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It's never too late to go back to school

By Laura Hubbard

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September marks the sixth year running for the Seniors'College Association of Nova Scotia (SCANS), as well as the first term offered in Lunenburg. The association has a membership of 450, with some 300 in the HRM. Treasurer Roland Lewis says there were only 100 members in the first year.

"We were quite impressed with the numbers that year," he says. "We basically started with a group of retired professors that thought it would be a good idea to get together and offer some learning opportunities for 50+ people in a non-frightening, non-academic environment."

The association holds fall, winter and spring terms, with courses running between six and 10 weeks. Memberships, for an annual cost of \$135, are good for 12 months. The income generated from memberships offsets the cost of rooms and lecture halls and also supplies professors with an honorarium. All speakers and board members are volunteers.

Lewis says the association tries to use libraries as often as possible.

"Libraries are public spaces, of course, so anyone could go to those lectures and just walk in," he says. "We hope they might decide they like it and join."

The majority of students are retired, Lewis says, as classes are held during the morning or afternoon. Often two hours long, each class includes a short coffee and social break. "It is, in fact, very social," Lewis says. The association holds annual general meetings with social get-togethers following, and Lewis says small groups often form book clubs once the courses are complete for the term.

Lewis got involved with SCANS after seeing an ad in the newspaper and registering for three courses. Impressed with the association and the commitment to life-long learning, Lewis offered his knowledge of microbiology, and has taught an introductory course six times.

Courses and curriculum are often suggested by the students, as well as based on the availability of professors. Lewis notes that oftentimes a repeat is suggested because students enjoyed it and want others to have the opportunity, as well.

"We have taught everything from astronomy to Zionism," he says. "Right now we're doing History of the Louvre. We won't teach you how to fix your car because it's pretty academic, but we will teach about anything else!"

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