

Why 'F' Words Matter

by SHERALYN ROMAN

Before your collective minds head to the gutter most of the 'F' words I am talking about today are words that CAN appear in a family newspaper.

In fact, 'family' is one of the words I'd like to talk about; along with 'friends' and yes, that other word that starts with an 'F' and rhymes with truck. In a shift away from all the controversy of late and in honour of the upcoming Family Day weekend, today I'd love to talk about why 'F' words matter so very much.

If these past two and half years have shown us anything at all, I would hope that it's the importance of family and/or our friends. In a world in which we are becoming increasingly divided and the most recent 'freedom convoys' highlighting the ugly underbelly of the racism that exists in our country it's becoming more and more clear that our loved ones are almost always the people we rely on most to provide the love, support and encouragement we need to get through yet another day.

When our freedoms were first curtailed (and freedom is another 'F' word we should talk about) almost all of us willingly embraced the lockdowns as an opportunity to protect our family and friends from an unknown virus and its consequences.

As a direct result, many families spent significant time together, bonding over old-time entertainment like building puzzles, playing family board games and sharing popcorn during movie nights. People found new and creative ways to still meet with their network of friends in parking lots and parks or by going for long, socially distanced walks, knowing that we all needed a safe place to vent, commiserate and support each other outside of the confines of family. Even those amongst us who had to work every day throughout this pandemic knew they could rely on their friends or family for whatever they needed whether that was groceries dropped at their doorstep, a phone call or zoom call to boost their spirits or pitching in to make meals, share resources (remember when yeast was hard to find?) and whatever else was needed to get us through.

Just lately however, I feel like we have forgotten the values that once united us. We've already forgotten the fear (these being two more significant 'F' words) that both forced us behind closed doors but also united us as a community. We now throw around the 'F' word 'freedom' as an excuse to warrant the inexcusable; like closing down entire cities and borders, something that simply curtails the freedoms of everyone else other than those partying in the streets of our nation's capital. Freedom, by the way, doesn't mean however we personally define it (your version or my version) but rather is generally understood to mean 'the ability to move or act freely;' 'an absence of undue restrictions,' or that 'something is free if it can change easily and is not constrained in its present state.'

So, yes, we have the right to believe what we believe and even to protest when we feel those beliefs are at risk. What we don't have the right to do is curtail the freedom of others as we do so. We've talked about this before; freedom in a democratic society also requires us to be free in a way that works towards, and supports, the greater good. We need to harken back to the days when we all understood that a temporary restriction of our individual freedoms was for the greater good of our family and friends because at the end of the day it's our family and friends that matter most.

Which brings me back to my original thoughts on 'F' words. This Family Day weekend now that we CAN (largely because we acted as one to defeat, or at least diminish, the pandemic) make sure to get out and enjoy some precious family time together. Whether you are blood-related or your friends are your 'family' of choice, it's time to gather and celebrate all the good that comes with still having family and friends around to celebrate with!

Don't forget about your senior loved ones who, in many ways have suffered in isolation more so than the rest of us. Plan a family related activity that in our great Caledon community might mean anything from skating on our many rinks and ponds, hiking along the Caledon Trailway, cross-country skiing through Albion Hills or visiting the Forks of the Credit Provincial Park. Shop at local

independent stores and support the artisans at the Alton Mills Art Centre or grab a treat, coffee or meal at one of the many fabulous dining establishments scattered throughout our towns and villages. Restrictions are lifting just in time for the long weekend and the beauty of Caledon is that it offers something for every family and on any budget. Embrace the idea of reconnecting again with what got us through this mess in the first place, your family and your friends.

As for that other 'F' word that rhymes with truck ? let's be honest, sometimes when you drop something heavy on your toe ? there's simply no other word that fits. That's all we have to say about that!