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There is a happily retired after all

Nepean women seek to debunk myths about retirement

May 24, 2009

BY JENNIFER MCINTOSH



Julie Chahal said the bubbles pictured on the front cover of the book Happily Retired...What Works What Doesn't represent the freedom she feels not having to plan her life around a paycheque. Jennifer McIntosh, This Week

Those still stuck in the daily grind fondly fantasizing about days on the beach and trips around the world will be surprised by Julie Chahal and Linda Lucas' book, Happily Retired: What Works...What Doesn't.

"A lot of people see retirement as one long work holiday," Chahal said. "But like dessert with no main course it starts to get old after awhile."

The opening of the book describes the stages of retiring—taking time to pause, cleaning house, getting down to busyness and big books and big projects.

Chahal said the stages are a part of what every retiree faces as they try to redefine their world without work.

"It's like those jugglers that have the chainsaw and everything else, once you take the chainsaw away they lose balance," she said.

Both women are far from what traditionalists would call retired. They both run consulting firms that use their expertise honed from years in the career world — expertise Chahal says helped them in their work on the book. Chahal worked with the federal public service on management techniques. She said her skills in project management help get the duo's self-published work off the ground.

"Linda's skill working with words really helped in the writing process," she said.

Lucas received a "buy out" from Algonquin College — where she worked in the resource centre — in her early 50s and tried out retirement then. When she found it didn't fit her, she launched MKR Consulting, which provides help for her

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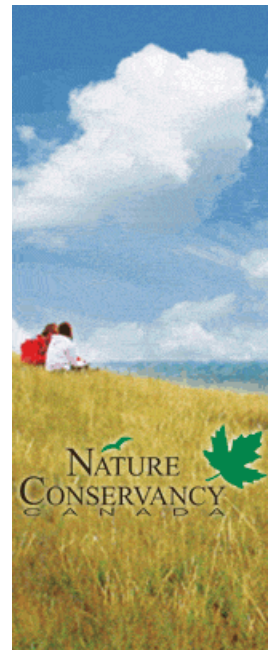
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"I consider myself something of a 'serial' retiree, since I left a full-time job for consulting several years ago," Lucas said. "When you make a break with a workplace there is often an initial identity crisis. I had to handle that crisis twice. Many of us are very tied up in our work, and retiring means shifting gears and searching out other sources of engagement and challenge in our lives."

Chahal runs Polygon Consulting with her husband Nash and provides help with management techniques and project planning to small and medium sized businesses.

"I know there are a lot of people who would say we are not retired," Chahal said. "But all it is is a freedom where your life is not run by how you make a paycheque."

Some of Chahal's most cherished time is the work she does on a volunteer basis for Canadian Executive Service Organization (CESO).

For CESO, Chahal has travelled to Iqaluit, NU and Jamaica to train people for fast track management and project planning.

"I love my job," she said. "And I don't plan my life around a paycheque, so I am free."

In fact, freedom is a constant theme throughout the short novel. The cover art of bubbles was chosen because Chahal feels they represent the freedom of not being tied down to an idea.

"The point is, not to get hung up on what you think retirement is supposed to be," she said

The two authors encourage the reader to look past the traditional views of retirement to the possibilities that lay beyond.

The official book launch will be held May 27 at 7 p.m. in the Chambers at Ben Franklin Place 100 Centrepointe Dr. The event is co-sponsored by the Ottawa Public Library.

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