

VENDORS PAY 50¢

PER PAPER

ALBERTA Street News

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Above: Editor Linda Dumont presents a Certificate of Appreciation to vendor Dawna Romine

Vendor Appreciation Day - story on pages 6-7



By Linda Dumont

When Norma Harms stopped at a convenience store, she met a woman, Anne, who was setting up a cardboard box on the edge of lot so she would have a place to sleep that night. Norma took time to speak to the woman, and Anne poured out her tragic story of life on the street. This time, she had been homeless for several weeks after she was forced to move out of the place she was renting where she didn't even have a bedroom, but was sleeping on a couch in the living room along with another renter

There is no place to sleep

on another couch. From there, the story got worse – after she had paid her rent for the month, the owner of the house told her she had to have sex with him in order to live in the house. When she refused, she had to move out. With her next AISH cheque three weeks away, she became homeless.

Anne told Norma she was barred out of Hope Mission homeless shelter for 24 hours because “I take medication and they couldn't wake me up at 6 a.m.” She said she couldn't go to the Women's Emergency Accommodation Shelter either, because she had stayed there in the past, and “they have bed bugs, and I got beaten up there.”

Her only alternative was to sleep outside on the street. But that can be dangerous, too. Anne has been beaten up on a number of occasions.

Norma couldn't bear to see her staying outside in the cardboard box so she took Anne to her apartment for the night, explaining that her lease did not allow for guests without permission from the landlord, and that if Anne stayed she would get in trouble herself. The next morning, Anne didn't want to get up. It was the first good sleep in

a safe place she had enjoyed for a long time. She slept and slept, until finally Norma, who had stayed home all day due to her guest, insisted she get up at 4 p.m. so she could go out.

That night, Anne was able to get back into Hope Mission. The next day she went to see her AISH worker to try to get a place to live at the end of the month.

Unfortunately, Anne's story is all too common, and while many of us would love to be able to help, taking in a homeless guest is not always advisable. There may be issues you are not aware of such as bed bugs, addictions, etc. Also, it can be difficult to get your guest to leave.

I have learned to be very careful about who I allow into my home. We did have a 16 year old with his dog staying with us for three months while they were homeless due to family break down, but he was a friend of my grandson. Understandably, he was a very unhappy youth. Finally, his grandmother was well enough to get an apartment and he was able to move in with her.

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Perspectives

Revisiting Urban Manor

By Allan Sheppard

The Edmonton Journal recently published a story about a city initiative to preserve an abandoned iron works and scrap yard in the Boyle Street North area, recalling the neighbourhood's history as a place of significant industrial activity in what is now part of the downtown core (City moves to save Edmonton's historic Iron Works, expropriate scrap yard, November 26, 2015).

The proposed heritage site sits at the northwest corner of a block bounded by 96 and 95 streets to the west and east, 104 Avenue to the south, and a bottle depot and LRT tracks to the north—all non-residential.

The Journal story also notes that the site “borders the new Boyle Renaissance residential tower, the Boyle Street community hall and Urban Manor, a home where men previously living on the street are still allowed to drink a controlled amount of alcohol.

The reference to Urban Manor caught my attention. Having done a story for Alberta Street News on the agency a few years ago, I was aware of Urban Manor and its goals, as described by executive director Linda Noel and case worker/supervisor Michele Dowling. I was sympathetic to what I heard and saw, and I wrote accordingly.

Since then, I have written about and talked with principals at other agencies, including the Edmonton Police Service, who have spoken positively and respectfully about Urban Manor, what it tries to do, and what it achieves.

The reference in the Journal story to struck me as dismissive and misleading. It seems to suggest—or at least to leave open the conclusion—that allowing residents to consume alcohol on the premises is Urban Manor's purpose rather than, as I understood



things, a way of enabling the agency and its staff serve the health, safety, security, and human rights needs of a small but seriously marginalized group—and, not coincidentally, of minimizing the consequences for communities and society of leaving such marginalized men living on the streets or in the river valley—when they were not over-using emergency and chronic health services or languishing in jails for petty crimes.

It's not just infants who appear as foundlings on the doorsteps of churches and other places of refuge, abandoned there by desperate families

I returned to Urban Manor for another interview with Linda Noel and Michele Dowling and offered them another opportunity to tell their story. The following conversation has been lightly edited and condensed for clarity.

It's not just infants who appear as foundlings on the doorsteps of

churches and other places of refuge, abandoned there by desperate families no longer willing or able to care for them. It happens with grown men too: men with alcoholism so severe that it threatens their health and lives—and places burdens on families and friends that sometimes become unbearable.

“We’ve had families literally dump them on our doorstep and leave them,” says Linda Noel, executive director of Urban Manor. “They promise that, oh no, they will return and keep contact; and that’s the last we see of them. They give us phone numbers that don’t exist.”

Urban Manor is a Boyle-McCaughey area agency that for 30 years has been home to men who need help with alcohol addiction and its health, safety, and lifestyle consequences. For the last six years, it has been a “wet site,” where residents can use alcohol within limits; one of two in Edmonton and one of only a few in Canada

Unlike typical social housing programs, Urban Manor does not prohibit alcohol. Residents are allowed to drink controlled amounts—beer only—under supervision at a designated table in the dining area.

“It’s really important to understand that they buy their own booze. We don’t provide their alcohol for them,”

continued on page 4

Revisiting Urban Manor continued from page 3

explains case worker Michele Dowling.

“On a typical day, the guys go out and get their beer at 10 o’clock (when) the liquor store opens. They go together. There will be two or three that will go—they’re very vulnerable out there. They’ll pick up a half-a-dozen beer for themselves, plus for the guys who have problems walking.”

The daily supplies are turned over to office staff, Dowling adds: “It’s documented who brought in what for who. And it’s managed: it’s one beer at a time, to the beer table. They bring the empty back before they can have another one. That’s to manage the situation and make sure that they’re not too intoxicated. If they can walk a straight line and have a conversation with the staff at the front,” they can have another beer.

“We don’t allow them to drink during meal time, because they’re encouraged to eat. The beer table is closed during lunch and supper, for those hours. And they’re not allowed to drink in their rooms, because an alcoholic can soon isolate themselves. They drink together,” says case worker Michele Dowling.

Aside from safety considerations when on the street, Urban Manor encourages residents to do things together as a way to build a feeling of family among them. They are encouraged to think of Urban Manor as their home—albeit with some vital assisted-living aspects—with the privileges, of a home and the responsibilities.

“This is not a flophouse, and it’s not a party house,” says Dowling. “That’s made very, very clear when they come in. Everybody is responsible for their actions. And there are consequences for breaking the rules.” Being asked to leave is a possible consequence, but it is the last resort, not the first; Dowling says each incident is dealt with on its own terms, with consideration for what was done and who did it—different residents are accepted

as being at different stages of adjustment and treated accordingly.

There are expectations.

Dowling adds, “We definitely encourage our guys to contribute. Everybody contributes. Nobody lays in bed all day long and does nothing. If they’re not working, they volunteer. They help in the kitchen. They sweep the floors. They shovel snow. They’ll mow the lawn. It’s their home, and that’s stressed to them: that they need to help be responsible to keep the place clean and to keep it organized, to keep everybody well.”

“Accommodation at Urban Manor,” Dowling says, is “based on need, not on the ability to pay.”

Some residents work part-time through a nearby temp agency, while others receive AISH (Alberta Income for the Severely Handicapped) or pension payments. “Those that work pay a percentage towards their room and board. Those that have (other) income pay room and board, as well. The ones that don’t have any kind of an income, they volunteer. They help out wherever needed, and everybody, everybody contributes in one way or another.”

Urban Manor follows a harm-reduction approach, which seeks to prevent the harm associated with the use of addictive substances, rather than preventing the use of those substances. The approach is controversial, especially when applied to harm-reduction programs for drug users that offer needle-exchanges and safe-injection sites in Vancouver and other cities. There is less stigma attached to harm-reduction programs for alcohol (perhaps because alcohol use is not illegal, and it is less associated with serious crime than the drug trade) but communities are still generally reluctant to accept wet sites, especially in their own neighbourhoods.

Opponents to harm reduction argue that the goal should be to prevent

substance abuse; allowing use, even under managed conditions, simply enables abuse and thwarts prevention strategies.

Proponents generally take a pragmatic view, arguing that, while prevention and cessation are desirable, there are some addicts who, for a variety of reasons, cannot or will not stop; for them intractable addiction is a public health issue that leads to personal, family, community and broad social harms that we should not tolerate.

Linda Noel speaks passionately to that point: “The understanding of addiction is not where it should be. And with the fellows that come here, by the time they get here, they have already previously gone through programs repeatedly. For whatever reason, some have just not succeeded. And they’ve fallen back into the addiction.

“So what happens to them? Are they ostracized, sent on the street to drink themselves to death, and no one should care? That’s not right either. They’re human beings. We have to have some compassion for these fellows. They’re human beings that have addictions that, for whatever reason, have not been able to beat the addiction.

“We accept them for who they are, with the addiction. We’re able to see past the addictions to the individuals. And we have some amazing guys in here. We really do.

“But the outside, unfortunately a huge percentage of people still see them as nothing but homeless drunks on the street. And they would rather than offer a helping hand make sure that they walk around them, like they’re not even there. Well they are there. They do exist.

“In the past we have had people refer to our guys as disposable. And that’s horrible. They are not disposable. They are someone’s son, someone’s dad, someone’s brother. But it’s all centred around the addiction and the fact that ‘Oh he’s a drunk, he’s good

Urban Manor continued

for nothing. Well I just, I don't know, I just..."

Words may fail, but the demand for accommodation at Urban Manor is constant. Noel and others who work with alcohol addicts in crisis suggest that Edmonton needs four or five more wet sites, including one for women. But few proponents have come forward. The NIMBY (not in my back yard) response is a significant deterrent.

Most residents do not make their way to Urban Manor as foundlings; those are rare. They find their way there on their own, with help from friends and advocates, or by referral from other agencies: Boyle-McCauley Health Centre, Boyle Street Community Services, Hope Mission, the Spady Centre, the Bissell Centre, social workers at the library, even the police. Most of those agencies (not the police) have Housing First programs designed to get homeless people off the street before dealing with any addictions issues they may have. Housing First clients are expected to stop using once housed, but the strategy recognizes having a safe place to live as a necessary first step toward detoxification and treatment. It also recognizes that some will not adjust successfully; some will fail.

Many referrals to Urban Manor are Housing First failures. They will usually have gone through at least one (sometimes many) placements. They have nowhere else to go, except to the streets; not a safe place for them, according to Michele Dowling: "It's a violent, horrible horrible place out there. By allowing them to consume alcohol here, we don't have the guys out on the street drinking. We don't have them having DTs, because they didn't have enough to get that bottle. We don't have the arguments and the fights out there."

DTs (delirium tremens: seizures, hallucinations, shaking and trembling fits) are a risk for alcoholics who go too long without a drink. When they

occur on the street, the best that can happen might be a costly (for the community) trip to an emergency room; the worst might range from beatings and robbery to an unpleasant death. Urban Manor residents don't avoid DTs entirely. "I've seen the seizures," says Dowling. "They're horrible. They will bite their tongue. They'll drool. If they fall, they can break things." But at Urban Manor full-time, trained help and support are available, including ensuring they take their medications, eat properly, and help managing their consumption to avoid seizures and the consequences of over-indulgence.

The program is not for everyone, no matter how needy.

Placement is voluntary. Dowling explains, "We do an interview. We basically have a chat. We let them see the place and find out you know what their expectations are, what they're looking for. Because it's a unique environment. Being a dorm style, instead of individual rooms—it's not for everybody. We've had guys that have said no, that they didn't want to be in a dorm.

"We've had guys that have come in from the river valley that just can't handle having walls around them. We've tried, and we've found them in the hallway. They've taken the mattress off their beds and put it in the hallway, because they just can't—enclosed spaces are very, very tough."

"We'll work with these guys and try what we can to make them safe, make them comfortable," Dowling notes. But she also acknowledges that in a few cases, men who could not make the necessary adjustments have left voluntarily.

It's not an easy road. But for many Urban Manor the only safe road left. They (and we) are lucky to have it.

An Urban Manor success story

Given the desperate circumstances that bring men to Urban Manor, success stories involving full recovery are rare. But they do happen. Linda Noel shared one

"We do have our success stories. We have fellows that have come through here sick, they're in terrible shape. "After we basically get them cleaned up and healthy, they get out working. They start at temp services and, before you know it, they have found full-time jobs. And because of this, the drinking has been minimized—or they're over it.

"They move on. We hear back from them, and they're doing wonderfully. They have their own places.

"We have a fellow right now that is working in a diamond mine, way up north. He had originally came here with the promise of a job; everything was going to be fine. He got here and there was nothing. So of course he started drinking, ran out of money.

"He was on the mats at Hope Mission and the Spady Centre. He heard about us, came here. When he came here, he was sick and congested, and just in terrible shape. And if you see him now, you'd swear it's not the same person.

"He's working, and he's doing wonderfully."

Below: Allan Sheppard

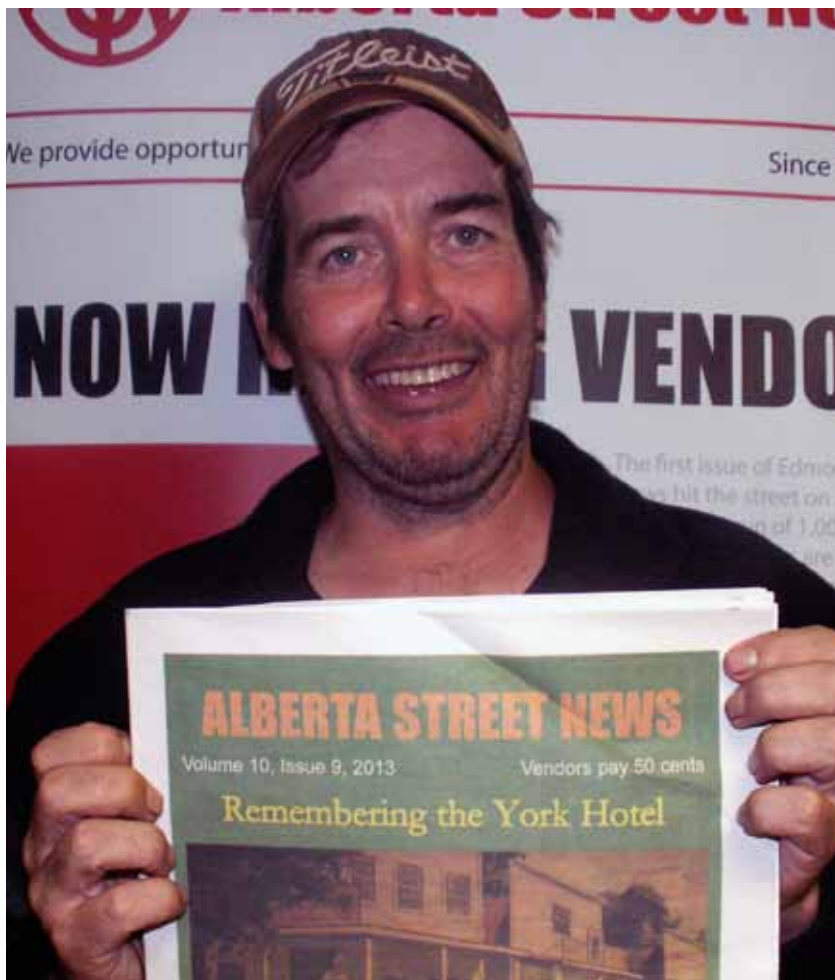




Left: Vendor Dale Ferris with his certificate on Vendor Appreciation Day.

Ferris was one of the first vendors to sign up to sell Alberta Street News on November 16, 2003. He was on the board of Edmonton Street News Society for several terms, and has contributed stories that have been published in the paper. He is an amputee with a missing finger and a prosthetic leg. Dale has survived years of homelessness.

Former Red Deer vendor murdered



Thomas Braconnier, 46, of Red Deer was found dead in the lobby of a downtown Red Deer business early Christmas morning. He was one of the vendors who signed up to sell Alberta Street News in 2014, when John Zapantis and editor Linda Dumont held a vendor recruitment day at a drop in Red Deer..

Braconnier had been living at the Buffalo, an apartment owned and operated by Potter's Hands Housing for people with a history of homelessness and addictions. He was on Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped due to a brain injury he suffered when he was robbed and hit in the head with a crowbar when he was 39. He also suffered from Parkinson's disease.

Braconnier was killed by a man he knew – Chad Kulba, who has been charged with second degree murder.

Funeral services for Braconnier were held January 27 at the Salvation Army Church in Red Deer, with donations going towards the Red Deer Food Bank in Braconnier's name because he frequently used their services.

Alberta Street News vendors receive certificates of appreciation



Vendors Donald Friske, Belle St. Michel and Dawna Romine with their certificates

By Linda Dumont

Alberta Street News vendors met with editor Linda Dumont and distributor Angelique Branston at the Milnar Library Feb. 2nd for a brief vendor appreciation ceremony. Each of the vendors who came received a certificate of appreciation, and a toque.

“In any workplace, it is important to have special days to show appreciation for employees. Alberta Street News vendors are entrepreneurs, buying as many papers as they can sell, then selling when and where they choose to work, but they are also part of a community.

Belonging is important,” said Linda Dumont, publisher of the paper.

Over pop and pastries, vendors shared stories about vending. A reporter from Alberta Sweetgrass came by to take photographs and speak to some of the vendors. John Givens, a former vendor who has not been selling for several years, came by and signed up to begin working again. Fortunately, there were some unsigned certificates, so he was given one, too. Vendors who were not able to attend the event at the library were given their certificates later when they came to pick up papers.

February 1 to 8th was Vendor Appreciation Week for the International Network of Street Papers (INSP); Alberta Street News is a member paper.

Thank you to John Zapantis for picking up pastries in Morinville from the Green Bean Coffee Shop and Bistro, to Doug Adsit, owner and operator of Green Bean for the donation of two trays of pastries, and to Bill Buck for the donation of toques.

Let's Talk About Heaven



By Sharon Spencer

When I lost my Christian daughter you can't imagine the shock. It goes so deep there are no words to express it. You simply can't imagine the magnitude of the woundedness and disbelief at the sudden death of my child. We thought we had tomorrow to visit, to talk, to straighten out old misunderstandings, and now that's been snatched away.

My daughter called me ten times a day. We had a long distance relationship with her 3,000 miles away. She had three young daughters aged four to nine. She called me one evening, "Mom, I'm going to do this call to you later. Love ya". The next call I got was someone telling me she was dead.

As the terrible tragedy began to unfold, I went to the Rock, the only solace for my pain. Through time and much prayer from my church there were revelations. My son and the father of the children began to have visions. She was in heaven, much younger and riding a horse of a colour they could not describe. "For eye has not seen nor ear hath heard what God has prepared for those who love him." It brought comfort to our souls. But one day I said to Jesus, "I want my own sign from you. I need it."

Shortly after that I opened up my Facebook account and saw a drawing in black and white of Jesus with the crown of life held over a girl. She looked just like my daughter. It blew my mind. I knew where she was and I knew she was happy. Jesus in his infinite mercy gave peace to my heart that I could pass along to her children. That day I took her out of the coffin and put her into Heaven where she was happy. Many would tell me she is dancing and singing and complete

at last. Some people can not be happy here but if they know Jesus in a personal way, they can rejoice in that they have been healed and enjoy happiness they never had in this world. The only way it could come was with death and the presence of Jesus.

When Jesus was leaving this world to return to the Father he said this in John 14:2-4, "My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going."

He's been working in Heaven for over 2000 years. There will be no more sorrow, no night, but surrounded by singing and dancing there will be perfect peace we can not imagine, pure joy with the heavenly family. Nothing can explain or compare with it. There's no way to describe it. Be at peace if you have a loved one in heaven. I am. Even my grandchildren are.



Never fail novena

May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be praised, adored and glorified throughout the whole world, now and forever. Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, I put my trust in you. Holy Mary, Mother of Jesus, pray for me. St. Jude of Hopeless Causes, pray for me and grant this favour I ask. Say this prayer nine times a day for nine days. J.M.

I Love Easter

By Joanne Bengner

No matter how it is celebrated, I love Easter. Let me count the ways.

1. I love the modern commercial Easter with its candy eggs, chocolate bunnies and marsh mallow peeps. I love baskets of expensive gifts and hot house flowers – lilies, tulips and daffodils. I enjoy egg hunts, egg rolls, egg tosses and egg and spoon races.
2. I love the old-fashioned traditional Easter which starts with Easter cards in the mail. Then comes the pomp and ritual of Easter day. The family must share a hard boiled egg before breakfast, then watch the sunrise for the sun dances Easter morning. I love the new Easter outfit, the Easter bonnets and baskets, and the dinner of lamb and mint sauce. I love Easter cake, raisin bread and hot cross buns. Hot cross buns never go mouldy so it is customary to hang one up to keep evil from the house for the coming year.
3. I love the religious Easter with lent during which I give up favourite foods, fast and wear no new clothes. I like the forgiveness of Palm Sunday, the atonement of Maundy Thursday, and the promise of the Resurrection.
4. I love the rural Easter with its weather lore. Think back to Christmas and you have your Easter weather forecast. "Christmas in snow, Easter in wind. A warm Christmas, a cold Easter. A green Christmas, a white Easter. Then we have early Easter, early spring. That is us this year. We had lots of hoar frost during the winter so we might have a wet spring. Will it continue? If the first three days in April are foggy, rain in June will make lanes boggy. Finally, a windy Easter brings a windy year and a rainy Easter forecasts a wet summer.
5. I love the pagan Easter, celebrating the equinox and the coming of spring. I like the warmth, the lengthening day, the pussy willows and the tinge of green that promises grass and leaves to come. I love the new life as lambs and calves are born and chicks hatch. It is a time of renewal and rebirth.

However you celebrate Easter, I wish one and all a Happy Easter!

The Easter Blahs

The Easter blahs are few and far between but I have heard the following:

1. The turkey was dry.
2. The Easter bunny hopped off without laying any eggs.
3. The Easter chicks didn't hatch. The Easter cards must have gotten lost in the mail.
4. It rained in the middle of the out-door Easter egg hunt.
5. We slept in so we never saw the sun dance.
6. And last but not least, I had a bad hare day.



St. Patrick's Day – the 17th of Ireland

If you're lucky enough to be Irish, you're lucky enough. Author Unknown

Irish Blessing

May you live as long as you want, And never want as long as you live.. May the road rise up to meet you.
 May the wind always be at your back.. May the winds of destiny carry you aloft to dance with the stars.
 May the sun shine upon your face and until we meet again, may God hold you gently in the palm of his hand.
 May you have a world of wishes at your command, God and his angels close at hand,
 Friends and family their love impart and Irish blessings in your heart.



My son and the butterfly

By Angelique Branston

My family has always enjoyed nature. Most of my childhood was spent moving from country house to country house. One of my favourite things to do was to go into the bushes and let my imagination run wild. I came to understand at a young age that all life is important and deserves to be respected. My best friends as a child were our goats.

When I had my son, I wanted to pass on these same values. As often as we could, some of our family would go to my aunt's farm located just outside of Sunnybrook and set up tents and camp there beside the old farm house that had not been occupied for years, and was falling down. The point of these outings was to get away from the city and enjoy nature. Since no one lived on the property, there was wild life there that would otherwise be hard to see. Once, while walking in the woods with my son, then four, and my sister, we saw a snowy owl hunting mice. He appeared to be almost as tall as my son from head to tail. My son was awed and terrified at the same time.

On another outing with my son, a big gust of wind blew a bunch of leaves past us, and my son screamed. I asked him why he was so afraid of leaves, and he told me how the last time we were out there, he had killed a butterfly. He thought the big leaf was the spirit of the butterfly coming to get him. I hugged him and explained that it was probably his conscience bothering him because he knew he shouldn't have killed the butterfly. I told him to apologize to the butterfly and ask its forgiveness. After he did that, he smiled and said he felt better.

In watching and living in nature, we learn how to respect all life whether it is a butterfly, a furry four legged creature, or a human.

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Send ads in PDF form, or we can design your ad for you.

2. Get a subscription to ASN - for \$45 a year the paper will be mailed out.

3. Become a patron - make a commitment to donate monthly to help with production costs.

All money raised will go towards production costs for Alberta Street News and for vendor events.

Contact Linda Dumont at 780-428-0805
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A Pail Full of Clams

By Sharon Austin

Once again our little cottage on four acres of land was up for rent. We kept the rent low because it was very tiny, had no foundation and needed a lot of renovations. A few people had come to see the place but it was always too secluded with all the tall trees, or too far from the city, or just too small. Then, an old beat up black car drove into the yard. I could see two little girls looking out the window and a big scruffy brown dog covered the back seat. A young man came bounding up the stairs, his wild red hair blowing about his thin white face. He was wearing faded dirty blue jeans, a black motorcycle t-shirt and big rubber gum boots on his feet. He told us he was a clam digger and he worked on the lobster boats in season. Apparently he had been raised along the coast until he was foisted into foster care by a dysfunctional family.

"I won't lie to you," he said, "I've been in trouble and I've spent time in jail but I just want to get my family out of the city. It's hard to find any place that will take three kids and pets." There was something about his honesty and the hopeful look in his pale blue eyes that made me want to give them a chance. My husband was a bit more skeptical than I, but I reminded him that they couldn't be any worse than our last renters who had come with good character references. They had skipped out in the night owing us two months rent and leaving a mountain of garbage for me to clean. The only thing worthwhile they left behind was an orange tom cat that we took in and named Billy.

"I won't let you down," Joe said

and he was as good as his word.

Although they were struggling, he always found a way to pay the rent. If he was going to be a few weeks late, he would come and tell us the reason.

My youngest son was coming home from B.C. and I asked Joe if he could sell us a pail of clams as there was nothing that Jonathan liked better than fresh seafood right from the ocean. The next day Joe came with a pail heaped with big clams. I had the money ready on the counter but he was insistent that I take the clams as a gift. Looking at his poor sun-burned face and sinewy red arms I thought how much that pail of clams had cost him in time and effort. I wanted to refuse and make him take the money but then I remembered the Bible verse, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." I knew Joe wanted to give us a gift because we had given him a chance when he had been turned away by so many others. I steamed those clams in sea water and truly they were the best clams we ever tasted.

Joe was worried about his one-year-old son because the doctor thought there was something wrong with his heart and was sending him to a cardiologist. A group from our church was coming the next night to have a bonfire in the yard so I invited Joe and his family for the wiener roast. I didn't really expect them to come but at seven o'clock I saw the little family coming across the field. I almost didn't recognize Joe; his wild red hair was tied back in a ponytail and he was clean shaven. Gone were the tattered jeans and gum boots. He was wearing a pale blue cotton shirt and clean jeans and in

his arms he carried the little boy that looked just like him. Everyone enjoyed the wiener roast and then it was time for the sing song and testimony time. Finally the Pastor asked if there was anyone who wanted prayer. Right away Joe stood up holding his little boy. He was clearly out of his element and his hands were visibly shaking but his voice was clear. "I want you to pray for my boy," he said "He might need open heart surgery and he's so small," his voice broke. Everyone gathered around to pray for Little Joe, who was more interested in watching the sparks fly heavenward from the fire.

Things turned out well for the family. Although the boy had a definite heart murmur he would not need surgery as his heart was working well. About five years later Joe got a good job offer in another province and the family moved away. I missed seeing the children playing and hearing their happy laughter and I'm sure the cottage missed them too. We never did rent the cottage out again. Instead my daughter moved into that beautiful peaceful spot. Over the years we lost track of Joe and his family but now and then, when I sit down to a plate of fresh steamed clams, I remember them all fondly and I am so glad that we took a chance on Joe.



The Celebration of Easter

March 25-27, 2016

by Judy Brown

Easter is the most joyous celebration of the year! It is a time when we celebrate the death and resurrection of The Lord Jesus who sacrificed His life on the cross for all the sins of mankind. On Good Friday, March 25th, we will give thanks and praise to Jesus for leaving the beauty of Heaven to come to this earth to live and to die for us. (He was the only person who could die for our sins because He had no sin).

Since none of us can enter Heaven with our sin, Jesus paid the price for us so that one day we could be there with Him forever. This is Jesus' promise to all of His followers, "In my Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for

you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me, so that you also may be where I am." (John 14:2, 3)

On Sunday, Easter Day, March 27th, we will gather in a vibrant, joyous church service to celebrate the day that Jesus rose from the dead and conquered death for all mankind. It is recorded in the Bible that after Jesus rose from the dead, He appeared to His disciples over a period of 40 days (Acts 1:3) before He ascended into Heaven to be with His Father forever, and to prepare a place for us. These joyous appearances of Jesus after His resurrection are recorded in Matthew Chapter 28; Mark Ch. 16; Luke Ch. 24; John Ch. 20, 21 and Acts 1. (And Jesus still appears to people today in dreams and visions)

Christians are also filled with joy and thanksgiving on Easter Day, because they know that just as Jesus rose from the dead, they need not fear death because they too will rise after death, into Heaven, where they will be with Jesus forever!

It is never too late to come to Jesus. He is always ready and waiting, and willing to forgive. He told us the story of The Prodigal Son to show us how willing He and The Father are to forgive. (Luke 15) But we must ask Him to forgive us and to come into our lives to be our Saviour and our Lord.

If you want to read more about the Easter story in the Bible, you can read about it in Matthew Chapters 26-28; Mark 14-16; Luke 22-24, John 16-21 and Acts Chapter 1.

Who has seen Jesus
By Norma Harms

Who has seen Jesus
Has he travelled the same road
As you and I?
How do the Saints
Throughout all of the centuries see Him?

Have only kings and Queens and angels
Praised his holy name?
And fallen down on their knees to worship Him
To worship him alone.

Who has seen Jesus?
Have you or I?
Or have the artists alone seen Him
As revealed
In the awesome Masterpieces
Painted only by the Masters hand alone.

Who has seen Jesus
Have you or I
Seen Him in these Masterpieces
Or in the faith we believe in
As Jesus or Saviour

Our Syrian Refugee family

By Judy Brown

Last night I had a wonderful visit and prayer time with the Syrian refugee family that Strathcona Baptist Church is sponsoring. They arrived here on Thurs. Feb. 18th 2016. What I noticed the most, was their love for Jesus and their concern that more people would come to know Him. I also noticed their peace -- you would think that because of all the killing (even in their own family) and the destruction that they experienced in Syria, they would be filled with anger and hatred and bitterness. But no, you could tell that they really know the love and forgiveness of Jesus! Praise God for sending them here! I have also noticed that sponsoring this family has shown the unity in the church – how we can come together with our different giftings, to help this family.

And we can help them, but they also can help us by sharing Jesus with people here, and by their example of love and forgiveness!



Grow Mercy, an artistic display by Bleeding Heart Art Space for the opening of a new art show, combines poetry and art.

Right: People read poetry attached to poles.

Photos by Linda Dumont

The Bleeding Heart Art Space is led by Dave Von Bieker and a team of “Bleeding Hearts”. Most of them live in the Alberta Avenue area, and are passionate about creating a space where “art, the sacred and community can dance.”

The Bleeding Heart Art Space is a project of Urban Bridge Church, a progressive Christian spiritual community seeking to “Bridge Christ and Culture”. Urban Bridge Church supports this project with finances, prayer, passion, creativity and human resources. The Bleeding Heart is deeply tied to the arts revitalization movement of Alberta Avenue (118th Ave. in Edmonton, Alberta). The space is shared with Elm Catering at 9132 118th Ave.



HEALING WORDS



**BY THE CMHA
WRITING FOR RECOVERY GROUP**

Nature at its Best By Michelle Black

The morning is still, not a sound to be heard
The sun is rising, the birds start to sing,
The breeze whispers through the trees
The fluffy clouds form into beautiful shapes.
As I lay here on the ground,
I feel one with nature that is all around.
I close my eyes, I smell the air
I feel the breeze blow my hair.
I am one with nature, I am one with God,
I have peace, I have love
I have loved ones up above.
I breath in and out, in and out
I feel a sense of calm.
A place I know I can always go to
No matter where I am.
Nature at rest ... Nature at its Best!!!

Post Valentine's Day By Lanky

In September of 1968, on the first day of Grade One, I did not want to go to school. You see, I had been a bully all of kindergarten and during the summer between kindergarten and Grade One I had met and was bullied and given a firm talking to by one of the older brothers one of the kids I had bullied in kindergarten. For the first time I was afraid of being bullied and beaten up the way I used to do to other people. Mom took me to school anyway, even though I really did have a sore stomach from anxiety and fear.

Grade One went by without

too much trouble, except I had to give Gary Fenkes my nickel for milk every day behind the canteen. I played by myself mostly. I gave my bag of marbles to Gary and the others and I never played alleys again just to be sure that nobody got mad at me for winning. I liked spelling words. I liked English class. I was always first, second, or third in the spelling bees, behind my best friends John Mellek and Angela Fournier. They were smart like mom and not bullies like dad. I liked being smart in English spelling bees.

February 14th, 1969 came along. I remember thinking and worrying that I wouldn't get a valentine. The teachers helpers

were handing out all the Valentine's day cards and they were almost done and everybody could see that I didn't even have one yet. In the end, though, I did get two valentines. One just said Happy Valentine's day. The other had an inscription on it. It said, "Thank you for being a nice boy now."

I reported Gary Fenkes to the principal the next day for bullying me for my nickel for milk. I was happy for the first time at Saint Theresa's School. I had received two valentines. That had to mean that I had two friends. I had two friends and two valentines to prove it.

A Day in my Life

By Vivian Risby

Some days I just don't want to get out of bed. I am so sick. I have to go out and try to make money for us. Trying to make ends meet is very hard. My Dad always told me, "If you put your mind to what you want, you can do it. Don't give up. I did not raise a quitter and you're a strong woman, Vivian."

When Chewy and I go out and pick bottles, some people are very rude. A lot of people pick. One day someone should pick with me – try to push a shopping cart in the middle of winter. Then you will see

how hard to push the cart is, and my lazy dog, Chewy, always wants to ride and she is not light. Some people bring bottles to my place and I would love to thank Linda Duncan herself. She helps a lot. Thanks, Linda, and Kris.

People always say I am mean, but don't judge me until you know me. I am a very nice person. I have lost a lot of loved ones and I always feel alone. I can be in a room full of people but I always feel alone and I wonder why? Do people think I can do all the work? Why do I have to do this by myself. And why do

I always feel alone. I can be with a lot of people and around them I am alone. When Mike (her husband) passed away I was so lonely. I said it will not kill me, but pray and be strong. I know that is hard. It is not easy. All I have to do is cry. But I have to go on and be strong and pray. A prayer always helps. Don't give up. And I will never give up. I miss my husband a lot. They say time heals. They lie. Always love you, Mike Risby. Your wife misses you.

Linda Dumont helps me with the papers to sell.

Advertising is a powerful influence

By Linda Roan

The story of the Michelin star illustrates the power of influence through advertisement. In 1889, the French brothers, Edward and Andre Michelin changed the horse and carriage style wheels to pneumatic tires. At this time there were only 3,000 pneumatic tires in France. Sunday's were the days when people went for drives which meant that the tires seldom wore down, which meant a problem for the Michelin brothers. In the year 1900, Edward and Andre printed 3,500 travel guides and distributed them for free. The Michelin guidebook for motorists was a long list of French towns, with recommendations of places to stay and dine and a manual on how to fix Michelin tires. One day when Andre was visiting a repair shop he noticed one of these travel guides being used to prop up a bench. This led to charging for the guides. The saying "Man only respects what he pays for", was

proven true as these guides sold everywhere. That same year a bigger edition was made to the guide, including more restaurants, and Parisian hotels. Circulation jumped to 155,000 copies. In 1926 the first "One star dining" rating was born. By the 1930's, the first "Three star" rating was employed. A "One star" was a very good restaurant, worth stopping for. A "Two star" restaurant had excellent cooking, worth a detour. A "Three star" restaurant had exceptional cuisine, worth a special trip for. Note the travel language.

To this day, a restaurant with a star is a sign of an excellent establishment. Losing stars is traumatic.

Gordon Ramsey cried when his New York restaurant lost its "Two star" rating. Today the Michelin guide covers 20 countries, across four continents. And it all began so that a tire company could do more business. Does the influence of advertising still have power over us? Silly question!

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Liberating ourselves from our deep rooted fears



By Maria B.

I feel that fear is one of the most misunderstood emotions in our life. We tend to see fear as one of our weaknesses, something to be ashamed of, when in reality fear is an important emotion. It is a feeling that warns us of something bad that could happen.

While fear starts with a thought that we create, then it becomes a feeling that might or might not be real. If we misperceive the situation we are not thinking logically or sensibly but are allowing our thoughts to run wild. Any fear that starts with a thought we assess first to see if it is only an unfounded fear or a legitimate fear. We should be careful not to empower our unfounded fears and eventually these fears will just disappear.

I became introduced to fear very young, so young that I could not understand why I felt so scared. I was brought up in an environ-

ment where fear was the weapon of choice by my parents. My father was a very physical abuser with me; he also used to raise his voice to instill fear on me. I think of this and it makes me feel like crying even at this stage of my life. If I see a movie of someone beating a child, I still feel like cowering and fear becomes like a black mantle that tends to embrace me really hard. Through my developing years, fear was like my loyal shadow, always with me. I also

learned to empower my fears to the point that I would not try to do anything new and in reality I allowed my fears to take over my life, which affected every decision that I had to make.

I grew up with the words of my father, saying "You are ugly, you have big ears, you disgust me." and "Leave because I do not want to have to look at you."

These kinds of words tend to sear in your heart and they are very hard to erase so I began to see myself through my father's eyes. What he thought of me became what I felt and what I was able to witness about myself. Now I realize that my fears were under a magnifying glass as I was a child and I could do nothing to defend or protect myself. Now I realize that what I went through made me incredibly courageous.

We are meant to shine and accomplish things in the world. As a

child I was taught that mistakes are a sign of weaknesses but this is not true. Mistakes are a sign of learning; we come into this world ready and willing to learn but when our parents use fear to dominate us, it blocks us, it handicap us. Because we are riddled with insecurity and shame, fear becomes part of our make up and we also tend to put our thoughts in control, creating a constellation of fears in order to protect ourselves.

We fear many things. Fear of failing. Fear of looking foolish. Fear of abandonment. Fear of betrayal. Fear of ridicule. Fear of getting hurt. Fear of rejection. All this fear has been magnified to the point that we become paralyzed with fear. When we are constantly anticipating the worst, our mind is totally devoid of positive thoughts which are so vital for our success.

Fear imposes limitations and it sets blocks but if we realize that these fears are false, then we can dedicate ourselves to realizing that we are worthy human beings and that we have everything inside of us that is needed to succeed. We have to clear our mind of false fears, feel them but gain the courage to confront them. The more you start feeling better about yourself, the more positive thoughts you will create and your fears will dissipate just as fast as they appeared in the first place.

We are born to manifest the glory of God that lives within us. By allowing our light to shine, we will be encouraging others to do the same.

Rob's Corner in Calgary



By Robert Champion What's on My Mind

The Calgary Flames, they're not doing so good this year. They should be able to beat the teams in their own division most of the time. Would like to head to B.C. this spring by April to visit my daughter Lori Anne and my three grandkids, ages three, eight and thirteen. They are out in Mis-

sion, B.C. Also would like to see a long time friend, Tony, whom I've known since I was 18 back in the summer of 1969 out in Burnaby.

Rob's Say of the Day

Think about the friends you have, value their friendship, stay away from arguments. Think about making new friends. Don't take your friends for granted. Don't take advantage of them.

Just Another Birthday

Just another birthday at 65. Don't feel much different than I did at 64. I just live day to day. don't worry about the next day too much. Had a nice birthday though-got together with some friends over at the Lord Nelson Pub. Friendly atmosphere, friendly staff. I haven't had a birthday party since around my 40's, some 20 to 25 years ago. A volunteer at Self Help baked me a cake. She's a friend of mine. I've known her since last October. I really didn't want a cake, but she really wanted to make me one so I shared it with some of the members

over at Self Help.

Sometimes I Wonder

Sometimes I wonder, will I be spending the rest of my life alone? Will I meet someone, someday, somewhere? I tell you, I don't believe in the internet! I'm a one on one type of person, kind of old fashioned. Still have a land line. Have a cell not working at the moment.

Rob's Last Say of the Day

It's been a pretty good winter so far. I have been riding my bike for most of it. Still have a long way to go before it's over. They have some good bike lanes. I'm sure there are a lot of angry motorists out there that don't like these recently added bike lanes because it supposedly takes away their driving space. Oh, well, life goes on. Have a friend who does not like these bike lanes one little bit. He thinks they are taking away his road space. I don't say anything. Well once I said to him, "Complain to the city.!"

The Path

By Ryan Robertson

Looking back there is nothing I would change. I have a loving family that has never quit supporting me and whom I have come to appreciate more and more as times moves on, a host of friends, who see that I am treated fairly, and myself, who really tries to cope in today's society.

With times changing like they

are, it becomes increasingly evident that people need to be more resourceful and be capable of making good, sound decisions for themselves.

Those that can will do well, and those that can't will be lost in a world which is terribly unforgiving.

Off times the way out of difficulty is tough, but an experience in which we all should learn. Patience is a key factor and one that really helps in difficult times like now. One thing a person should not do

is take things for granted. If they do life can be very disappointing. Another thing that some people err in is forgetting those who gave them a hand and not putting them in a more positive space. People should be both appreciated and respected for helping.

However it all stems back to the beginning – to family, to friends, but most importantly to yourself, the one who decides for you and weaves where your life path will go.

Ambrose place - One Year Later



By Paula Kirman

When the board of Ambrose Place (Niginan Housing Ventures on 9629-106 Avenue) first began designing and securing support for the project they came up with the original vision of providing safe, supportive housing to homeless individuals and couples of Indigenous descent. Their primary goals were:

1. House and keep people housed, creating a safe home for individuals.
2. Improve the quality of life of the residents.
3. Build community and to involve the residents in the development of their community.
4. Provide residents with a sense of control over their lives.

Ambrose Place started accepting its first tenants in late 2014. The year and a few months that have followed have seen changed lives and fresh starts for many who have passed through its doors.

"I believe that we have abso-

lutely surpassed and created a place where the Indigenous people can truly begin the first steps of decolonization in that they have their own home where they can eat traditional food, speak their language, practice their values system and ceremonies, and share their sense of humour with one another," said Executive Director Carola Cunningham. "Also, a place where they are supported by Indigenous staff that celebrate each person's life and instil hope for pimatisowin (good life). This is what it is like to be at home with yourself and your community."

Cunningham also noted that Ambrose Place has saved significant public money. For example, the number of calls for ambulances for some residents, which can cost around \$500 per call, has been dramatically reduced. Run-ins with the police and legal system, which can lead to mounting public costs, are also fewer for some. This is typical of social housing according to the Canadian Housing and Re-

newal Association (CHRA). Supportive/social housing costs \$25 to \$30 per day compared to a psychiatric inpatient bed at \$665 per day or jail at \$143 per day.

In addition Ambrose Place strives to be a good neighbour and contribute to the community with residents and staff pitching in to pick up garbage and beautify the grounds.

Most of all, Ambrose Place has had a tremendous role to play in helping people get their lives back on track. Over the past year, in the 14 affordable suites, 20 individuals have been assisted to build a rent record, obtain ID, secure employment/training and in some cases get their children returned before moving into more independent living arrangements. In the 28 permanent supportive living units, Ambrose Place has housed 46 individuals as singles or couples. Of those who moved out Cunningham said most relocated to other communities or felt well enough to live unsupported.

"There have been so many amazing life-changing stories," she said. "Individuals that needed critical surgery for some time while on the street and who were unable to slow things down to be healthy enough for surgery, individuals who have been diagnosed as terminal have lived past their life expectancy and are thriving. One lady was able to contact all of her nine children, explain why she gave them up, and speak to how her addictions had impacted all their lives. Some of those children have reacquainted themselves with their mother in

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Ambrose Place

Continued from page 18

Ambrose Place. They have heard the words they have longed to hear all of their lives, such as 'I love you' and 'it is not your fault.'"

Ambrose Place's first resident was the first to pass away, but even he experienced better quality of life. He arrived at the facility needing palliative care, and lived beyond the two months he was told he had left, passing away in June. "He was so happy to live here at Ambrose and often made bannock and duck soup. He told me that he loved how kindly the staff treated him, how we lifted everyone up," said Cunningham.

Success can also be measured in residents who have achieved stability that many take for granted.

"People on the affordable floor have had an opportunity to have a permanent address; secure employment, build a rental history and move on in life. Mothers in the process of working towards reclaiming responsibility for their children have built a foundation of sobriety as well as a rental history. They have been reunited with and

moved on with their children in tow," said Cunningham.

"Most significant is that people are accepted where they are at. Once housed, fed and feeling safe, they have slowed their intake of alcohol and drugs. On four separate occasions people, who we never would have thought had any desire to pursue sobriety, have stopped drinking and gone to treatment. That is not to say that there haven't been setbacks. Yet it is important to note that no judgement is attached to their setbacks. We just provide kindness and support."

Some future goals for Ambrose Place, according to Cunningham, include building a volunteer program, as numerous people have asked about volunteer opportunities. She also said that they need a van and a small car to assist residents in getting to medical or legal appointments.

"A van would come in handy to take people to the larger rural Indigenous communities to attend ceremonies, cultural camps and medicine gatherings," she said

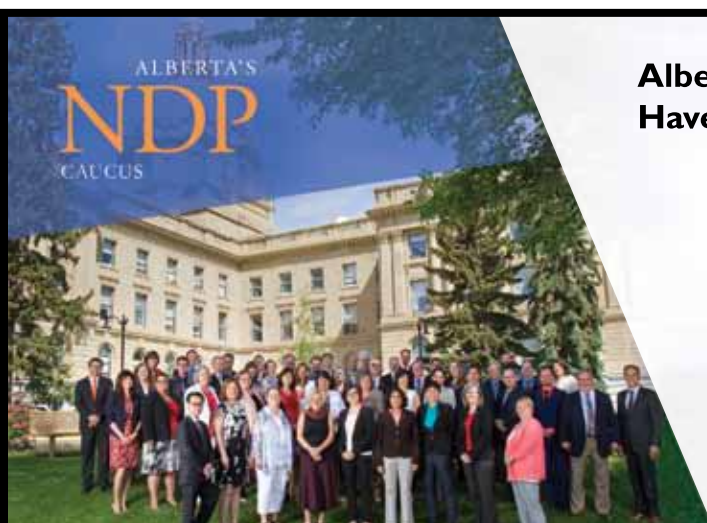
Ambrose Place also wants to continue to break down stereotypes concerning homelessness and

addiction in relation to the harm reduction model.

"As people become housed and adjusted to the concept of safe, secure housing their behaviour and lifestyle choices change," Cunningham said. "By applying the medicine wheel philosophy to harm reduction and alcohol intake, the whole person is taken into account. If a person has a mental, physical, emotional or spiritual incapacity or is on prescribed meds, we work with health care professionals, elders and staff to assist the individuals in making choices. This may include ensuring that amounts and time of administered alcohol will not interfere with their needed medication."

In addition Cunningham said Ambrose Place will "continue to expand engagements with other communities, (residents) own communities, families and work opportunities."

Ambrose Place seeks "to share our model with others to create other possibilities for the homeless. And to educate and share the cause and effects of homelessness by training our tenants to be speakers and presenters along side us."



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The Knife Wielding Wacko of Hastings Street

By John Zapantis

Photo by Theresa Wazlsh Cooke

Quick thinking and my creative effort for a safe escape from a dangerous situation certainly made the difference, in a life and death situation.

That's what happened when I was holidaying in Vancouver, B.C. back in the summer of 1987, while walking up East Hastings Street towards Main Street. I was approaching a traffic light so that I could later cross the street to continue on with my scenic walk in downtown Vancouver. Just when the walk light was about to turn from stop to walk, I happened to look over my left shoulder, and noticed a young man in his late twenties with long dirty blonde hair down to his shoulders, staring menacingly at me. He caught me by surprise as I stared back at him in discomfort.

He then ignorantly demanded out loud, "What are you looking at?"

I am not one to tolerate anyone's ignorance, so I replied boldly,

"What's it to you? You just happened to be staring at me after I noticed you looking over my shoulder. What difference does it make?"

He, in defiance of my moral stand on the issue, then decided to physically lunge at me for starters, but stopped abruptly in his tracks while trying to get me to think over what I was about to get myself into in the first place.

I let out an eruptive laugh, thinking that his scare tactic was kind of cute and had no overall impact on where the two of us were going in this odd situation. Then he changed his tune as breaking into an angered look, he placed his right hand slowly into his pocket and pulled out a six inch pocket knife.

I was feeling threatened as I backed up. Quickly turning to my right, I darted up Main Street running northbound along that street, while this knife wielding wacko followed me in quick pursuit, chasing me along Main Street. When we got about half way up that street, he started to decrease his running speed, finally giving in and coming to an abrupt stop.

I knew from my prior experiences of walking through the entire area of this skid row district that the Vancouver Police Department was just up the street and my intentions were to lure this man into the Vancouver Police Department, so that I could have him eventually arrest-

ed by Vancouver's finest at the front desk of the downtown detachment.

So with some street smarts, I called out to him loudly to issue the challenge, "Well don't stop now, we're almost half way there."

He then gave a menacing look and started giving chase to me once again, as I continued with a mad dash towards the Main Street Vancouver Police headquarters, luring him successfully right through the Vancouver Police Department's front entrance. He continued to chase me right up to the front the front desk, where two officers were standing behind that counter.

I loudly informed the two saying, "That man chasing me has a knife on him, frisk him, officers."

The two officers behind that desk, without any hesitation, quickly sprang into action, running from behind their desk demanding to the culprit that he get against the counter, while the other male officer frisked him for the knife.

The officer frisking the man, then looked over at me and said, "There doesn't seem to be a knife on him."

I immediately replied, "He must have thrown the knife away, just before he chased me through the front entrance. He really had a knife while chasing me down the street officer."

The officer replied, "I believe you."

The only assurance I needed was to have the officer hold the culprit

Continued on page 21



Knife Wielding Wacko continued

until I was clear out of the Hastings and Main Street area as an assurance for my safety, so in an emotional plea, I asked, "Could you hold him so that I can have enough time to clear out of the area?"

The officer replied, "We'll hold him for you for half an hour until you're out of the area."

I was very relieved about the co-operation I was receiving from

Vancouver's finest and thanked both officers as I was leaving through the front entrance and on my way out of the area in a really big hurry.

A week later, when I got back from my holiday in Vancouver, I shared that story with my mother and father. My mother concluded that the reason why I safely got out of that bizarre situation, was because she was praying for my safety all that time.

I was thankful for mom keeping me in her thoughts while praying for my well being and thanked her and the Good Lord for bringing me home safely.

I also vowed to my mother that I wouldn't be returning to that same area for some time, while on my next holiday to Vancouver. I had learned my lesson well in surviving that dangerous close call, while confronted by The Knife Wielding Wacko of Hastings Street!

DATS needs to fix fix flaw

By Darryl Gautheir

There seems to be a problem with the Disabled Adult Transportation System (DATS) that DATS seems to be ignoring or is unaware of. People's rides are booked and they are picked up and delivered via arrangements made on the computer. Most clients are supposed to wait five minutes ahead of time for their pick up and might have to wait an extra 30 minutes before their ride shows up. I thank DATS for they do what they can with what they have but I have been noticing more and more that people are being left behind if they did not make their pick up window on time. With the group of people I wait for DATS with normally there are regulars, the same people every day whose pick up times have been the same for two years. 95 percent of the time DATS is very good and on time. But the five percent of failure is unacceptable in my point of view. Some of the ones left behind are physically\verbally unable to fend for themselves, nor do they have a phone or the money to call DATS.

For two years I have been bat-

ting this flaw with DATS and they seem to be unable to do anything about it or maybe it is an over site. To add some extra confusion into the mix I have been facing the freedom of information act. Where I have been blessed is that most of the people I hang with can talk for themselves and the only thing wasted is our time because on average our wait time has been from 45 minutes to three hours. Had I not been with them, who knows how much longer it may have been.

All I am proposing is to fix the five percent flaw so that DATS has a 100 percent rating. Sometimes data is entered incorrectly, some times there is misunderstanding. Eventually the people get home. The big question here is WHAT IF I wasn't there? How many people are left behind?

Some thing that DATS should think about is when DATS leaves behind a client there should be an automatic resend of DATS to pick up the missed client. DATS has a computer orientated system which could easily recall or resend a dat to pick up the missed client . Instead I have to call and in a couple

of cases I have been on the phone every 10 minuets for two hours. Meanwhile I have been sitting with some very confused and scared individuals who are more confused because they are not going home at their regular time and worried that they may not have a ride home.

For some one who is brain injured this becomes traumatic. This has been going on for over two years and every time I have to go through the same protocols, not that this is an issue because I understand that it was set up to help protect the client. The flaw is that they leave them behind, miss pronounce their names, some times pick them up or drop them at at the wrong doors and some of the drivers don't walk into the entrances. We all are human and this is understandable but leaving behind someone who is in a **Wheel chair, Blind or Mentally challenged** is Not acceptable

Ever.

Politics, Percentages and Paycheques

By Timothy Wild

One of the most difficult aspects of developing and implementing effective public policy is defining the problem that actually needs to be addressed. Without a refined, precise and, perhaps most importantly, a commonly accepted definition of the problem, solutions are considerably more elusive to develop and problematic to implement. As we have seen over the course of the last few decades, this is particularly evident when it comes to dealing with poverty. We lack common ground. Is it strictly an income problem or is it related to larger structural factors? What's the impact of childcare and market housing? Where does income replacement fit in? There are so many factors to consider.

Furthermore, regarding "poverty", we can't even agree on what it means and how many people it impacts. Take for example, a recent report published by the ideologically based Fraser Institute. The document – An introduction to the state of poverty in Canada, written by Charles Lammam and Hugh Macintyre – contends that although poverty continues to persist at higher levels for certain demographic groups, overall poverty rates are falling dramatically. To demonstrate this, the authors argue that the percentage of households beneath the "basic needs poverty line has fallen from 6.7 percent in 1996 to 4.8 percent in 2009". They also suggest "for the overwhelming majority of Canadians who experience low income, it is a temporary situation, not a lifelong condition". Fair enough.

Or is it? Well, no, not really. There are a number of problems

with their premises and assumptions, and this combination then tends to lead to a troubling underestimation of Canada's poverty rate. However, I must admit, that as far as Fraser Institute reports go, this is one of the more balanced ones I've read. Lammam and Macintyre do compare rates and income bands derived from the "basic needs poverty line" to the more generally used and accepted Statistics Canada's Low Income Cut offs (LICO). As mentioned, they also note the uneven impact of poverty on particular groups (for example, people with disabilities, lone parent families, new Canadians and people who have less than high school education). They also recognize the need for further research and work in this area. But, in calculating the prevalence and incidence of poverty, the fact that they employ a very restrictive "basic needs poverty line", based on "the financial resources a household needs to stay out of absolute poverty", certainly has an impact on the resulting "decrease" in national poverty rates. To my mind this is an unfair and unreflective measure of poverty.

Actually, I would go further and argue that it is absolutely ridiculous to use absolute measures of poverty in Canada. We must aim higher. Following from that, it is more effective and efficient just to look at it in terms of relative poverty; a concept even Adam Smith supported and promoted. Perhaps we have less absolute poverty in Canada. That is undoubtedly a good thing. But by applying this measure the authors tend to underreport the level (and impact) of relative poverty in our country.

The Fraser Institute report

looks at the issue as one of conditions of absolute basic, day-to-day survival (Christopher Sarlo, an adjunct scholar with the Institute, once calculated this requirement right down to the number of toilet paper rolls "required" by the household), rather than linking it to broader conditions of social inclusion and economic participation.

And this can have consequences. Unfortunately, the calculation of "poverty rates" is not simply an intellectual exercise. It has very real daily implications for people who are already on the social, cultural and economic margins of society, as poverty rates can help set the anti-poverty policy agenda. We know, historically, that poverty has decreased in both Alberta and Canada largely because of public policy. The Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) and Old Age Security (OAS), for example, significantly reduced the poverty rates for older people, particularly older, single women. And supports provided through the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH), while not perfect, have helped people with a wide range of disabilities enjoy some improved quality of life due to income and programmatic supports. However, my fear is that if the Fraser Institute's "basic needs poverty line" gains increased public and policy traction in these tough economic times, there will be less political will to continue these not inexpensive anti-poverty programs. We all want poverty rates to decrease. Even if one is completely self-interested, as noted by Richard Wilkinson, income inequality is unhealthy for society as a whole.

Vision for Change

By Sid H.

I have always been a believer that dreams are what make life tolerable. Many people are dreamers and try to think of a big idea that can change the world. Some people are lucky; they manage to cash in a great invention or were in the right place at the right time. Sometimes all that is needed to be successful, however, is the knowledge that something in one's life has to change. A perfect example of a man, who decided to change his life, and eventually transformed into a successful entrepreneur is Frank O'Dea. O'Dea would eventually co-found the successful company Second Cup.

Frank O'Dea, at the age of 12, was helping his father with a campaign. He was paired with a young woman in her late 20's. After a few hours of work, she took him to her car where she molested him. Too afraid to tell his father, he lived within himself for quite some time. A few years later, sensing Frank needed some time away from home, his father enrolled him into a boarding school. This school was located only a block away from a bar. As Frank looked older than his 16 years of age, he was allowed to buy alcohol there and began con-

spicuous consumption daily. One day a police officer bought him drinks then drove him home where he was raped repeatedly. When Frank returned home after school finished he continuously stole from his family members to buy alcohol to escape reality. Finally getting the courage to tell his father about the police officer incident, he was dismayed to learn his father did not believe him. A few months later after many complaints about his stealing money and now known alcoholism, O'Dea was kicked out of his house.

O'Dea worked many jobs for quite some time but due to his alcoholism he missed work periodically or could not function and was fired frequently. In an attempt to reconcile with his parents he got married only to divorce a few months later. After that Frank was evicted having not paid his rent. Frank thus became a homeless panhandler. When he got 50 cents he would stay the night in a Toronto room that charged only 50 cents a night. However, in the Christmas season of 1974, he made a decision that would change his life.

After receiving a relatively large sum of change from someone, he pondered buying a bottle of

wine, but instead called Alcoholics Anonymous. After many months he eventually got an apartment and started a steady job. After receiving a phone call from a friend about a business proposition, Frank used his business sense to co-found the Second Cup coffee chain stores with Tom Culligan. This made him a millionaire but at the same time he was only getting his feet wet. Building off the success of his coffee company, he went on to found Proshred Security which shreds documents of onsite destructions. This company would eventually be established and used internationally. He has done numerous projects for the homeless both locally and in developing countries. He is an advocate for homeless and has funded the destruction of land mines in war torn countries. He has been recognized for his philanthropy on numerous occasions and was even given the Order of Canada.

While not everybody can achieve greatness in their lifetime, Frank O'Dea's message of using a vision and desire for a better life teaches us that even the smallest steps in life can lead to a great change. Sometimes all that is needed is recognizing that change is needed.

Politics, Percentages and Psycheques

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But I want the rates to decrease because fewer people are actually living in poverty, rather than due to the application of more restrictive definitions on what poverty actually is. When it comes down to it, poverty is not a numbers game but

an avoidable social condition that unnecessarily robs people of their potential and future.

Currently, we don't actually have a poverty line in Canada, even though LICO is generally accepted as an objective measure. To be sure, this lack of a poverty line serves to muddy an already complicated social issue. However, let's agree that it is a significant social

problem, put the politics of numbers aside, and work to develop a comprehensive social agenda to reduce poverty in our province and country in a way that will allow for real economic inclusion for all, not just the meager provision of the bare essentials. Because behind the numbers are real people, and it is the people that count.



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