

OPINION

Living

MAPLE

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My view



Tina
Rogers

Tied down to mobility

There's little worse than a reformed smoker, except perhaps a reformed cell phone user. I'm both. It is 25 years since I smoked, and 12 months since I had a cell phone.

I surprise myself at my tolerance and empathy where smokers are concerned. I understand that quitting is really, really tough. But mobile phones; that's a whole different story.

I had a brief and discontented relationship with the cellular device, and although I may be one in many thousands, I took great joy in dispensing with it over a year ago.

Now I feel out on a limb. After all, everyone seems to be convinced that a cell phone is a must-have. I am frequently asked for the numbers (plural) where I can be reached, and the enquirers look at me aghast when I tell them I have only one number.

'Perhaps cell phone use while driving, whether hands-free or not, should be made illegal in Ontario as it has in other parts of the world.'

Is it really that unusual? Am I the social outcast, or are cell phone addicts the pariahs?

People speak loudly on cell phones. Blaring, one-sided conversations are disturbing, irritating, and usually banal. You cannot escape mobile chatter — people have to be connected to others in the supermarket, in the video store, in restaurants.

When a cell phone rings (now, don't get me started on the cacophony of cutesy downloadable ring tones and tunes that pervade every public place), there is a compulsion to answer it. Witness the poor neglected lunch companion staring at the ceiling while they endure a boring wait.

Worst of all is the real mobile phone user — driving a car. You instantly know who they are. The car is usually meandering about in the lane, often straddling the line and pushing you off the road. They drive slowly and distractedly. They execute ditzzy manoeuvres and are a danger to themselves but most of all to me and to you.

Perhaps cell phone use while driving, whether hands-free or not, should be made illegal in Ontario as it has in other parts of the world.

This is madness, and I wonder that we have become so caught up in it. Unlike smoking, it's not a physical addiction.

Comments? Email Tina at mapleliving@rogers.com



COURTESY OF KORTRIGHT CENTRE

Around Town Around Town

Out and about, enjoying the beauty of winter and staying active. Cross-country skiing is alive and well at the Kortright Centre for Conservation, Major Mackenzie Avenue and Pine Valley Drive.

YOUR VIEW

Beating winter

Why not let Maple know how you enjoy the winter months and keep active? Do you think that if we have to endure three months of winter, we may as well make the best of it? If you do, we'd surely love to hear from you.

Tell us what your family and friends do to pass through these cold snowy months as quickly and enjoyably as we can.

There's a lot to do out there ... which activities work out best for you?

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Living

ON OUR COVER



PHOTO BY TINA ROGERS

Local schools get off to a running start in the Girls on the Run program.

Iconoclast



Chris
Caldwell

Community detachment

You have probably read reports about our bodies being loaded with industrial toxins and pesticides, some of which can be passed from mother to child in breast feeding. Allergies, obesity and immune system problems that were never heard of years ago now exist in children on a scale which could be considered a pandemic.

'THE LIFESTYLE CHANGES WE HAVE UNDERGONE IN THE PAST FEW DECADES MAY HAVE BROUGHT CHEAPER PRICES AND MORE CONVENIENCE, BUT I QUESTION THAT WE HAVE A BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE.'

Children don't play outside so much any more. Malls seem to have become our permanent spring-time indoors. We leave our temperate homes, cocoon ourselves in our heated cars, and run for the mall doors in haste to avoid a splash of rain or snow on our faces. We no longer habitually interact with nature, or with our communities, and both are feeling the loneliness.

We can help make choices together that will encourage social togetherness, sustainable building, unique and interesting architecture and healthy green space.

I suggest you take a look around, as if you were a tourist or perhaps a prospective home buyer looking for a vibrant community in which to spend a lifetime. You will see the most rewarding places are the more open spaces in which there's a mix of greenery, unique and interesting commercial uses and the freedom to walk and talk as you pass from one (small) local merchant to another. For sure it will not be a mall parking lot, or a big box store.

The lifestyle changes we have undergone in the past few decades may have brought cheaper prices and more convenience, but I question that we have a better quality of life. If we did, our health and that of our children would be improving, not declining.

And remember that the paved place in which you may stand was never always so. It may have taken many thousands of years to become a lush forest or meadow, a place where there used to be trees and animals, perhaps a crystal clear stream, but now has been flattened and paved over to make these structures that allow us to congregate. So let's have a little respect, and congregate in them as a community.

Chris Caldwell exited his corporate IT career and is completing a degree in Environmental Studies so that he can pursue his passion for urban planning and sustainable communities.