

VENDORS PAY 50¢

PER PAPER

# ALBERTA Street News

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## VENDORS

## ALBERTA STREET NEWS

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# Vendors All!!

**By Linda Dumont**



If you are reading this, you have probably met an Alberta Street News vendor on the street, and purchased a paper. Your support for our vendors is important, and

I would like to express my thanks to all

of our Alberta Street News customers. Many of you also help our vendors in other small ways that are so important. – buying a cup of coffee, or simply stopping by for a chat.

Alberta Street News is made possible through donations and ads like our back page city council ad but with the upcoming civic election, once more the future publication of the paper is threatened. The September issue could be the last issue for a while, so if you see vendors selling the same paper in October, that is why. It costs roughly \$650 a month for printing costs.

The one thing that distinguishes street newspapers from other daily, weekly and monthly newspapers is that they are sold by vendors on the street. Content, language, and size may vary. In this issue, stories about street newspaper vendors from different countries around the world are featured. The countries they call home differ, but the stories have many similarities – they reveal the struggle to survive; the struggle with illness, with addictions, with homelessness and other challenges.

For some, vending is a way to top up insufficient fixed income from pensions, welfare, or part time employment; for others it is their only source of income. In some countries, like Germany, vending is considered employment, and the vendors even pay income tax on their earnings. Other newspapers, like the one in Athens, have a set price printed on

the cover of the paper. Alberta Street News vendors work as entrepreneurs – they buy as many papers as they need for 50 cents per copy, then sell them for the price of a donation. They also choose their location, and can work on any public sidewalk, or even on private property if they get permission from the owner. They keep the money they earn from paper sales.

Our Alberta vendors face many barriers to employment. Some are mentally or physically challenged with mental illness and chronic health problems, some have prison records and/or lack of education that make finding employment difficult. Vending provides the flexibility to choose your own working hours, so even if the vendor struggles with severe physical limitations, he or she can work in those small window of time when he or she feels ok.

For those who are living with addictions, vending helps improve self esteem. As one vendor, who was addicted to alcohol, said, “I can buy my booze. I don’t have to steal or panhandle to get the money for my beer.”

Over the past thirteen and a half years we have lost many vendors. More than 35 of our vendors have passed away. For some, vending was a job they could do even though they were very ill. We have had vendors selling papers from wheel chairs, or seated on their walkers. Nick Diklich, a Calgary vendor, sold from his wheel chair until he suffered a stroke and had to move into a nursing home. Robert Champion lost his wife five years ago and has not done well since. The last I heard, he was homeless, and he has not been in touch for months.

There have been some success stories – vendors who have sold papers then gone on to other employment. I met an ex vendor recently, who told me she is working as a security guard. Another one is employed distributing papers with Metro. Writer John Zapantis sold street papers back in the 90’s and still does occasionally, but has gone on to support the paper through his writing and other initiatives.



## Rose Gascon Real Change Seattle, USA)

By Lindsay Hueston, Real Change

If there's any vendor who deserves a cup of coffee in the morning, it's Rose Gascon.

Rose's daily itinerary consists of commuting from Issaquah to Ballard, selling Real Change most mornings at the Trader Joe's there, commuting back to Issaquah and working another job at Ross Dress for Less at night. "I have no time to sleep very long — when I'm in Ballard before 11:30, almost 12, then I just pick my things, and then it's 12 already before I lay down [at night]. And then at 5 I will get up and take shower before I go sell my papers. But I am happy to be part of Real Change, because I see my life change. Loneliness to happiness, it's always nice to be in."

Rose has felt that loneliness several times over the past few years. Immigrating from the Philippines, she's been in the U.S. "for six years on March 14!"

Before she immigrated to the states, Rose lived in the Philippines and was an administrative secretary for Dole — like the bananas. Then, she lived abroad with her husband, a chemical engineer and professor at universities in Oman and the United Arab Emirates.

"Seventeen years we stayed there, until my husband had a high blood stroke." He passed away a few years ago, and though Rose feels lonely without him, she's been struck by the power of the community around her who have helped to fill in those gaps. "I have experience also of sleeping outside. Not very long, because the people care for me and they don't want me to live like that; one family in Issaquah, they have a big house — so many times I've moved to another place because they say, you come to my house."

Rose stayed there for four months, and she met the family through sell-

ing papers. They put her in the guest room — even though "they have basement," she says. But the generosity of Rose's customers knows no limits: she also stayed at a customer's apartment in West Seattle for four months.

Though Rose now lives in Issaquah, she sold at the Trader Joe's in West Seattle for several months, and has switched stores several times due to long commutes from Issaquah. Her customers, though, no matter where she sells, have remained loyal and support her as she sells.

"[They say to me], 'You know, you make us happy if you are here with us. Every [person] coming — 'Rose, you okay? You want coffee?' They are very nice to me, just like that, and then I stop and I leave, and they drop me in my apartment, and I will change my uniform to go on the bus again. That's why I am happy at Trader Joe's now."

Rose really enjoys the high level of community support at her selling locations and the fact that the customers and managers want her around. She owes her success to a close friend who is another Real Change vendor — "always guiding me where I stay because he knows that I know how to talk nicely to people and sell my paper" — and former Real Change staff member Alex Becker —



"He is very nice, he was the one who trained me, and [taught me] how to talk to the customers."

"It's been really hard for me since my husband passed away. Your problem — nobody can solve your problem if you have a problem. It was very hard for me when I came here and it's good that I have a chance to join Real Change. I see my life change because of selling papers ... but I do love Real Change, because I see my life change. I become happy."



International  
Network of  
Street Papers

# VENDORS

## Camaxtli Ortiz (Mi Valedor, Mexico City, Mexico)

By Camaxtli Ortiz, Mi Valedor

My arrival in the homeless shelter was unforeseen. I was living in Cuernavaca, looking after my mum and working; my siblings always helped me. But I realised I didn't want to rely too much on my fami-

ly. I had devoted myself to them and didn't fully live my own life.

Then, four years ago, I came with my mum and sister to Mexico City to celebrate the festivals. My mum returned home but, as fate would have it, I couldn't go. Now I'm living my life by hook or by crook, but I'm definitely living it. In the shelter I've learned to value myself as a human being, and to motivate myself.

Through the magazine Mi Valedor I've learned more, like how to live with a lot of people. It's not easy because I'm very shy, but little by little I'm getting rid of that. I'm also lucky to be breaking my sales records. I remember once I sold 15 magazines in half an hour. In the workshops I've been able to acquire new skills, like knitting; I thought that knitting was done with hooks,

but no! You can knit with your fingers!

Saving money has been good for me. Before, I was selling the magazine and doing well, but I spent this money on parties. I never thought about saving... Here we never think about tomorrow. But you must have discipline – like the Japanese!

In the future I'd like to be emotionally stable, and physically too, because I've had problems my kidneys and heart. I would like to have house, a car and my own business that I could share with my friends. I hope that it could happen very soon, but it's going to take time. Mi Valedor has put me on the right track for this, because it teaches me to better appreciate myself and other people.

I used to be one of those people who didn't think much of the people on the street. I've learned a lot from my colleagues here, because before I was living in a community that was too rigid. The people on the street have really suffered, the cold, and from time to time people come up to them to hit them or even kill them.

I would say that buying Mi Valedor helps everyone involved: the help's mutual, and this isn't just any old magazine.

Translated from Spanish to English  
by Gary McCrossan

- EL VALEDOR -



Camaxtli Ortiz

**Earn money  
Sell Alberta Street  
News**

To sign up as a vendor call Linda  
at 780 975-3903



# Sergio Milan, Italy

## Scarp de'tenis

By Elisa Rossignoli, Scarp de'tenis, Milan, Italy

The first things you notice about Sergio are his willingness to work and his smile. He was a construction worker for many years but when the company he was working for closed he couldn't find a new job.

It wasn't easy at 57, but for a while he managed on his own, adapting to precarious housing situations in order not to be a burden to his family. About a year and a half ago, when that was no longer possible, he came to the shelter Il Samaritano.

Once there, he joined the day centre and started off by doing various jobs until he was asked to do carpentry and woodworking. At that point many people were already aware of his flexibility and willingness to work, and he's never done anything to prove them wrong. He's been involved with the department ever since, working tirelessly and enthusiastically. Since the day when he put on his blue work shirt for the first time he has cut wood into every possible shape and size: from panare (traditional round cutting boards for polenta), to toy parts, from small ready-to-assemble furniture parts to a zoo of stylized animals, and many, many more. If you go into the woodworking room and ask him to make you some impossible cut out that you designed, he will interrupt his work (which he's never short of), smile, and say 'Va bene' ('Alright').

It won't be long until you'll have what you asked for. So far he's nev-

er said 'no' to anyone. In the worst-case scenario, if the deadlines are tight and the bus is about to arrive, he'll smile and say 'Va ben, te lo faso doman' ('Alright, I'll do it for you tomorrow') in perfect veronese. The day after the requested shape will be ready for you exactly as promised.

His deadlines must take into account for the bus timetable because he's no longer living at the shelter. A few months ago he moved into a flat provided by the progetto casa solidale ('the supportive house project'). Sergio began working with Scarp at the end of the summer after becoming more integrated into his parish by volunteering at the neighbourhood party. He started out as a vendor right there in the neighbourhood, where many people already knew him. Over time he was able to gradually reach more readers. He enjoys working



**Sergio**

for Scarp and being a vendor gives him a small degree of independence.

Translated from Italian by Marta Anna Segit

**What can you do,  
when someone close to you drinks  
too much? You might be surprised  
what you can learn at an Al-Anon  
meeting.**

**Call 1-888-322-6902**

**for information about Edmonton (& surrounding areas)  
meetings**

**Email**

**edmontonalanon@gmail.com**

**or visit [www.al-anon.ab.ca](http://www.al-anon.ab.ca)**

# Celebrating ten years of Norwegian street paper Sorgenfri – with the vendors

By Trond Ola Tilseth, Sorgenfri

As Sorgenfri celebrates ten years providing opportunity to people facing homelessness in the Norwegian city of Trondheim, we meet four of their longest-serving vendors. They say that local people need to be reminded what the street paper is all about.

## Tom Vikdahl (35)



Started selling Sorgenfri in 2010 when the magazine was based in premises in Ravelsveita.

“The sales were absolutely tremendous at the time I started. Sorgenfri was really a hot topic and the buyers lined up waiting to buy magazines from us. I could sell around hundred magazines in a day. But it’s not like that anymore. Yesterday I stood from 9.45am to 4.15pm at City Syd [one of the largest shopping centres in Norway] and sold five magazines all together. I think people have forgotten what Sorgenfri is. Some are also grumpy because we increased the price from 50 to 100 kroner.”

## Gweir Augen (48)



Started selling Sorgenfri in 2007 when issues of the magazine were sold from a bus in a city square.

“There was a lot of fuss when Sorgenfri was new. We sold around 20,000 issues of the first number. It was for sale for two months and cost 40 kroner. Sorgenfri has meant a lot to us addicts. Where before, we had to fund our drug use by committing crime, we could now earn an honest living. Lately, sales have been down. Yesterday I sold only three magazines before noon. I think people need to remember what Sorgenfri really is.”

## Tor Ødegård (66)



Tor tarted selling Sorgenfri in 2007.

“I do not think so much about sales figures. I get to know many people through this job, people I can have a chat with when I meet them. In the past, I walked around the city a lot just to pass the time, but in the last ten years I have had a regular routine that gets me up and out in the morning. Meeting people is the most important thing for me.”

## Helene Disington (60)



Started selling Sorgenfri in 2009 when the magazine had premises on a street called Tordenskjoldsgata.

“[When I started selling the paper] the distribution room was so small that we had to queue outside to buy magazines. It was first come, first served when it came to choosing a sales pitch at the time. I remember there were a few addicts who had not received their fix yet, so there could be some violent episodes. We were not allowed to use the toilet after some syringes were found there. People have settled down considerably since then. The lives of people have become more stable and safe. I think Sorgenfri is due a lot of credit for that. At first, we had amazing sales figures. I could sell 20 or 30 magazines in four hours. It has changed dramatically. On Friday afternoon, I only sold eight magazines and then I was too tired to keep going.”



# Bluey The Big Issue, Melbourne, Australia)

**Interview by Katherine Smyrk,  
The Big Issue (Australia)**

Two years ago, when I was about 60, rather than die from drug abuse I decided it would be good to do something else. I was really in the gutter, going downhill fast, so the only thing I could think of doing was sell The Big Issue. And it's been perfect for me.

I was born to a large family in leafy Adelaide in the mid-20th century. I worked in sales, advertising and hospitality in Australia and overseas. I lived in Berlin for five years in the 70s.

I was 27 when I was the victim of a murder attempt. It was a random attack, they killed two other people; they were only teenagers. I started going downhill from there. I wasn't diagnosed with PTSD until much later – it wasn't recognised as a real diagnosis in those days. Post-traumatic stress disorder, I call it. It changed my personality. I self-medicated and I started to isolate myself as a result.

I was taking massive amounts of drugs every day. I went from high-powered jobs to a succession of marginalised jobs. I ended up isolated. Big Issue has enabled me to re-engage to some extent.

In a way, I find selling The Big Issue quite difficult, to be honest. But if I'm selling The Big Issue, I'm not taking drugs. I don't have to worry about paying bills. I don't have to worry about overheads. It's better to have 20 bucks in your pocket than to have nothing. Because if you've got 20 bucks, you're in control, you can do a lot of things, even if it's just reading a paper and having a coffee.

My life has improved 100 per cent since I started selling The Big Issue. The main thing about being disadvantaged or marginalised is that you're not in control. And, by nature, that causes



more secondary marginalisation problems. You're coming from a situation where you've got very low self-esteem. And if you're living in the gutter, even if you're staring at the stars, that's where you are.

The only way you can get back on your feet is stable housing, because then you can work out parameters and have control. I was very single-minded and relentless and I managed to get through the barriers, but that doesn't apply to everyone. I used to live under a tree. But now I've got housing commission accommodation, so I'm very fortunate.

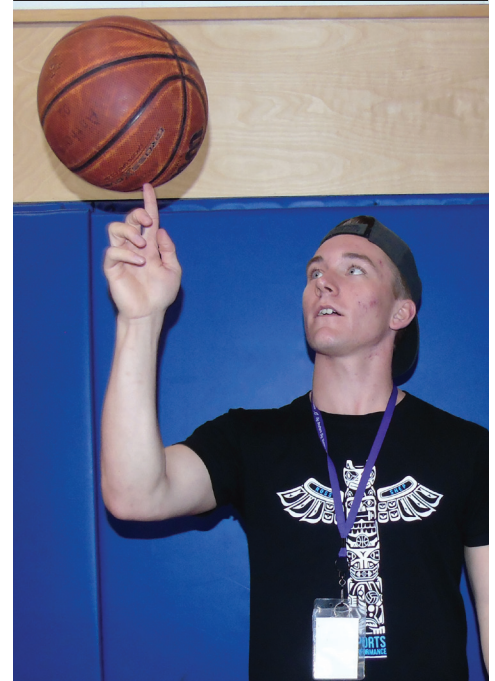
If I've got spare money from The Big Issue I tell you what, I enjoy it. I buy books, I see a movie. Look, I'm basically a middle-class tertiary educated person: I like going to the movies, I like reading, I like going to exhibitions, I like dinner parties. The normal things.

My life has improved 100 per cent since I started selling The Big Issue. That's what I think I would like to express to people that buy the magazine: it really does make a difference.

## BELOW

**Boys and Girls Club Big Brother Big Sisters Edmonton and area (McCauley Club) summer program staff member Austin, who wouldn't give out his last name, mentors children in various club activities, including his specialty teaching members this fancy move on the basketball court.**

**Photo by John Zapanis**



# Angelique Branston

## Alberta Street News

### Edmonton, Alberta

By Angelique Branston

Photo by Linda Dumont

My name is Marie Angelique Branston. I have been an Alberta Street News vendor for eight years. It is natural, I think, for people to want to know a little bit about me, especially those who have been regular supporters of mine throughout the years.

I am 40 years old. I have one son who has just turned into an adult. I separated from my husband when my son was three months old, ( I divorced after a five year custody battle) when I realized the man I had married was too similar to my ex father. I have no contact with my ex father since he was abusive in every way imaginable.

I live in a house that I share with family, and everyone chips in. I have PTSD and I live in chronic pain due to severe arthritis and Bell's palsy, which makes day to day things like cooking and cleaning hard for me to do. I have finally found a pain medication that works for me, Unfortunately, it is not covered by insurance so I pay for it out of pocket.

I sleep in the living room, a nuisance to my whole family, since I broke my shoulder November 2016. I need to sleep in a slightly upright position. Otherwise I wake up with my arm feeling numb from dislocation. I am saving up to buy an adjustable bed.

My hobbies are reading(sci/fi, fantasy, and historical novels). I write short stories and personal articles for the street news, as well as poetry. I am trying to write a poetry book. I enjoy singing, I also enjoy watching Japanese anime. My favorite animes are Peacemaker, Sukisho, and Tokyo Goul.

I have one dog, he is named Spotacus. He is eight years old. He is part Shiatsu and part Begal with a little bit of Dashhound.

I sell the Alberta Street News at the Strathcona Farmers' Market on Saturdays, which helps top up my medical allowance. On Sunday, when I am feeling well enough, I go to the local mission and help out with the song service .

This is my day to day life.

Peace be with you.





## Untitled

### By Dani Zyp

Magic happens  
 And I miss you  
 Disappearing items  
 Of no consequence  
 Appearing items  
 Of importance  
 The red ink suddenly  
 Turning blue  
 The leaves turning golden  
 Then brown  
 Eventually new sprouts of green  
 You had such a green thumb  
 I always thought you had magic  
 In your majestic kingdom  
 The purple shamrocks  
 Giant shining in the sun  
 I think of you

Your magic finger

Your magic thumb  
 Your magic twinkle in your eye  
 Gleam of love in your eyes  
 Depth of magic in your soul  
 You believed it was all a miracle

Painting and poetry channelled  
 Straight from god  
 With your beautiful hand  
 For lettering and brush strokes  
 Your touch as tender as with a baby or a wisp of feather  
 Cherished lines of wisdom  
 And humour as you would have  
 Trumped Donald Trump with  
 Reasonable insanity from the  
 libertine left with exaggerated  
 Cartoons and wit  
 I miss you today on a deep  
 Hot magical rhythm of love

## HEALING WORDS



BY THE CMHA  
WRITING FOR RECOVERY GROUP

## Vivian Risby,

### Alberta Street News

### Edmonton, Alberta

By Vivian Risby

Some people try to walk over me. "Good Luck!" Now I feel I hit the lonely place again. I can sit in a room with a lot of people but I feel so alone. I just wonder, "Why?" I had lost a lot of my family and now **the family I have left won't talk to me and, yes, I do have a very bad temper.** I sit at my chair and look at the church and pray and, yes, I do drink too much. I also know I need help. But I Have to take the first step. That will be the lonely road my Dad had said. Now I understand what my Dad had said; at the time it did not make sense. Thanks, Dad!. Now I understand I am the one who has to take the baby steps to help myself. No person can help but ME.

Right: Vivian Risby with her Alberta Street News jacket outside the Strathcona Farmers' Market where she vends on Saturdays.

Photo by John Zapantis



# September Daze

By Joane Bengier



1. Where did summer go? It went to join spring in the old season's home.
2. Where have the geese gone? They went south like the snowbirds.
3. Why did the geese fly south? It was too far to walk.
4. Why are the leaves turning yellow? They heard that blondes have more fun.
5. Where does the frost come from? There is a big ice maker in the sky.
6. Why are the days shorter now? Maxi-days went out of style and minis are in.
7. Why are the nights so long? They don't like getting up early when it is cold.
8. Why doesn't the first snowfall stay? It feels uncomfortable because it is an unwelcome guest.
9. Why do they call it fall? Leaves are falling, hemlines are falling and bears are falling asleep.
10. Where does heat go in the fall? The sun sucks it up through a drinking straw and stores it until next summer.
11. Why do we call it Indian Summer? Blame Christopher Columbus. When he discovered America he thought it was India so he called the natives Indians. He was so mixed up fall became summer.
12. Why do potatoes like the fall? They get picked first.
13. Why do we call it September? It could be Souptember because cold days bring hot soup or it could be Siptember because we sip that soup. Instead it is September because someone thought it was the seventh month.
14. What country do bears move to in the fall? The Hiber-Nation.
15. Why do we call it harvest? After harvest it is cold enough to wear a vest.
16. Why don't we labour on Labour Day? Shouldn't we call it Rest Day instead?
17. Why do we call them leaves? They leave us every fall.

## You May be poor if

By Joanne Bengier

1. The biggest bill you have ever seen is a twenty though you hear they make fifty dollar bills and even one hundred dollar bills.
2. Most of your clothes come from the thrift store or the liquidators if they aren't hand-me-downs. You splurge with a trip to Wal-Mart.
3. You eat food bought on special or reduced for quick sale if you can't find it at the dollar store.
4. You know there are live concerts, plays, sports events and horse races but only because you see them on TV.
5. You walk everywhere but take public transit when you must.
6. When you have to eat out, which isn't often, you ask for a doggie bag though you have no pet.
7. You have never been to a spa or exercise studio. You get your exercise the old fashioned way – by working and walking.
8. You have never had plastic surgery so you show your age and genetics without shame.
9. Most of your friends, neighbours and relatives are poor just like you.
10. You didn't invest in that burglar protection service because only an insane person would steal your treasures.
11. Most of your furniture is vintage and mid-twentieth century Good Will style.
12. You can't afford modern electronics so you use the internet at the library and watch TV at the bar.
13. You refer to utility bills as futility bills because it is futile to try to pay all of them on time.
14. The lower the interest rate, the happier you are.
15. You don't go out in bad weather because you can't afford suitable clothing.
16. You don't own a passport and have never been out of the province.
17. You only go to the recreation centre to vote and have your flu shot.
18. You are too cold all winter and too hot all summer because heat and air conditioning are too expensive.
19. You don't fill your prescription because it costs too much.
20. When you sit on a park bench, policemen come and ask you to move along.



# VENDORS

Raitis

Hinz&Kunzt,

Hamburg,

Germany

By Jonas Füllner, Hinz&Kunzt



"I don't want it to be a normal, boring photo", says Raitis, with a note of pride in his voice. Hence the dog hat, which he brought specially for the shoot. "It's good, don't you think?" Just like every day, Latvian-born Raitis appears early in the morning in the Hinz&Kunzt shopping area. He collects new papers, drinks his coffee and chats with fellow sellers. Then he continues on to his selling site.

It's very important to him to have a regular routine for the day. "I have a serious disease," explains 60-year-old Raitis. "It's called alcoholism." Even when he was just a child, the adults around him were always drinking.

Alcohol was the norm in his family. "Some of the family were able to control their drinking," says Raitis. "But not me."

When he was still a young man, he began drinking. To unconsciousness. Regularly. There were consequences. "Brain doesn't work right," says Raitis, smiling self-consciously. He doesn't like looking back on that time. Two marriages broke down. He dropped out of his studies.

For 16 years, he was dependent on the bottle, Raitis tells us. In 1991, he finally sought help in Riga through Alcoholics Anonymous. "I was so happy, because I found people who understood me," he says.

His health gradually improved. But his financial worries remained. "If a person has no job, it's hard to earn money." He did casual jobs in warehouses, and did forestry work. However, he struggled to concentrate and was barely coping.

It was more out of despair than a sense of adventure that he decided to hitchhike out of his country in 2001. His goal? To get to Germany. He

learnt the language at school, Raitis explains. The journey took 17 hours. "At the German border, I was really struggling. I cried a lot."

The fact that his final destination was Hamburg was by chance. For the first few nights, he slept at the headquarters of the Bahnhofsmision, a charity helping those arriving at the railway station. Then he searched for a bench in a park. Suddenly, it began to rain.

"That's when it became clear to me that I had a problem," Raitis says, who is a short, sturdy-looking man. Once again, it was Alcoholics Anonymous who came to his aid. This time, they helped him to find a place to spend the night. That was also how he found out about Hinz&Kunzt. It was very lucky for him that he did. "I didn't want to beg any more," says Raitis. But at the same time, he still hadn't found any work.

Now, Raitis has his own flat. He's back in contact with

his kids. And he is standing firm, despite the end of a new relationship he had formed here in Germany.

"The dry years have been my best times," says Raitis, who speaks with real conviction. But is he happy? "Of course, for many years the grass was greener in my home country. And the sky wasn't as blue as in Latvia," he remembers. "But I love Hamburg. I've been to Berlin a few times. But to me, Hamburg is the real Germany. "There's nowhere else I'd rather be now."

Translated from German by Melanie Vogt

# Invalidation of our childhood

FOR CHILDREN, THEIR TRUTH IS THEIR STRENGTH, YOU TAKE THAT FROM THEM THEY BECOME EMOTIONAL CRIPPLES.

Parenting is one of the greatest responsibilities a person can take on. After raising children from birth to adulthood, a parent looks forward to having a life long relationship with their adult children. Unfortunately, circumstances sometimes arise where an adult child chooses to ignore their parents. These situations can often cause hurt feelings and emotions, but parents must be honest with themselves and think if their relationship with their children was based on fear or on love.

Were they the kind of parents that caused emotional and physical pain to their children, or the kind of parents that ignored the emotional needs of their children; maybe they were the kind of parents that were indifferent and inadequate, or exploitative and cruel. The fact is that if the parents were toxic, they were able to cause incredible damage to their children, the kind of damage that manifests itself in adulthood and the kind of damage that the children do not want to be put through any longer.

The fact is that there are million of adults that have suffered tremendously, and have become emotional cripples because of the invalidation that they suffered as children. As adults they are living the hurtful legacy of their toxic parents and these parents are oblivious to the damage that they have caused to their children. Or is it because they can not take the responsibility for their poor parenting and instead of taking the opportunity to ask forgiveness to their children, they continue to invalidate them in every way?

I know myself if I had gone to my

father and asked him why he treated me the way he did, in this instance I would have been denied my "truth" of what he did; he would have ignored the wounds that he inflicted on me and in the end I would have been invalidated and blamed for his toxicity.

I can site so many examples of how he used to fabricate things or take the opportunity to target me so he could physically punish me, making me feel responsible for his toxic behaviour.

I will cite one time when he went drinking and left his dog in the truck. Unfortunately he left the window open so the dog took the opportunity to escape. When he arrived he was angry and desolated and while he was talking to my step mother, I asked what happened. Well, he looked at me and he stated "It is your fault that I lost my dog," and he started to hit me. I still can feel the weight of his hands on my head and on my body. His error became "my fault".

My father was not unique; he was like many other fathers that exist in the world leaving victims at the end of their journeys as "parents". For me the end of his and my mom's journey was when I was six. Then they just abandoned us and probably it was the best thing that could have happened in my life as my paternal grandmother raised us. Through her we were able to learn trust, love and personal responsibility. There were five of us and she was in her sixties.

She was an excellent role model and through her I learned to stand up for my truth, what I see as my truth, what I feel as my truth and what I speak as my truth.

Six year of toxic parenting was



enough to cause damage which developed into a very negative personal image and negative self esteem. I grew up suffering from the hurtful legacy of my toxic parents and carrying the burden of guilt and shame as I used to believe that there must have been something wrong with me. I heard the words enough and I was able to feel their disdain. This has been one of the hardest thing to deal with because through that invalidation, I ceased to be the kind of person I was supposed to be, I learned to live the abusive words that were spoken to me, I lost my identification as a human being, I detested myself so much I wanted to disappear. I was turned into a shadow of hurt and pain and ridden with fear.

Now when I see a parent figure, the horrible words they tell their children, the horrible way that they make them feel by their indifference, I re-live the pain and I am able to identify their helplessness.

How many young adults, in order to avoid the wrath of their father's or it could be their mother's, choose to live in their bedrooms, away

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## Second series of ASN jackets are handed out for free to ASN vendors and writers

By John Zapantis

Alberta Street News is a provincial street newspaper that provides a living income for its ASN vendors, who sell the paper for a donation on various street corners of Calgary and Edmonton.

The sale of the paper supplements their (A.I.S.H.) Assured Income for the Severely Disabled, or welfare supports. Some vendors also play an integral role in writing about their relevant social issues each month that could include commentaries on human behaviour personal loss, or even rising above adversity. The stories could be on anything that comes to mind that impacts their personal lives.

Each month prior to the new ASN issue's publication and distribution on the street corners of Calgary and Edmonton, vendors buy papers at a price of 50 cents each, then turn around and sell each paper for a donation.

Vending can be a tough job at times and it's not so easy when a vendor is being mentally and verbally abused by a sometimes not so friendly public.

ASN vendors also have to be tolerant to the odd ignorant passerby. When worse comes to worst, vendors will sometimes experience uncalled for remarks from a verbally abusive passerby, who will tell the vendor, "Get a real job!"

ASN vendors know themselves that the rude remarks hurled their way, should go in one ear and out the other.

ASN vendors have my vote of confidence and deserve all the respect in the world. They are notably the unique ones, who have managed to rise above adversity to get to this stage of vending in their lives. Some have suffered long term homelessness. Some have experienced sexual or mental abuse. Some have even experienced alcohol and drug abuse, all at no fault of their own.

Some vendors are fortunate to be on A.I.S.H. and independently living in their own homes.

Despite rising above adversity, all in

ing the odds of failure and proving the public wrong, by showing that vendors can be just as productive as any working contributor, whether it's selling the paper to the public, or writing about their personal issues.

I truly admire the many ASN vendors who go out on those many street corners to courageously make that honest effort to bring you the Alberta Street News.

I also admire ASN vendors Angelique Branton, Harvey Laderoute, Rob Champion and Vivian Risby. These four are notable for making written contributions that have helped our ASN readers understand that some vendors have no limits and are capable of going beyond their reach, when informing and educating the ASN readers about important issues that impact their personal lives.

So to award those courageous achievements in vending and for some vendors for their many written contributions, last month I saved \$733.60 for 12 ASN jackets that had the new ASN logo that I designed, embroidered on the left heart side of these jackets. The contract was taken on by Elite Sports Wear and Awards.

To add to the character of these jackets, I also had the name of a ASN vendor or writer embroidered on the top right chest side of these jackets followed by their occupational titles right underneath their names.

So again, for the second time, vendors and volunteer writers, will be receiving ASN jackets at the end of September, including ASN vendors Trevor Starr, Dawna Romine, Clifford Mitchell, Belle St. Michel and Bill Cunningham, ASN volunteer writers, Rob Champion, Allan Sheppard, Maria B. and Joanne Bengier.

Those that have their names published in my story, who are eligible

all, you have to admire their courageous step in beat-

for this second series of jackets, may call my resident phone number in Edmonton at 780-250-7126; if it's our Calgary vendors and writers they just have to add the 1-for long distance to call collect at 1-780-250-7126. Leave a brief message on my answering machine with your name and phone number, mention the date, time and location where we can meet, so that I can bring your jacket to you.

Calgary vendors and writers will have their jackets mailed to them.

I'll be making a third series of jackets in March of 2018 next year.

This again is my way of showing my sincere appreciation to ASN vendors and writers for the important contributions they have all made to Alberta Street News. Like I've said from time to time in previous issues, while commending those important contributors, without that incredible team effort, we simply wouldn't have a paper!



**Alberta Street News Media Relations Coordinator/Reporter John Zapantis modelling his new look ASN jacket.**  
Photo by Mikayla Webster

# Invalidation of our children

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from the toxic parent. This kind of parents are time bombs, anything triggers them and is better to stay away from them. There is no one that cares about the reason that the child lives in isolation and refuses to integrate with the family, the child is well aware that if he speaks out, chaos will arise and in the end it would become the child's fault for speaking up.

These children blame themselves for the abuse, they are defenceless, if they say something to the mother, the mother will get angry with the father and the father will only deny what he has done, leaving the child in such an uncomfortable place, feeling that he cannot trust what he is feeling and knowing that the person that demands his respect lies and can not be trusted.

In the mean time, they feel invalidated, isolated and worthless, nurturing feelings of hurt, anger and confusion. It becomes a very dark vortex in their life.

It is not only the occasional physical abuse but the constant emotional and verbal abuse that tend to a pattern of behaviour coming from the toxic parent that becomes a consistent and dominant reminder that the child is worthless and good for nothing. These parents are guided by control not by love, constantly attacking the core of the child and crippling him or her.

At the core of every adult child of toxic parents - no matter how strong or successful he or she may appear - is a blameless child whose trust has been betrayed by the people that were responsible to protect them and to ensure that their rights were not violated.

I have witnessed children having the enough courage to tell someone that they trust, something that they witnessed. You can see their power when they are disclosing but then the mother is told and the mother protects not the child but her partner and questions the child in such a way that the child knows with certainty she has to lie in order to pacify things. You see the pain in the

child's face and the image is seared in your mind. The parent does not rest until the child says: "I lied, I did not see anything".

As for the mother, she is greatly satisfied that she was able to make the child recant what she has seen in order to protect others. And this is not the end because the mother will ensure that the child keeps that secret without realizing the damage that she is causing to her daughter by invalidating what she seen, having to surrender her truth and having to carry what she calls a disgusting event as a secret. To me this is incomprehensible - how a mother that is supposed to love and protect could become the child's worst enemy.

Abuse comes in many forms. A child can be brought up well clothed and fed with all his needs supplied except for the all-important need to be empowered. No physical harm is ever done to him, yet, as each year goes by, his spirit shrivels up inside the child more and more, as a plant will shrivel without sunlight, desperate for the smallest demonstration of total acceptance. Eventually, he grows to adulthood; everything seems to be normal, yet the child is crippled inside by all the secrets the he/she carries and the indifference about his feelings. This is invalidation.

Most children at some point in their lives experience being excluded from a party or suddenly being ignored by friends. Being rejected or repeatedly ignored becomes a very painful experience for a child. But as a parent, if you have been ignorant and you are the person that is invalidating the child, you will not be able to help him/her how to deal with exclusion.

Uninvolved parents are completely unaware of their children's feelings, they may even make statements to a child such as "I don't care what you do." These parents may be depressed or overwhelmed with the struggle of daily living, but the result is a child with little or no supervision, support or affection. In some cases, the uninvolved parent may be outright neglectful and putting their children's safety at risk.

When these children become adults, they continue to bear the burdens of guilt, inadequacy, making it extremely difficult for them to develop a healthy

and positive image of themselves.

This results in a lack of confidence and self worth that will plague every aspect of their lives.

Parents who care for their children in a loving, responsive way, tend to have children who are securely bonded to them and who develop into self-confident, well adjusted children.

Parents who talk to their children, listen to them, and spend quality time with them tend to have bright children who do well in school.

Parents who behave in an honest, kind, and conscientious manner with their children are likely to have children who also behave in an honest, kind, and conscientious manner.

The most powerful influence parents can have on their children's lives is through the example they set by how they live their own lives. Children instinctively identify with and imitate their parents and adhere to their values.

Child welfare and protection laws that we have in the prevention and detection of child abuse, are only as effective as the actions taken to effectively protect our children. We are lacking enough public education campaigns, places where parents can go for advice without involving the police. We need the kind of justice system that would reflect our values as caring human beings. The justice system that we currently have protects the perpetrators and fails to deter crimes against children. We need awareness and prevention not statistics of children that have been abused and killed at the hands of the people that they were supposed to trust.

Good parenting foster empathy, honesty, self-reliance, self-control and kindness. Failing to do this, we have to accept the responsibility of the adults that we are moulding, ridden with anxiety, depression, antisocial behaviour, abusing alcohol and drugs.

I am tired of hearing, "Our parents did the best they could." No, we did what was easier and what did not took so much effort. Children deserve more from us; we need to become better and more effective parents.



# A Mosquito Tale

By Sharon Austin

Many years ago I heard a joke about mosquitoes that seemed fitting for this summer. One day a city fellow rode his horse up to the saloon and proceeded to tie him to the hitching rail. "Don't leave your horse out there," a local farmer told him. "Put him in the stable or the skeetoes will get him."

"Away with your tall tales," the city fellow scoffed. An hour later when he left the saloon the horse was lying on it's side, sucked dry, and the mosquitoes were playing horseshoes.

Where I live near a marsh, a lake and a duck pond the mosquitoes can be unbearable when the sun goes down. This summer we have had a lot of rain and there is standing water in the ditches which compounds the problem. Some friends of ours from the city came to visit in the heat of the day. They told me that in such a lovely secluded place we should have an outdoor hot tub. "Sure, I said, "but the only way we could use it would be with a mask and snorkel."

They thought I was joking until the howling hoard sent them running for their car and spinning out of the gravel driveway.

I have compiled a list of how you can tell if you have a worse than average mosquito problem where you live.

\* Some folks are signing a pe-

tition to have the provincial bird changed to the mosquito.

\* My neighbour to the right mows his lawn wearing a bug suit complete with hat and veil.

\* My neighbour to the left bought a bug zapper and he cleans under it with a shovel. The zapper burned out in two weeks. Their children watch vampire shows and "The Walking Dead" without batting an eye but let mother suggest a fun sleepover in the tent and they run screaming for their rooms.

\* The old fellow who lives alone in a camp deep in the woods told me that eating all the fresh garlic that you can keeps the mosquitoes at bay. He also wears a string of garlic around his neck. "It sure keeps the mosquitoes away," He told me happily, "And it works on people too."

\* Recordings of our mosquitoes have been used in air-raid signals, heavy metal music, and burglar alarms.

\* The swallows that feast on the mosquitoes are getting way too fat.

Seriously, there are some things that we can do to protect ourselves without spraying

ourselves with repellant. Mosquitoes are attracted to dark colours, sweat, and fruity shampoos and body sprays. Wearing light coloured clothes and using unscented toiletries will help to keep the mosquitoes away. It is said that putting a dryer sheet in your pocket while hiking or camping will keep insects away. I have not tried this one personally as I have a sensitivity to dryer sheets and don't use them. Most bugs dislike cinnamon and sprinkling it around points of entry will help to keep them out. Other natural deterrents are white vinegar sprayed around doors and windows and sliced onions in a bowl of water. Citronella candles, torches, and lanterns are also a good choice for repelling mosquitoes without using harmful chemicals. If you are lucky enough to have bats flying around at night, rejoice. They are eating thousands of nuisance bugs every night.

I am always a little sad to see September come as it brings an end to the warmth and beauty of summer. There is one good thing about September, though, the colder nights bring an end to the mosquito problem.







**Edmonton**

*As members of City Council, we have a goal to end poverty within a generation. It's shared vision of prosperity for all, where every Edmontonian has an equal opportunity to live, work, participate and thrive. Ending poverty benefits us all, and we've started a city-wide conversation about it. Our approaches to ending poverty — even the ways we talk about poverty — are evolving. We know there is no one simple solution. We invite you to raise your voice, share your opinions and be part of this conversation. Let's end poverty together.*

**[www.endpovertyedmonton.ca](http://www.endpovertyedmonton.ca)**



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