# Third Age Barrie

*Left to right: Pat Masfield, Louise Pope and Terry MacMillan*

I was first introduced to Third Age-Barrie and the concept of Third Age-Learning in the spring of 2018. I had an invitation to listen to the City of Barrie's Mayor, Jeff Lehman, speak on the Sustainability of Urban Sprawl. As someone who loves learning, I jumped at the opportunity. What I encountered that day at Grace United Church surprised and inspired me!!

My surprise and inspiration was not simply because Mayor Lehman is a great orator, my surprise and inspiration stemmed from the fact that this presentation was a sold-out affair, with 250 people over the age of 55 in attendance.

That afternoon I listened to Mayor Lehman discuss issues facing suburban sustainability, and I heard Anne Golden, Director, Ryerson City Building Institute, discuss the many social and economic challenges faced by Canadian cities. I enjoyed both speakers, but I was truly captivated by the audience surrounding me. The church pews in Grace United Church that day were packed with life-long learners who listened intently, respectfully questioned the material and enthusiastically debated with the presenters and each other. It was thrilling!

Just what had I stumbled upon? I had never heard of Third Age-Barrie or Third Age Learning for that matter. Originating in France in the early 1970's, the term "Third Age" was created to reference the period of one's life following childhood learning and middle age working, when one is free to explore interests and activities that please them.

The Third Age Learning Movement came to Quebec in 1975. Now in 2019, there are close to 100 Third Age Learning Groups across Canada including Third Age-Barrie, Georgian Triangle Third Age Learning out of Collingwood, and Third Age Lakehead out of Orillia.

To learn more, I met with Louise Pope and Pat Mansfield. Louise and Pat shared that together with their friend Terry MacMillan, the long-time friends, passionate learners, and long-time residents of Simcoe County, helped to create what we now know is Third Age Barrie. Upon retirement, the friends realized that people they knew in larger communities, like Toronto, were participating in life-long learning events and were really enjoying themselves. Inspired, the three friends decided to work together to bring something similar to Barrie, with the goal of having their first Third Age learning experience in the Fall of 2014.

They operated with a shoestring budget and a vision of what they wanted to accomplish, but without a fulsome understanding of what they were truly getting themselves into. Pat says, "We didn't know what we didn't know!" and that naiveté as she calls it, helped them to scramble together a world class learning opportunity in under six months. Something they now take a year or more to produce.

That inaugural Third Age Barrie series was a sold out affair, led by Dr. Larry Black, Dr. Michael Johns, and Alanda Theriault, looking at geo-politics and The Changing World Order.

They sold out that first learning event and have sold out many more since. Louise, Pat and Terry are very pleased that others in the community are as keen to continue learning as they are. They aspire to challenge, invigorate and engage community members with their wide ranging topics.

They have tackled topics of terrorism, truth and reconciliation, Alzheimer's disease, feminism, and much more.

Third Age-Barrie has now evolved into a not-for profit organization with a volunteer board made up of retirees who are excited about life, learning and the opportunity to be vibrant, engaged contributors to their community. The Third Age Barrie lectures come together with a lot of help and support from volunteers and partners, such as Grace United Church, who provide the venue as well as the audio-visual equipment.

The Barrie Chapter of Grandmothers and Grand-others is also an important partner group providing refreshments and parking assistance for the lectures, with donations from the refreshments going to the Stephen Lewis Foundation. Third Age-Barrie operates with the philosophy that people who never stop learning are healthier and happier, and as such, they strive to keep their lectures as accessible and affordable as possible.

What's up next for Third Age Barrie? If you haven't already experienced a Third Age Barrie lecture, you will want to come out to one or both of the lectures in November! On November 5th 2019 Joni Mitchell's Music and Painting will be discussed. Mr. Tom Gerry will explore the themes of journey, love and nature in Joni Mitchell's music and art work.

On November 12th 2019 Dr. Mike Daley will present The Beatles and their World by tracking their musical development, focusing on their music but also considering how recording techniques, and the culture of the 1960's impacted their music.

For more information on these lectures or to purchase tickets, please go to the Third Age Barrie Website at: https://www.thirdage-barrie.ca/

If you or someone you know, would like to share a Seniors Spotlight or a story about someone in Simcoe County that is working to create an Age-Friendly Community, please contact Cheryl Dillon, Accessibility and Diversity Advisor, at Cheryl.Dillon@barrie.ca