

## Don a Red Hat

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A year or so ago my friend Linda invited me to join her chapter of the Red Hat Society. I knew about The Famous 5 Foundation's earnest commitment to acknowledge women's historical and societal contributions. Also, I'd heard of Zonta, an organization started by the aviator, Amelia Earheart, to encourage the advancement of all women. However, I had heard little about the Red Hat Society. Although I've regrettably never made a gathering I have increasingly seen groups of these Red Hat Society gals from Calgary to Lindsay, Ontario. Actually there are over 58,000 chapters in 31 countries. Perhaps you too have had a Red Hat sighting—a gaggle of laughing fifty plus women wearing red hats with purple gowns, boas and glitter.

Here's the story. American founder, Susan Cooper, was inspired by the lines in Jenny Joseph's 1961 poem, "Warning", "*When I am an old woman, I shall wear purple with a red hat that doesn't go and doesn't suit me. And I shall spend my pension on brandy and summer gloves and satin candles, and say we've no money for butter.*"

Cooper noticed that women over fifty in our society become next to invisible. In 1997 she gave Joseph's poem and a red hat to a friend on her fifty-fifth birthday. The idea was as hot as menopause. On July 1 the Toronto Star quoted Cooper's "disorganization's" goal, "It's about playing and growing older playfully. You're a different person when you are out for fun. You may get the giggles."

Expect to see these merry Red Hatters at restaurants, theatres, fairs, bowling allies, billiard parlours, parades, shopping malls, art galleries, farmers' markets and anywhere else they can have fun and be noticed. Products such as fedoras, pins, boas, wigs and dresses are now being created with Red Hatters in mind and sold in stores such as Tan Jay. Yet, thrift stores and consignment stores are also great places to find that just-right purple dress. Speaking of dress, women under fifty are asked to wear lavender with pink hats until they graduate.

At church recently I had a Red Hat image flash as I sang Gordon Light's 1985 hymn, "She Comes Sailing on the Wind."

*She come sailing on the wind, her wings flashing in the sun,  
On a journey just begun, she flies on, and in the passage of her flight,  
Her song rings out through the night, full of laughter, full of light, she flies on.*

Red Hatters help one another fly. Red hat or not we women, after years of nurturing and caring for others can benefit from adding some fun and play to our social life. To

learn more about the Red Hat Society, to start a chapter or join an existing one (38 chapters in Calgary, 15 in Edmonton, 1 in Vegreville, 21 in Toronto and many more) go to [www.redhatsociety.com](http://www.redhatsociety.com).

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