



THE NEWSLETTER

The PROBUS Club of Simcoe & District
Meets second Tuesday of each month at St. James United Church hall



Christmas lunch

**FRIDAY NOON, DEC. 15, 2023,
Hi-Way Restaurant, 63 Queensway West, Simcoe.
Members, spouses and guests welcome!**

Order individual meals from the menu.

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Review of Nov. 14, 2023, meeting:

Former President **Frank Brock** called the meeting to order at 10 a.m. and welcomed 16 members. **Brian Cook** led the singing of O Canada.

PROBUS business:

Finances: **Treasurer Dave Montross** said our finances are doing well. **Dave** has printed new name tags with larger lettering.

Program: **Gerald Sheppard** asked for suggestions for speakers.

Who-Am-I: **Tom Vandertuin** is lining up Who-Am-I presentations.

Guest speaker: Bernie Solymar, Nature's Calling, Environmental Education:

Bernie Solymar is the founder, executive director and treasurer of Nature's Calling, a not-for-profit charity that provides environmental education for children. Bernie also is general manager of the Berry Growers of Ontario and president of the Norfolk Field Naturalists.

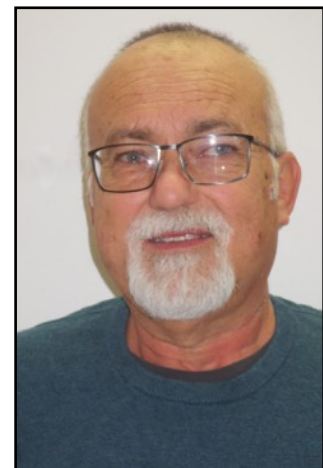
Bernie is a biologist. Nature and the outdoors are his primary love. Twelve years ago he founded Nature's Calling to connect youth and families with nature and foster a strong environmental ethic through education and activities that benefit the local environment.

North American kids spend as little as 30 minutes a day in unstructured play outdoors. Meanwhile, they spend 45 to 60 hours a week in front of their cellphones and other devices.

Studies show people who spend more time outdoors tend to be healthier and happier.

Being outdoors encourages physical activity, healthy development and overall well-being.

Playing outdoors builds self-confidence and a sense of adventure.



Bernie Solymar

Regular exposure to nature enhances creativity, focus and problem-solving abilities.

Children who participate in structured outdoor activities, such as camps and hikes, are more social, co-operate more and have a higher sense of self-esteem.

Children who spend time outdoors are less prone to being overweight.

Children with ADHD concentrate better after a walk in the woods and regular exposure to nature reduces the severity of the condition.

Nature's Calling organizes forest schools, school programming, outdoor day camps, festivals and outdoor theatres, family nature clubs and summer camps. Its funding comes from fees, grants and fundraising. The group has held events at several locations. Currently, it has an eye on buying property for its forest school.

Gerald Sheppard introduced **Bernie** and **Zeke Gulabsingh** thanked him.

Who Am I: Brian Cook

Brian Cook was born on May 1, 1938, in a thatched cottage in the village of Cold Ash near Newbury, Berkshire, England. He was born with a cleft lip and palate. He had 13 surgeries before he was 11. As he grew up, he had speech therapy and overcame being self-conscious.



Brian Cook

At school, **Brian** became a keen chess player and captain of his school's chess team, which helped build his self-confidence. Also at school, **Brian** developed an interest in politics.

When he was 13, a local farmer hired **Brian** to deliver milk in the evenings by bicycle. Later, he did the morning route with horse and cart, first with the farmer and then alone. Eventually, **Brian** got a job in the science lab at a boys' private school and later in the medical lab at the Atomic Energy Research Establishment in Harwell. He got on-the-job training and classes at Oxford and qualified as a medical technologist.

At age 19, **Brian** was ordered to report to the Royal Army Medical Corps for three months of basic training. The rest of his two years of national service was spent back at Harwell. One day before his 25th birthday, **Brian** took ship for Canada and a laboratory job at a hospital in Galt (Cambridge), Ontario. Here he met his wife, **Marion**.

This is all the time **Brian** had to tell his story. Here is the rest of his Who-Am-I.

Brian worked at Norfolk General Hospital for 25 years, retiring in 1996.

In 1973, **Brian** helped establish a branch of Big Brothers in Haldimand-Norfolk. Around the same time, he helped start minor soccer in Simcoe. For years he coached and refereed soccer. He and **Marion** joined St. Paul's Presbyterian Church. Brian sang in the choir and with other groups.

Marion and **Brian** have two sons. **Bruce** is a lawyer in Hamilton. He and his wife have a son and daughter. **Colin** is a golf pro. He and his wife live in Brantford.

Brian joined our Probus Club in 2000. He is a past president and did a great job arranging speakers for several years.

Thank you, **Brian**, for telling your story.

Farewell, Mike Kite:

Mike Kite passed away on Nov. 14. Our condolences go to his wife, Phyllis, and family.

Mike gave his Who-Am-I in March 2018. Here is his story from our newsletter:

Life has been good to **Mike Kite**. From his childhood and youth in England, through his 50 years in Canada, **Mike** has had a wonderful time.

Mike was born on Dec. 12, 1935, in Sevenoaks, southeast of London, England. He left school at age 15 to apprentice as an industrial electrician. At age 21, he began two years of national service with the RAF. In June 1959, he married his wife, **Phyllis**. Their first daughter, **Samantha**, was born in 1964.



Mike Kite

Although life was good in England, **Mike** and his wife looked at emigrating to New Zealand, Australia or Canada. Canada won and in April 1967 they moved to Fort William, Ontario, where **Mike's** sister lived. They arrived on a Wednesday. Mike interviewed for a job the next day and started work as an electrician with Canadian National Railway on Monday.

In 1976, **Mike** got a new job with the Ministry of Transportation in Northwestern Ontario. He worked on traffic lights, street lights and helped build airport runways, including installing runway lights.

After 10 years with the MTO, he took work with the Thunder Bay housing authority.

The **Kites** and their three daughters enjoyed life in their home with five acres in Thunder Bay. They liked winter sports like skiing, and tending chickens and a vegetable garden.

Mike retired in 1996. He and **Phyllis** moved for two years to the Northern Ontario town of Manitouwadge. From there, they moved to Mill Bay, north of Victoria, B.C., to be near their daughter, **Miranda**. In 2004, **Mike** and **Phyllis** came to Simcoe, where their daughter **Samantha** lives. A third daughter, **Belinda**, lives in Manitouwadge. In all, **Mike** and **Phyllis** have six grandchildren.