Here are three ideas for a personal, thoughtful gift she'll treasure:

- **A photo album** -- Fill it with photos that mean something to her: pictures of your family, pets, and places you've lived, as well as quotations, ticket stubs, postcards, etc.

- **A tribute video** -- It doesn't have to be long or involved. Use your digital camera to record a sincere message. If you have the resources, mix in a montage of photos or her favourite songs.

- **A special class** -- Enroll her in a seminar on something she loves or has always wanted to do but has never taken the time. Do some research so it will be a really good fit. Give a gift that goes along with it: a sketch pad if you're signing her up for an art class, for example.

**Limerick Day, May 12** -- This day, which honours one of the verse forms indigenous to the English language, is observed on the birthday of English limerick writer, Edward Lear. Traditional limericks are five lines of rhyming verse such as:

*There was a young poet named Lear  
Who said, it is just as I fear  
Five lines are enough  
For this kind of stuff  
Make a limerick each day of the year.*

**Victoria Day, May 18** -- Canada celebrates this day on the Monday before May 25th every year in honour of Queen Victoria's birthday, May 24, 1819. It was first declared a holiday in 1845, eight years into her reign. After her death in 1901, the Canadian parliament made the day a national holiday. More informally, this long weekend serves as the start of cottage season.

**International Museums Day, May 18** -- Mark this day by visiting your local museum. Kids and grownups can have fun and learn something at the same time.

The National Capital area boasts six major national museums. These include: The Canadian Museum of Civilization, The Canadian War Museum, The Canadian Museum of Nature, The National Museum of Science and Technology, The Agricultural Museum, The National Aviation Museum.

## The mothers who raised us (virtually): a quiz

Match the TV mother with her words of wisdom:

1. **Marge Simpson**  
("The Simpsons")
2. **Clair Huxtable**  
("The Cosby Show")
3. **Marion Cunningham**  
("Happy Days")
4. **June Cleaver**  
("Leave it to Beaver")
5. **Laura Petrie**  
("The Dick Van Dyke Show")
6. **Lois Griffin**  
("Family Guy")
7. **Joyce Summers**  
("Buffy the Vampire Slayer")
8. **Carol Brady**  
("The Brady Bunch")

- a. "Once a boy always a boy."
- b. "I've been doing a lot of thinking about . . . where you're coming from, how to relate to you . . . and I've come to a very simple conclusion: I don't get it."
- c. "Six kids and no noise. That's what's the matter with that. I've never heard such a loud silence."
- d. "You should listen to your heart, and not the voices in your head."
- e. "Oh no, I'm not angry . . . I'm MAD!"
- f. "If you kids don't quiet down we're not going to McDonalds after church!"
- g. "Life would be so much more pleasant if we just had more closet space."
- h. "Let me put it this way: I have a happy, semi-well-adjusted husband who comes home and greets me with a smile and a kiss -- and I'd rather have that than all the money in the world."

**Answers:** 1d; 2e; 3g; 4a; 5h; 6f; 7b; 8c

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### Are we hard-wired to expect fair treatment?

An experiment with Capuchin monkeys conducted by two primatologists from Emory University did some research.

In an experiment, monkeys were trained to exchange a "token" -- a small rock -- for a piece of food. Once the monkeys were conditioned, they were paired up so that one monkey could watch another. Then a researcher would hand over a grape to one of the monkeys without signalling for the token. The other monkey, accustomed to giving up a token first, then refused to hand over its rock when the researcher signalled. "If he didn't have to give you a rock, why should I have to?" seemed to be the monkey's reaction, as the scientists saw it. Maybe the expectation of fair play runs deeper than we think.

### Panamania

Type 'retire in Panama' into Google and you will get tens of thousands of links. Panama has been considered one of the best places in the world to retire to for years. It is a safe, beautiful place and many Canadians are building winter homes there or are moving there to enjoy their retirement years.

Helix president Sieg Pedde visited Panama in 2005 for the first time and fell in love with the country. In 2006, he assembled a group of Canadian and Panamanian partners and began development of Roca Milagro, a residential community in the mountains of Panama near the Costa Rican border.

The Panamanian currency is called the Balboa and has a 1 - 1 relationship with the U.S. dollar. Our dollars go a long way in Panama. A full-time maid or gardener costs about 10 Balboas per day. Tired of cold winters? No more snow shovelling or monster heating bills to worry about in Panama.

If you enjoy the great outdoors, there is much to do: white-water rafting, canopy zip tours, bird-watching, eco tours, deep-sea fishing, hiking, horseback riding, If you prefer to relax after your hectic career years, there are wonderful restaurants and bars and many other Canadians, Americans and Europeans to meet with, not to mention the wonderful Panamanian people themselves.

There is more information, for anyone interested, in a separate enclosure with this Helix Courier Limited Messenger newsletter. Visit Roca Milagro at [www.rocamilagro.com](http://www.rocamilagro.com).



*Happy Mother's Day*