



NewsLETTER NouvelLES

Ontario Association of Library Technicians /
Association des bibliothécaires de l'Ontario



MESSAGE FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

VINCENT ELIT

Dear OALT/ABO members,

Welcome to our Fall/Winter 2020 issue of NewsLETTER/NouvelLES. Since our Spring issue, services have evolved within the library community, and our colleagues and students have been sharing their stories with us. This issue provides a look at the Association's Archives, a sneak peek at our 2021 Conference, as well as stories from LIT Students, and working from home at the Thorold Public Library. We also celebrate Liz Aldrey's lifetime membership.

Our 2021 Conference will be happening in mid-May, with volunteer opportunities available to assist our virtual conference. If you are interested,

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please reach out to our Conference Team at conference@oaltabo.on.ca.

I also encourage members to reach out to the Board of Directors, and other members via our discussion platforms (including: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and the discussion list).

On behalf of the Board of Directors Team, I would like to wish you and your family a wonderful Holiday Season and a Happy New Year.

– Vincent Elit

President, Board of Directors / Président, Conseil d'administration

EDITOR'S NOTE

What an unpredictable year it has been! Since our Summer 2020 Special Issue, there are still many changes happening in the library and information field as the world continues to adjust to a "new normal". I would like to give a big thank you to the LIT program students who volunteered to write articles and open up about their own experiences during this time while balancing school. Many thanks also to the Board for collaborating on and putting together another great newsletter. Happy Holidays everyone!

– Sarah, Internal Communications Coordinator

DISCLAIMER *The views and opinions expressed in NewsLETTER/NouvELLES are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the OALT/ABO Board of Directors.*

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MEET THE ARCHIVIST

Tiffany Ribeiro | OALT/ABO Archivist

OALT/ABO has existed for more than 47 years, with its founding meeting having been conducted in 1973. With years of information and records being circulated, a home for such documentation would need to be established. This is where the Archives comes in.

The Association's Archives stores hundreds of documents; many have yet to be digitized and discovered, while many others are being maintained by the Archivist. My name is Tiffany and I am the Archivist for OALT/ABO. I first started back in August of 2019 and have since been working on the collection. The duties of the Archivist are to "maintain a complete collection of OALT/ABO documents as detailed in Standing Rules and Orders of OALT/ABO" and to "maintain an inventory of the archival materials." In order to do so, many tasks need to be performed to ensure the proper maintenance and preservation of our materials.

Such documents are stored in a Google Drive as well as a physical hard drive for backup. These documents are not all born digital. The majority of them

are physical paper documents that are stored in boxes; yet to be scanned and uploaded. Our President, Vincent Elit, and our Treasurer, Lori O'Connor, have inherited these materials. They work together to ensure their preservation by scanning the documents and emailing them to me. We may work in different parts of Ontario, but this allows us to still work together.



After I receive the documents, I read through them and determine what exactly it is that I am looking at. Is it a letter, newsletter, invoice, or conference material? For those who may not know, the Google Drive does not allow you to add metadata. The only metadata that I can apply to ensure its ease of access and searchability is through file naming conventions. For example, if I am working with a past newsletter, I want to include important “bibliographic” information that will help with its discoverability, such as the date of release, type of document, and volume or issue numeration. With these factors, I can determine a naming convention, such as “2019 Newsletter Vol.1 No.2.” These naming conventions need to be recorded for ongoing use so that we may establish a controlled vocabulary. Where might these naming conventions be stored? Through a new resource called the Archiving Manual. Its creation is in the works as I continue to go through documents.

The preservation of these records and materials is so important. It allows us to maintain the memory of this Association and inform others of our heritage.

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

I will be presenting at this year’s OALT/ABO 2021 Conference. You can also send me an email at:
archives@oaltabo.on.ca.

WANT TO CONTRIBUTE?

The Archives cannot be complete without your valuable contributions. Do you have Conference swag sitting around or an old mug with our logo? Send me a photo, and I would be very excited to add it to our collection.



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY:

Are you looking to Volunteer with OALT/ABO?

Our Chapter Executives are a great way to get involved in OALT/ABO at a local chapter level. Our executive positions are President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer. No experience is needed just a willingness to volunteer and help out! The following regions are looking for volunteers to help build their executive:

- Toronto
- Halton-Peel
- Ottawa
- School

If you are in any of the above areas and want to know more, contact Jeka Dupont, (Chapter Coordinator) at:

chapter@oaltabo.on.ca

OALT/ABO 48TH

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

VIRTUAL NORTH

May 10 – 15, 2021

The Association began planning our 48th conference to travel to Sudbury but, due to the current pandemic and out of an abundance of caution, the decision was made to move our conference online. Although we cannot be together physically, we are still going to take you there to experience the Sudbury community in a virtual way. In times of a pandemic, isolation, and uncertainty, Virtual North aims to explore how our rapidly evolving virtual lives connects us and bring us closer together, no matter where we are in the province. Join us on an exciting adventure to travel to a Northern Ontario community, virtually.

Interested in attending?

To hear more about the conference and the sessions offered, follow us on social media, and visit our virtual booth at the OLA Superconference Expo, February 3-5, 2021.



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SESSION SPOTLIGHT

The following are just a small selection of some of the sessions we have planned for this year's conference:

Indigenous Matters: On First Nation Public Libraries

An introduction to Indigenous matters as they relate to librarianship. Information on the work being done, within the profession, to increase the status of Indigenous matters and First Nation Public Libraries. A session to share knowledge and resources, as they relate to the Original Peoples of Turtle Island.

Introduction to Astronomy

Participants will learn to read sky maps, and use a planisphere, become familiar with types of objects commonly observed in the night sky, constellations in the northern hemisphere sky, feel awe recognizing the size of our solar system/Milky Way /cosmos. This includes conversations about viewing with binoculars, common types of telescopes and the unaided eye.

Creative Approaches to Makerspaces

Wish your library had a makerspace, but don't have the capacity to staff one? Learn how the Kingston Frontenac Public Library launched their staff-less Create Space, provided public training with programming, and offered maker programming in shared community spaces.

LIBRARY & INFORMATION TECHNICIAN STUDENTS: Learning During A Pandemic

THE COVID WORLD INSIDE OF ME

Sarah Mills, Mohawk College

COVID-19 started in the year that was supposed to be *my* year.

I had just gotten back to Canada from overseas where I was planning on a few hundred things: travel, visiting old family and friends, starting a new job in a new city and going exploring.

I don't have to tell all of you how that turned out.

2020 became a very different year than I had planned, which meant that my well thought out plans basically fell apart.

However, the global pandemic, although certainly shocking and ultimately tragic, did not destroy my year. Upon reflection, COVID simply changed it.

There are many things I learned while in quarantine: how to clean my apartment from head to toe in under two hours, how to organize a day of nothing into doing something, how beautiful my neighborhood was, how to meditate, how much money I could get back for returning wine bottles, how to coexist in the same space with someone in a peaceful and quiet way and, most importantly, how to live with myself.

During quarantine, I had a lot of time to self-reflect. I got to know myself in a way I had never really been able to before. It was due to this self-reflection that I had the time to really think about all those plans I'd made before, and ultimately told myself that instead of regretting and lamenting them, I would make a new decision. I decided to go back to school, specifically Library Technician School.

School had always been in the cards, but the question had always been what I really



wanted to go back to school for. Libraries were always an important aspect of my life, but that came into sharp relief during quarantine. Not since I was a kid did I have so much time to read books. Even though I had never lost my love for reading, I had been too busy before to simply sit down and read a book in one sitting. But during quarantine, I slowly made my way through my bookshelf, reading books I'd always meant to get too, and rereading my favourites. Libraries themselves became an escape of sorts during the pandemic, a way to get books I didn't have access to. Not to mention that organization and sorting information soon became essential in my day-to-day life.

Fundamentally, library school seemed like not only a great fit for a future career, but a new direction, a way to take back my year.

I have no regrets about going back to school in these odd times. It has been challenging and very different from the school I remember, but ultimately I knew it was the right choice for me. There are parts of it I enjoy, because even though I regret not having a better way to connect with my fellow classmates, I can still appreciate the upside of a purely virtual world. Not having to go to specific classes at regimented times, gives me free time to finish work whenever is best for me. Having resources available online and accessible to me is convenient. Even

though the workload is similar to what I remember about school, I have never been so organized and motivated to finish, and never with so much time at my fingertips to get it done.

And perhaps, I owe that to the quarantine, because if I hadn't learned how to organize my days or make the most of my time within a strict COVID world, I wouldn't have been motivated to go back to school, or been as successful at it.

I know this is not a universal thought. Many people take my small regret of the inability to socialize on campus as a detrimental part of virtual learning. I certainly am saddened at missing those networking connections, but I have been to school before, and have had those connections in great depth. The goal for me was to go back to school, with ambition and motivation, to pull the best grades I could, and become excited on entering the world of libraries.

Indeed, my goal was to reclaim my year of missed opportunities, and turn it into something. I choose to look on the hopeful side of things, and I feel that in the end, I have even been able to reclaim myself.

LIT student experiences continues on the next page

Colleen Worobess, Mohawk College

One of the things I look forward to every year is winter camping in Algonquin Provincial Park. It's such a magical experience that I am often at a loss for words of how to describe it. Algonquin in winter is so placid, so serene, that upon entering the gates you are immediately liberated from the din of life's chaos. This past March my partner and I headed up to Algonquin for our annual winter pilgrimage, making our usual jokes that we hope there's a snowstorm and we're forced to stay longer. The air up there feels clean and crisp on your cheeks as large fluffy snowflakes fall onto them and you suddenly feel as if you've been transported into a picture postcard. Within the hushed lull, I feel genuinely content and take pleasure in the sounds of birds chirping, the snow crunching beneath my snowshoes and the eerie sounds of pops and pings caused by air pockets under the frozen lake.

Being surrounded by such awe-inspiring beauty and tranquility of this winter wonderland, it always pains us to pack up and get ready to go home. Just like any other year, we began packing our gear, and then came the news. Our government was shutting down the province due to a global pandemic caused by a virus called COVID-19. It was a Tuesday, and we had already planned on heading home, but we were in complete shock to find out that they were giving notice to all campers to vacate the campground the following day because they were shutting down all provincial parks



due to COVID-19. While packing we had talked about maybe stopping at a local grocery store instead of waiting until we got home, but we thought maybe we were overreacting. In hindsight I wish we had stopped because we were in shock once more when we got home and ventured to the grocery store and found shelf after shelf to be empty of basic staples like milk, bread and eggs. Not long after we arrived home, stores began implementing COVID-19 safety precautions such as only allowing so many people in the store at a time, staying 6 feet apart from other people and making masks mandatory. I just sat back and wondered how I went from snowshoeing to feeling like I was inside of a sci-fi movie. It was all so surreal.

Because I was registered in an online LIT program offered through Mohawk College, I didn't fully comprehend the fact that COVID-19 would, and still does,

have an impact on my education. I figured that because the course was already online that nothing would change, but I was quite wrong. The first way I noticed that COVID-19 had an impact on my education was in the first few weeks of school and I noticed that there were several assignments that required you to go into a library. I began to panic because I live in a rural area and only 2 of our 14 branches were open and with limited hours, which would make it difficult to complete assignments. The interior of the library has been reconfigured to prevent people from getting too close to one another and to prevent people from lingering. Browsing is permitted but it made me feel guilty to do so because every single item that you touch must then be placed on a cart to be quarantined. Every time you pick up a book to read the back cover to decide if you want it now has to be quarantined if you choose not to borrow it. This means that it is now temporarily unavailable to other library users and it creates more work for library staff. Hanging around the library to gather information to complete assignments was no longer practical and actually stressed me out.

This led me to think about one of my biggest fears. What happens if I am not able to do my placement because of COVID-19? No amount of virtual or classroom learning can prepare you for a job better than on-the-job training. I worry constantly that because only 2 of our branches are open with limited staff, that they may not allow any student placements during COVID-19. Under normal circumstances I wouldn't hesitate to seek a placement in a surrounding municipality, even if it meant

having an hour commute. But a global pandemic shifts one's perspectives greatly. Driving to a bigger city could potentially put me in a COVID-19 hotspot and therefore put myself and my family at risk. I would sacrifice a lot for my schooling, but my family's health is not one of them.

Overall, I would say that the biggest impact COVID-19 has had on my education would have to be how it affects my mental health. I absolutely love the LIT program, but there's no doubt that it takes a lot of time and concentration. But it is very difficult to focus when you worry about feeding your family when 8 months into the pandemic you still see empty shelves at the grocery store. It is difficult to focus when you not only worry about getting a full hands-on experience of a placement at a library, but you also worry that if the pandemic goes on longer than expected that you may not be able to find a job once you graduate. It is difficult to focus when you haven't hugged your parents in 8 months and you worry that you may not get to celebrate Christmas with them and you worry about their mental health as well.

As a mature student I have been around the block and have lived through and survived many things, both positive and negative. Because I hadn't yet registered for school when COVID-19 started, I did have the option of choosing another program or not going back to school at all, but the LIT

program was where my heart was and I wasn't going to let anything get in my way, not even a global pandemic. So, I will plug away and do my best and make do with what's available because there are many people out there that have been impacted by COVID-19 in a more serious way than I have. I am very fortunate to have my health, to live in an area that has hardly any COVID-19 cases and to be blessed with a partner who fully supports my decision to go back to school and take the LIT program.

BEANS, BOOKS & REFLECTIONS DURING COVID-19

Crystal Donohue, Confederation College

It's complicated, but I'm thankful to be a student during COVID-19. I also hold my peers who are on this journey with me in the highest esteem because there were moments when it truly felt like I was studying while battles raged nearby. The complex emotions surrounded my isolated heart while I struggled to concentrate on schoolwork instead of my supply of beans. These are dramatic sentences to emphasize those few quiet, dramatic moments from last semester. All of the students who are attending classes from all levels of education are now warriors in the pursuit of understanding. They are the quiet, unsung soldiers who are preserving what is good while so many historical events are occurring all over the world.

The complex changes that are happening inside of these hearts can be studied for generations long after COVID-19 becomes another page in humanity's book of history.

COVID-19 has revved up the need for self-reflection in all of us. After a lifetime, self-reflection becomes the conversation you have with yourself. As with any conversation, this occurs in a myriad of situations, requires the same variety of deliberation, and serves an endless number of benefits. A healthy inner dialogue becomes a check-in with how your inner world is doing. It can be developed to become a self-reflexive skill which is needed in jobs such as teaching, counselling or social work.

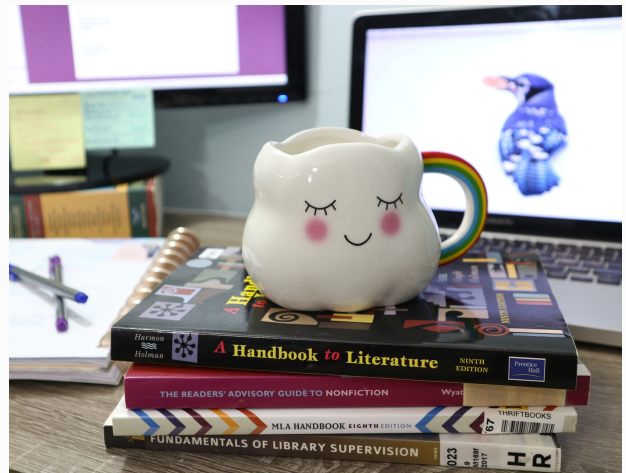


Photo courtesy of Crystal Donohue

The stresses of 2020 have certainly affected everyone, students included. This type of stress has forced me to look more critically at humanity to understand why my Earthly peers are coping in the ways they are. Stress tends to bring out growth and change. All of this finally brings me to being a

student during this stressful time of uncertainty and change for the better.

An unexpected benefit of returning to school is the new opportunity for self-reflection. I've always enjoyed reflection because I adore philosophical journeys.

Going into the LIT program, I expected to learn about information and how to organize it. This promise was enough to get me to commit to this program. I applied in February 2020 for classes to begin May 12. We all know what happened in March. I topped up my dried rice and bean supply; decided to let my husband and I run the risk of no toilet paper. Being raised in a low-income household, coffee filters have always gotten me through - and we had plenty of those. Initially, I decided to try and assist those on social media with coordinating resources. It also seemed like a great chance to get started on developing my resources sharing skills. I shared a few resources on Instagram, but mainly focused on local needs. Once a local grassroots organization, which has been responsible for feeding the locals for decades, got themselves organized, I stepped back because they had everything under control. I'm still amazed at how quickly local organizations got themselves coordinated. So, I shifted my energies towards offering to listen to others who needed someone. Occasionally, I stayed on Facebook all night just to be there. Sometimes, I still keep my lights on at night because I'm sure it brings comfort to those who are awake.

To get a head start for school, I decided to get a community library card from my college to borrow a stack of program related books. This was a great decision! The books gave me a head start for understanding the library field better. They were invaluable resources for completing my homework assignments.



Photo courtesy of Crystal Donohue

These early days swung between a love of learning with genuine concern for the increasing severity of the pandemic. The events that followed ever since brought up this panic and concern all over again. My hope is still that we'll come out of this as a better society. I wave more often at strangers on the street, regarding them with my most genuine customer service skills. I threw myself wholeheartedly into my schoolwork. Most of all, I began to see the connections between my teaching experience and the library industry. These led me towards developing a new blog idea that is called 021toZA. Essentially, it's the connection between the Dewey Decimal call number for Library Relationships and the LCC's call

number for Bibliographies. It represents the growth of a young learner towards higher education in the etymological sense of the word and the importance of communities that this requires. Of course, community can include people or books.

One of the biggest struggles was the nagging question, is it right to be in school when so many are out there facing the effects of this pandemic? What always brought me back to yes, is self-reflection. These same stresses affected my younger days in school. During the 2000's, I was surrounded by concern for the Indigenous people facing poverty, the suicide epidemic and addictions. To me, studying during the pandemic brings up many of these same emotions. But, one thing the Ojibwa told me back then was, seeing growth brings hope.

Please remember, no matter what happens, learning, curiosity, information-seeking, and personal development will always be necessary skills, even if they don't seem to be immediately useful. I'm incredibly thankful to have found the library industry now; when the call for information, information literacy and service to others is becoming louder. Love what you do. It's worth so much.

WORKING FROM HOME

Sheryl Davis, Thorold Public Library

Thorold Public Library is a small local library in the city of Thorold, a city of 18,000 people. Despite its vital role in the Welland Canal, most people outside of the Niagara Region are unaware of the city's existence. They are more familiar with its larger neighbours, St. Catharines and Niagara Falls. The library staff numbers thirteen employees, including pages and casuals.

During the pandemic lockdown that began in March 2020, Thorold Public Library's eight permanent employees worked from home on special projects. The local history collection consists mainly of scrapbooks, newspapers, family papers, and Thorold property history cards. Staff were assigned specific times

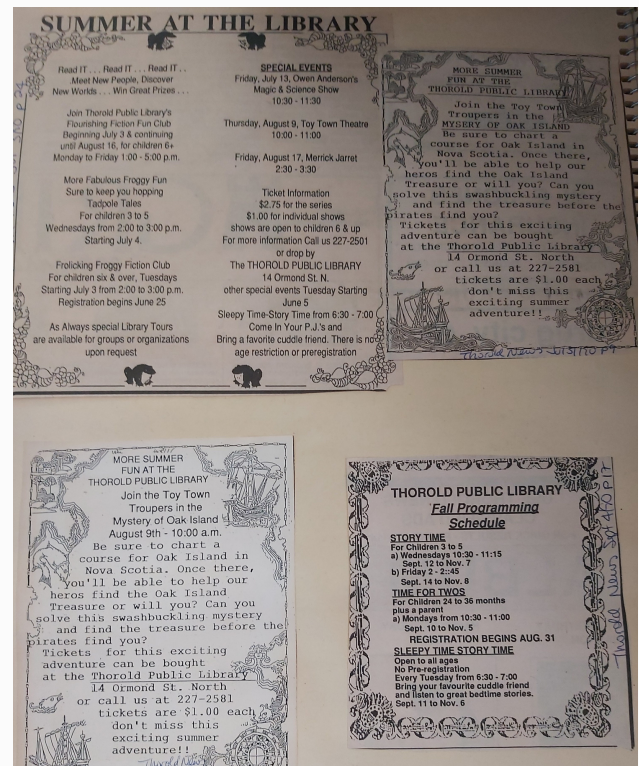


Photo courtesy of Sheryl Davis

to go into the building and retrieve boxes of material to take home. We indexed all of the scrapbooks, the property cards, and one of the newspapers. The scrapbooks alone were 2,739 entries! This was a delicate process as some of the scrapbooks were falling apart, as you can see from the photos.

Our chief librarian, with the support of the library board, did everything in her power to ensure her staff stayed employed in this time. These were not make-work projects. They were meaningful additions to our collections. Indexing and posting this information online has proved valuable for those family researchers from out of town. They do not need to travel to Thorold to retrieve the information as it's available on the library website. When everyone is doing their best to avoid human contact, this is most helpful.

Our Public Services Librarian created an interactive virtual library on Facebook. Book clubs, social media and even garden clubs were held online. Our programmer recorded fun story time videos despite her glitchy rural home internet. Between the two of them, they kept services active during the lockdown. They continue to offer outstanding virtual and in-person service to our patrons.

Working from home had a few perks besides the short commute to my desk. I found I was more productive in my workday with fewer interruptions.

Although, as photos of my volunteers illustrate, the day was not without distractions. Yoda is a rescued Quaker parakeet who is very feet-on. He loves walking across the keys. Fortunately, I have another keyboard that is primary to ensure no work was lost.



Photo of Yoda on a laptop, courtesy of Sheryl Davis

We were able to complete our special projects before we were allowed back in the building as part of phase one to offer curbside service. Staff had to be flexible about their tasks as we were limited by the province as to what we could do inside the library. Everyone pitched in to make the transition to curbside service as streamlined as possible. Being focused on that one goal, we coalesced as a team. By the time we returned to full service in October, with all of the staff back on-site, we were comfortable with all of the COVID-19 protocols and our roles in the new normal. It's far from over, but I feel confident our little library will continue to handle it well.



LIFETIME MEMBER: LIZ ALDRY

By Doug Willford

Liz and I have known each other since childhood, having grown up together. Our parents were close friends, we attended the same schools, we took the Library Technician program at Niagara College in Welland, and both worked in college libraries after graduation. Following graduation from the LT program in 1971, Liz took a position with St. Joseph's School of Nursing and later that year when the Nursing Schools were amalgamated into the community college system, Liz was transferred to Mohawk College School of Health Sciences. She worked there for 34 years, retiring in 2005. Her last location worked was the Mohawk/McMaster Institute of Applied Health Sciences on the McMaster University grounds.



Andrew Porteous and Liz Aldrey in Sudbury, 1983.

Photo courtesy of Liz Aldrey

Over the years, Liz has received the following awards: OALT/ABO President's Award of Excellence (1979), Mohawk College President's Award of Excellence (1989), and the Mohawk College Continuing Education Health Sciences Award of Excellence (1994). She is also a Lifetime honorary member of the Hamilton Bay Sailing Club.

Liz is one of the founding members of OALT/ABO, having attended the initial meeting at Humber College back in October 1973 where a group of interested individuals held a meeting to discuss the formation of an Ontario-based LT association. At the founding meeting, Liz served as the recording secretary. She was also involved with the association's first constitution where brainstorming sessions were held in Schreiber, Ontario (near Thunder Bay) and in Ottawa. Liz was also involved with discussions of the vision for OALT/ABO.

Over the subsequent years, Liz has been involved with the association both at the Provincial and the Regional level including: Regional Director, Regional President, Treasurer, Conference Co-Chair, Conference Treasurer, and assisting with the planning of workshops and entertainment. She was also involved in some Provincial committees, including the writing of criteria for the President's Award. Liz was involved with the Niagara Regional Chapter which was later renamed LOHANIA with the amalgamation of the London, Hamilton and Niagara Chapters.

She also represents OALT/ABO on the Mohawk College Library & Information Technician Records and Information Management Libraries and Digital Technologies committee.



Photo courtesy of Liz Aldrey

OALT/ABO members in Thunder Bay, 1982. (Liz Aldrey is third from the left).

Outside the Library field, Liz is involved with other committees: Niagara College Alumni Council, Director and Newsletter Editor for the Retirees Association of Mohawk College, Director on the Wainfleet Historical Society, Photographer, Facebook Administrator and Website contributor for the Wainfleet Agricultural Society.



Liz Aldrey

Photo courtesy of Liz Aldrey

In what spare time she has, Liz enjoys spending time with friends and family members, participating in leisure activities, especially sailing, curling and photography, and finds time to assist with local charitable organizations.

Please join us in congratulating and thanking Liz on her years of dedicated service to OALT / ABO!



Do you have a project you've been working on? Want to share your story? Email internal@oaltabo.on.ca to be featured in our next newsletter!