

VOICES FROM OUR STREETS
SUMMER 2015



“A place that would welcome all ...”

It has been a wild and wonderful few months. For me it started in April with a phone call from Dr. Jack Lightstone, Brock University's President asking if I would accept an honorary doctor of laws from Brock University at June's 2015 social sciences convocation in recognition of humanitarian service to the community. It was a complete surprise—not planned—not an expected outcome, a magical moment.

The June convocation was followed immediately by a second amazing event—the purchase of 17 Gale Crescent as Start Me Up Niagara's permanent home. This took years of planning, fundraising and a circle of community support. Start Me Up has a home and is here to stay!

This all happened as SMUN celebrates its 15th anniversary year of incorporation as a charitable organization. When it opened SMUN focused on working with mental health consumer survivors to start small businesses. This was a way to increase participation in the labour market by a group who were under represented. It became apparent from the very beginning that being out of the labour market was only one problem people faced. By



far the common over-riding issue was poverty that was often coupled with housing instability, homelessness and a myriad of other harmful consequences. As a volunteer at Out of the Cold I knew a bit about poverty, homelessness and hunger and as Director of SMUN I had the organizational structure including an active advisory board to try to establish a resource drop in centre open every day of the year. It would offer basic needs, practical assistance, activities, housing and employment supports. It would be open to all. It exists today thanks to many.

In the first 10 years Start Me Up Niagara defined its philosophy, increased its financial stability and established an inclusive, accessible model of service delivery. During the next five years it expanded programming, added new partners, achieved some success and gained trust. Now at 15, Start Me Up is feeling confident, impatient with

the status quo, ready to stretch limits and find solutions. It is ready for the next stage of its journey toward its vision of a society where everyone is included, healthy and self sufficient.

Today it sees the increasing awareness about poverty and homelessness. In Niagara two encouraging signs are the Niagara Poverty Reduction Network, and the Region's Housing and Homelessness Action Plan which clearly supports the Housing First philosophy that is spreading across Canada. There are solutions. I believe the community is up to the challenge.

SMUN's foundation was laid on some advice Tony and I received from Joe Mancini, Director of the Working Centre in Kitchener back in 2001 when we visited him to talk about expanding existing programs by opening a 52/7 drop in resource centre. 'A place that would welcome all, give people a place to go, to do something and be somebody.' Not exactly a clear picture! Joe told us to trust our instincts, not to believe in experts, think long term and build community. Joe will be here on September 9 at 7 p.m. for a community conversation. ***Open to all.***

Happy 15 years! EVENTS

WE CELEBRATE **SEPTEMBER** AT THE SMUN CENTRE, 17 GALE CR.

Sept. 2

'Our Own Home' Celebration

3-5 pm - refreshments,
entertainment

7-9 pm **AGM & Volunteer
Awards**

Sept. 9

7-9 pm - Joe Mancini, from the
Working Centre, Kitchener - **Building
Community** www.theworkingcentre.ca

Sept. 16 5 - 7 pm Pasta Supper

Sept. 23 7 - 9 pm 'Home at Last'
Video Release - entertainment

Sept. 26 11 am

SMUN float in Wine Festival Parade

Summer GARDEN FARE

Fruit, veggies, herbs for
sale outside SMUN Centre
every Thurs 10 am - 2 pm

Expressions Art Collective

Thursdays - 2 - 4 pm
See Kim, 905.984-5310

Harvest Festival 2015

Westminster United Church
**A Celebration of Harvest &
Neighbourhood** Oct. 3 11 - 3 pm

FEDERAL ELECTIONS?

Interested in community life?
Angela Browne - [http://hereis-
myminorityreport.blogspot.ca/](http://hereis-myminorityreport.blogspot.ca/)

JOIN US FOR...



Pasta Dinner

Dine in or Take Out

Wed. Sept. 16

only **\$10.00**

5 - 7 p.m.

17 Gale Crescent

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Thanks to our dedicated group
of volunteer reporters and poets

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Street News

VOICES FROM OUR STREETS

Published Quarterly ©

Start Me Up Niagara

Working Together...Moving Forward

Works with individuals whose
lives have been impacted by poverty,
unemployment, homelessness,
trauma, disabilities, health and
substance abuse issues to develop
level of self sufficiency and
quality of life by
providing opportunities to improve
health, increase community integration
and support employment.



To donate or contribute to
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SMUN Garden season is here!

by Debbie Sexsmith

I would like to thank everyone for joining us at the SMUN Garden Celebration on June 17th.

Special thanks to Rev. Cheryl and Bonnie for bringing blessings to our garden.

We have also had wonderful volunteers from North Face and Tzu Chi join us this year.

Tzu Chi has helped plant a whole row of Asian vegetables.

The rain and the sandy loam soil of Vineland have created a lush harvest already. The zucchini boats are coming.

Visit us at the **Farmers Market** here in St. Catharines from 7 am - 3 pm on Saturdays at Market Square. We are at **Silver Spire United Church** on Sunday mornings at Le Cafe. AND the **SMUN Kiosk** opens Thursdays from 10 am - 2pm in front of our building at 17 Gale Crescent.



Garden Baskets

Pick up your seasonal fruit and vegetables every week from June through October in downtown St. Catharines. A full weekly share (10 to 12 items) is \$500 and would feed a family of four. A bi-weekly half share (5 to 7 items) is \$250. The cost will be prorated at the time of order to accommodate later orders.

First baskets include asparagus, salad mix, spinach, arugula, scapes, radish, green onion, strawberries and rhubarb. By Thanksgiving you'll be choosing from broccoli, squash, tomatoes, peppers, celeriac and maybe try cardoon.

You are contributing to a healthier, sustainable community by purchasing these baskets.

905-984-5310 garden@startmeupniagara.ca



No Place Like Home!

The goal of owning our home has been achieved! We now hold the deed for the Centre at 17 Gale Crescent. On behalf of SMUN Board of Directors, **congratulations to our director, Dr. Susan Venditti**, for her dogged determination to reach a cordial and equitable deal with the Sardegna Club of Niagara. I was witness to Susan struggling through the many legal and financial hoops and hurdles.

I also want to thank our special friends who lent their essential expertise. Our monthly costs are now greatly reduced, and we can begin important upgrades, starting with the heating and air conditioning. As owners, we'll have access to Trillium funding for accessibility and energy efficient upgrades. What building improvements would you like to see? And yes, the old 'Sardegna' sign will soon be replaced with the Start Me Up Niagara banner.

It was well worth the 3 Coldest Night of the Year walks to help raise funds.

Thanks to each and everyone in the community for their contribution!!!

~ **Bob Hillier**, CHAIR, BOARD OF DIRECTORS



People mean a lot too

It all started with Tony at a meeting and Susan V. Then I met with Susan S. in the kitchen, we work to other job. Work at Start Me Up Niagara, started in 2014 with Susan S. and Jen. This is my second year. I did a walk on the "Coldest Night of the Year". In the office, I help Patti and Susan downstairs.

I help Jen do phone calls and I like it. I like to work with the people. Kim is a good person to talk to and to work with. Dawn is good to work with also. Paul is good for writing for St. Vincent de Paul voucher. Darren is good to

work with too. Faye helped me get a job. Cool Kyle helps people get a apartment which is good. Tara helps people a lot of people. Caleb helps at the church, he's cool. Cisco likes to talk to people good. Patty is good to work with. Judith works with me all the time, she's awesome. Debbie works in the greenhouse. Karen is a good lady to work with. Jen helps people get a job that is good. People mean a lot too. I think of my family. OK thank you.

by Loriann Smith
Feb. 26, 2015

From the bus

Two gentlemen, who appeared a little down on their luck, met on the bus and had this not so quiet conversation in the seats across from me.

They were obviously happy to see each other as one man said to the other.

"It's good to see you. How have you been?"

"Not so good," the other man

replied.

"One thing went wrong and then another, and then everything went wrong dragging me down with it"

"I get it," the other man said, "Been there myself."

"Thanks," his friend replied, "It will turn around."

"Yes it will," his friend laughed, "and the ride up is so much more fun." *by L. R.*

Cinderfella by jb

Hey, what's up?



Oh --one bad thing leads to another, so I'm down?



Yeah, and one good thing leads to another - you get up...



way more fun in that direction!!



**HOME AT LAST,
HOME TO STAY**

Finally finding a home

I've had lots of times where I lived on the streets. This winter wasn't easy for me, stayed at the churches, and my friends. Some people don't even have that option.

I just got an apartment in the middle of May, before that I was homeless for over a year. Now I don't got to worry about where I'm going, I know if I go out somewhere I have a place to come back to, I'm not asking myself anymore "Where can I go?"

Today it's warm and there's a chance of showers. If I didn't have my home I'd be under a bridge somewhere. I wake up every morning and it's home. I can walk to my washroom and not worry about seeing anyone.

I think I'll be here for a while. It's home, yes it's home.
by J. S.

HOMES NOT HOSTELS

by Kyle Kuzyk

The Rise of the Housing 1st Epoch

'Housing First' is a recovery-oriented approach to ending homelessness that centers on quickly moving people experiencing homelessness into independent and permanent housing and then providing additional supports and services as needed. It is an approach first popularized by Sam Tsemberis and Pathways to Housing in New York in the 1990s, though there were Housing First-like programs emerging elsewhere, including Canada (House-Link in Toronto) prior to this time. The basic underlying principle of Housing First is that people are better able to move forward with their lives if they are first housed. This is as true for people experiencing homelessness and those with mental health and addictions issues as it is for anyone. Housing is provided first and then supports are provided including physical and mental health, education, employment, and substance abuse and community connections.

This was the beginning of the "Housing 1st" movement, and I think where we still are today. It seems to make really good sense doesn't it? I mean how difficult is it to get your life in order when you are sleeping in a tent somewhere, always having to make sure your site is dry, your belongings are hidden during the day so no one rips them off while you are out looking for employment or enough food so you don't go hungry today, drying out your clothes and bedding from the previous night's rain, hiking out of the bush and looking for an open washroom somewhere where

you can get cleaned up enough to be considered "acceptable" by the rest of society. I believe this is true whether living (camping is something people with money do) in the bush or on a friend's couch or down on a park bench somewhere. Having to pack up your belongings each and every day and being forced to live at the whim of Mother Nature or a friend's mercurial nature really makes things difficult for a person



to find peace of mind and most importantly the time to figure out life for oneself.

My name is Kyle Kuzyk and I am a housing worker here at Start Me Up Niagara. It has been my good fortune to find meaningful employment here in St. Catharines assisting individuals to find and retain housing. The goal is to break the cycle of homelessness, encouraging people to form attachments to community and to their home; we really want people to identify where they live as a home as opposed to "just

a room" or a place to crash. When people form a positive attachment to their dwelling they are less likely to leave, they are more likely to stay put and invest in both their community and their home, and the more they invest in their living situation the more they want to invest and the more they have to protect from ever becoming homeless again.

Now back to the Housing 1st model or project being conducted here in the Niagara Region. Basically the Niagara Region understands we do not have enough affordable housing stock available; it also understands that the costs associated with homelessness (regular hospital visits, declining health, providing food and feeding programs and hostel stays, etc...) is more than the cost of keeping someone housed. With record numbers of people unemployed, on assistance and using foodbanks the need for affordable housing is needed now more than ever before. There is not enough monies available to build all the units needed to solve the problem and as such we are always looking at other ways of mitigating the damage. Housing 1st is one such way the Region has decided to address these issues. How the project works is that The Region makes available (x) number of subsidies to attach to individuals to assist them in finding and retaining market rent apartments throughout the Niagara Region. The subsidy is an acknowledgement that there is not enough money made available to people on "fixed" or "low" incomes, you know, people on Ontario Works, people on Disability

continued on page 6

marginally employed. How can you afford a home on a \$376 per month Housing allowance? So the recipients of the subsidy is required to pay the housing allowance they receive from OW or ODSP and the Region pays the difference between what the client receives and what the unit rents for on the open market. The amounts the Region will approve are hard capped at average market rent prices for this region.

We (Start Me Up Niagara) help recipients find available rentals in the community in which they would like to live, negotiate with landlords, set up payments in conjunction with OW or ODSP,

I guess when you turn off the main road, you have to be prepared to see some funny houses.
Stephen King

arrange for the move, help with obtaining furniture and we like to try to smooth out any issues or bumps that might arise during the adjustment period for both the tenant and the landlord. It is important that I add that it is wonderful to have the support of the workers at both the Ontario Works and Ontario Disability offices. Without their help and understanding this would not be possible and also a big thank you needs to go out to the folks up at the Region for making the program available to us and the way they are choosing to implement it.

This "common sense" approach to tackling the issue of homelessness must be commended. Homes not Hostel beds is a huge leap forward in ideology for a society and a culture that has for too long turned a blind eye to these issues. Not enough affordable housing available? Let's create more,

either through subsidies or building new units that can offer homes at affordable rates to all Canadians, to all people. I would argue housing is a basic human right; all peoples are or should be entitled to a home! Just because you lost your job, weren't able to find work, have a disability or an addiction should not preclude you from this right. Housing 1st as a philosophy and as a project is a step in the right direction, it is not the end but it is a place where we can start.



You're OUT-SIDE!



...And why shouldn't it. The first thing I see in the morning and the last thing I see at night is the smiling happy face of my PSW. What a great way to start and end the day.

The day I was discharged from the hospital October 1, 2014, I moved in to a new apartment in St. Catharines that my daughters, Heather and Terri, had set up for me. They had moved me lock stock and barrel during the two months I was in the hospital. I did not know anybody. I could not speak. My larynx, thyroid, and voice box were gone. I was very weak-but I was alive after experiencing fourth stage Cancer. It has been 10 months now and the oncologist told me I'm Cancer free.

I live in a building owned Niagara Regional Housing (NRH). What a wonderful job they do in maintaining a clean safe home for so many people. The staff that Shirley, the administrator, entrusts the care of the property to--Bob, Louis, George, Terry and Clarence--seem to have time for everybody.

It makes me happy that all the help I receive is available to everyone that needs it. It's just a matter of applying it. Most of my neighbours are over 50 and some have limited physical abilities-that does not mean that we're not active-in fact on the whole we're a pretty self-sufficient bunch in providing our own entertainment and fun. Our large bulletin board often has no room on it to post anything. The volunteers in the building like happy Max-who has an extensive movie library and shows movies two or three times a week. Then there is Shirley, our resident poet, who, with Sandie, provided a card making opportunity for a few weeks recently. Musical entertainment is a full afternoon every six weeks or so thanks to Terry and his friend. Bingo and card games are also popular.

BUT! I can't stop here. Now here's a group of volunteers that put a real meaning to the word volunteer. Unappreciated by a few Grinch's, they spend

hours and I mean hours giving freely of their time every week and on all special occasions giving to all our neighbours who want to join their activities. Mother's day, Father's day, Christmas, St. Patrick's day, Valentine's day and every other special occasion you will see

IT MAKES ME HAPPY

by Bob MacDonald



the foyer and common rooms decorated and special lunches or BBQ setting the mood for celebration.

Full breakfasts Monday and Wednesday are always available and on Fridays a continental breakfast/coffee. All that time and work. Shirley, Joyce, Chris Sandi and Kaye and Nancy sell tickets to special events. Ladies, we all owe you thanks. Then we have Jessie who is with Community Support Services of Niagara. Jessie's whose activities include monthly auctions, birthday parties, market days, assisted shopping and joint projects with the social committee. We're lucky to have her.

We also have Susan our foot nurse and Sylvia our wellness nurse and their monthly clinics. Anita has exercise classes and special events. The

wonderful monthly dinners put on by the always caring Salvation Army are a real treat.

The people you see out supporting the social committee at their breakfasts and other events. The faithful bunch, Marilyn, Louise, Mary, Anita and Barry.

If you would like to join our volunteers, contact Shirley Hampson at any Friday morning coffee break in the common room. Your help would be greatly appreciated. It's really needed.

Now the reason many of us are able to live independently.

The Gale Angels (officially The March of Dimes). Pam leads a great team of Wendy, Cathy, Lisa, Alisha, Kendra, Cassie, Nicole and Melanie. Depending on the physical need they visit every 4 or 5 hours from 7 am to 10.30 pm. The ladies from Carlton check on us during the wee hours to see if help is needed. Their help and encouraging support could not be bought for any money. They really care and obviously love their jobs. Thank you ladies! You are our friends.

The Cancer Society's support in providing unbelievable volunteer drivers to take people to cancer related appointments is something special. We should all support them-The Wheels of Hope. I don't know what I would do without this service.

Many creative arts program presented by NRH and SMUN and NRH including painting, writing and crafts. Recently Jackie Labonte, a elder from the Mohawk Nation, gave a teaching presentation on medicine bags. I must have good medicine too! I am not a Cancer survivor. I am a Cancer Beater. I won with my faith, family friends and medical staff. I beat the heck out of it.

WHAT MAKES YOU HAPPY? I'm sure you don't have to think very hard to find something to be happy and thankful for.

Thanks to Pam and Shirley H for their help in preparing this item.

POETRY

The Perfectly Complete Whole

Anonymous

I AM completely Self Contained.
totally Uncontainable
contained on the smallest possible containers
encompassed in a completely whole container
from the infinitely smallest perspective
to the All Encompassing, Infinitely largest Whole unit

All timelines, existing where Time does not exist
From Beginningless start to the Neverending end
Always Close, yet perceived as Far away
The Unattainable that has always been Attained

The beauty in truth, words that describe what is True
Point to the Beauty that is experienced
Describable by Nothing and depicted in Everything
Always present and perfectly complete in
every incomplete imperfection,
The Flawlessness of each fracture.
In the smallest unit of Division, the the dividing force
That that divides the indivisible
Multiplying facets of Oneness into an infinite array
Of contrast, Created from What is Uncreatable. I AM.



On My Mind

by R. G. Cousins

I feel run down
I feel a weight on me
May be the devil's coming
Do what he please

I'd been told lies
Been made a fool
I was doin time
Till the day I met you

Always on my Mind

People try and tell me
But I can't hear
I need you now
I got to be near

Like a song in your head
Like honey to the bee
Like the earth to the sky
Your fire sets me free

Always on my Mind

Supernovae

by Rainbow

It is said: "It is better to light a candle
Than to sit and curse the Dark"
But this is a desecration for
We are always bathed in Light.

What we perceive as darkness is merely
Waves of Light stretched so long, moving so slowly
That our rainbow eyes cannot see them.
The Soul sees when eyes are blind
Or we would not feel Night's mysteries
Leave candles and curses alone.

Sit with the Void; make peace with the exquisite vastness of your Potential

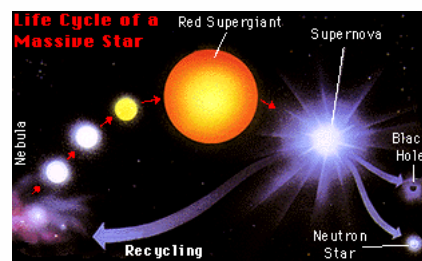
Then-look up:

For only in the Darkness can we see the stars.

And remember this always:

Candles go out.

Stars go supernova.



POETRY

ONE DAY – ONE MOMENT AT A TIME –

by Paul Shtogryn

Living with almost no money is always a challenge
 Taking time, paying the bills having less
 You try to make do and make the most out of it,
 Knowing you cannot change the status and miss
 Every moment, every hour, every day that it takes,
 Unexpected appliances break down and you know you must pay
 Hardship follows every moment, every hour, every day.
 But life goes on and the monthly cheque comes in
 Knowing the routine starts all over again
 You wonder if there is any relief in sight
 Better time, better days to look what will be bright
 However, we pinch our nickels and dimes
 Hoping in the long run, good deeds will chime



Back to Reality

by Shorty

As my cell door gets locked
 All lines of communion are blocked
 I sit here with my pencil and paper
 Hoping it will help me escape
 this empty chamber
 Stuck here thinking of things that someday could be.
 Now F* that, I'm real, this S* is not for me
 So here I sit in this dark and gloomy cell
 Wondering if it really is the epitome of Hell
 Can't wait until I can leave this place
 Just hoping she'll let me see my Kids' face
 For this is what Life has become
 I found a better way-F* it, I'm DONE
 Addiction –is it me or you?
 Or is it a pastime, just something to do?
 No matter what, I think it grew
 Addiction-could you please go away?
 Just for one time can I be sober today?
 So silly this is the game that we play
 Addiction in all shapes and forms
 Doesn't last long til families are torn
 Sometimes it's with you from the time you are born
 Addiction-I wish would pass
 It's because of you I am such an ass
 So my addiction this I must ask-
 Can we say NO to Puff-Poke-Sniff or a glass?



6 Degrees of Everything (or addicted to Love).

by Rainbow

My true name is known to many of you, although "Melissa" might not be.

I have a secret.

30 years ago, I had a sacred experience with a triple rainbow-they're very rare-and dedicated myself to the ideals inherent in it. I strive to be inclusive, cooperative, friendly, polychromatic, flowing over, and willing to try other ways of doing things. I am-as are we all- the bond between heaven and Earth. I am my own work of Art and I will put down the brush only with my last breath. And while I appreciate the ephemeral dance, I am more concerned with the eternal journey that falls outside of the visible spectrum.

But this is not my secret.

I even have a Native name, one that not only describes my many moods perfectly but resonated strongly with the Sabian symbol (lock it up) that lies exactly on my 10th House (public) Leo (honest), artistic, creative and taking pride in my work) moon (emotional needs and drives).

The Symbol is: "after heavy storms, a rainbow appears." This has been a recurring theme in my life, long before the triple rainbow or knowing the Symbol-which happened many years apart.

I hold to Rainbow Woman's promise to me and have received many of Her blessings.

But this is not my secret.

I am quite open about being a Living Rainbow- and Rainbow Woman and Creator between them

seem to have decided that I need to take another step on my multicoloured journey.

You may have noticed that I have added the one colour I don't like-pink-to my wardrobe.

Being a rainbow is not easy for anyone but it is that much harder for someone with Asperger's Syndrome. "Doing social" is something the average neurotypical seems to take for granted.

The majority of you understand things like facial expressions and voice tones. Some of you can't be without a group around you, and, unless you are very shy, most of you like being with others for a fair portion of every day. You are more likely to be able to sort out the info that hits you at your own pace instead of all at once. You are less likely to need to distress after only 3 hours of being with others-and I am lucky enough to be very high functioning.

Pink is quite literally the "anti-autistic" colour. So is deer medicine. Spirit has declared in no uncertain terms that I must include them in my journey. We are all connected to everything and everyone else in a sacred web. This is not just a Spiritual concept either-it is verifiable, quantifiable, Quantum Scientific fact.

Pink is new to me, but it is not my secret.

My secret is that I am an addict.

I have recently become obsessed with making Dream Catchers. I can spend hours in Green

Earth, Willow Den or Michael's-enablers all.

Admiring the round shininess of the metal hoops and the purity of the wood ones. Whining because Michaels won't get hoops in bigger sizes. Sneering at this American company's inauthenticities-while ignoring my own.

Fingering the brown softness of the deerskin (Deer?) lacing. Running my hands down the lengths of hemp I use for the web. Staring with longing at various beads-and occasionally paying way too much for them. Dreaming of making new designs and scaring Bonnie with my eagerness to do so.

The meditative, yet highly focused quality of stringing the web. Reminding myself that only Creator is perfect when I repeat one particular mistake that I can't seem to fix. The feeling of accomplishment when I finish one, and astonishment when I put it down, only to find that I have picked it up again. I look forward to Thursdays with the Art collective.

My arthritic fingers actually itch to feel the laced hoop in my hands. Oh yeah, I have it bad, real bad.

This has to stop, because it is seriously cutting into my TV time. Just a few months ago I would have been upset to look up and find that 'Republic of Doyle' was half over. Now I use the excuse that "it's not finished yet" (and besides, missus, everyone knows that Jake Doyle is a tool and that's all it is, boy.)

Hey, I can handle it-after all,

I don't let this thing interfere with Murdoch Mysteries or PBS. Yet.

Dream catchers tend to be thought of as cute pieces of art, ostensibly to catch and destroy bad dreams. In actuality, the Dream catcher is an ancient Teaching.

Long ago, Dream catchers were made as part of a long, complex healing journey. Depending on the healing needed, this could take weeks, months or even years. The Shaman/Medicine person who facilitated the Healing would help one find the root. Little things would be added to the weave over a period of time, things that represented the root in all its facets. When the healing journey ended, the Dream catcher was ceremonially burned.

Dream catcher energy has inverted over the ages as these threads of Grandmother Spiders work have crossed and recrossed over time

The web is Spirit squared.

Examine why you are drawn to certain colours, stones, feathers and/or web patterns.

As for me I have always seen connections others don't. Now I am making new ones and receiving validations of old ones—including social ones.

Wait a minute. Was that a hot pink Deer with a Spider tattoo on her side that just ran in front of my car??? And was she really holding a Rainbow coloured Dream catcher in her teeth???

Rainbow Woman and Grandmother Spider—what have you done to me???



What Joy!!

When I was younger, I had all these mistaken ideas about what joy meant to me. I thought achievement in school and my careers would bring me joy; they didn't. I thought marriage and a home would bring me joy; they didn't. I thought financial security would bring me joy; well, you can never have enough, can you. I thought a dog would bring me joy; well, that was one that I got right! As Ziggy used to say, happiness is a warm puppy. But, let me tell you what brings me joy today.

Today, it's being a part of other people's journeys that bring me joy. It's riding my bike down Church Street, and hearing "Hi Karen!" from someone's porch, hearing another "Hi Karen" from someone at the Booth Centre, and another shout out from the guys at Wayside. I might even get another couple of "Hi Karens" on Gale Street as I head into the Centre.

Each one of us is on a journey, me included. Some are coming from sleeping outside, to shelter and then to their own place. Some are from the depths of despair of addiction, through detox, to treatment and recovery. Some are from loneliness and isolation to friendship and community. I've made the second journey, and now I'm working on the third.

I always believed in being self-sufficient, and I still am to a degree, but I've certainly learned how much I need people. What's really funny is I needed people to teach me how much I need people! Today I have mentors, people who I respect and admire, who guide me in learning about life. They let me know about my strengths and weakness, so I can capitalize on my strengths and minimize my weaknesses. That's what they tell me is building character. But the most important thing they have taught me is to help others; because in helping others, I help myself.

It brings me great joy to see someone I haven't seen in a while. It doesn't matter where they've been, what's happened or what they've been doing; I'm just ecstatic to see them. I get such a rush of pleasure to see someone do something they didn't think they could do. Sometimes, that's just asking for help; sometimes, it's realizing that this is a place where people care. Other times, it's a great day just because someone remembered my name!

It was such a huge revelation in my life to find out I wasn't alone, and more importantly, that I didn't have to be. We are all part of a community of people who care, and we realize that by showing that we care. Today, why don't you take some time to say hi to someone you haven't talked to before—you just might make their day; I know you'll make mine. Actually, you probably already have!

God bless, Karen

Where are my slippers?

by Julia Blushak

For most of us, a sense of home is about personal freedom, safety, and privacy. The cost for acquitting oneself of these priceless residential benefits is increasingly difficult for many. Accessible and affordable housing in Canada is the elephant in the national parlour, eating slippers and drinking cups of tea. How do you relax when an elephant won't let you feel at home?

In 2013 a comprehensive report entitled, *'Affordable Housing in Ontario: Mobilizing Private Capital in an Era of Public Restraint'* presented a case for maintaining the existing supply of social housing and private rental stock. The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHA) cites a sector with Core Housing Need as more than 15 percent of Ontario residents, concentrated by the lowest income earners and disproportionately by lone parent, one person households, immigrants, youth and seniors. I suggest reading this brief IMFG document to grasp current and past federal, provincial and municipal stakeholder responsibilities. Policies and numbers for the past 25 years are neatly crunched

into graphs and recommendations as the authors pose a new question for the elephant, 'How do you create the conditions for greater private participation in affordable housing in Ontario?' They also provide new approaches to public/private sector participation and incentives by describing fresh thinking in the USA, Great Britain and Australia.

Canada does not have a national housing strategy. In 2013, Bill C-400 (The Secure, Adequate, Accessible, and Affordable Housing Act) was struck down at second reading in the House of Commons. The UN-Habitat Global Housing Strategy began that same year. This collaborative global movement towards adequate housing for all held sessions this past April. Canada is not a governing member of that initiative nor the UN Human Settlements Programme. It's time for momentum and a new plan to face that huge elephant. Our federal elections are coming this fall. Pay attention to who wants your cookies with their tea!

SOURCE:

http://munkschool.utoronto.ca/imfg/uploads/238/imfg_perspectives



Our Boarding House - by Gene Ahern





OUR SISTER, MOTHER EARTH

by Deacon Maurice OFS

"Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth"

Pope Francis has written a teaching letter on everybody's responsibility for environmental problems and everybody's responsibility to care for this physical world. The Latin title of this teaching letter is "Laudatio Si," which is a reference to a prayer by St. Francis of Assisi, which begins "Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs"

The following thoughts or quotations from Laudatio Si are striking not just as they refer specifically to environmental crises, but as simple, universal truths that raise questions about most of damage that we do as human beings.

1. People's failure to change when they know that they should often rises from one of two causes: either from the rationalization that 'there's nothing I can do,' or from 'fear of changing.' In what other problem areas do I fail to act, even though I know that I should? (paragraph #217 of Laudatio Si)

2. "In fact, the deterioration of the environment and of society affects the most vulnerable people on the planet: 'Both everyday experience and scientific research show that the gravest effects of all attacks on the environment are suffered by the poorest'" (#48).

In what other areas of life am I willing to accept the harm caused by my actions, because I ignore my responsibility for the harm that my actions cause to others who are more vulnerable ?

3. We will not be able to love the environment until we love each other ... There can be no renewal of our relationship with nature without a renewal of humanity itself." (#118).

'If personal and social sensitivity towards the acceptance of [human life] is lost, then other forms of acceptance that are valuable for society also wither away'" (#120).

How much of my destructive behaviour is rooted in a lack of respect for the preciousness of human life?

"Living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience" (# 217)

pax et bonum

deacon maurice ofs (July 2015)

5 TOXIC BEHAVIOURS

Here are 5 behaviors NOT to be tolerated from others.

1. GOSSIP:

Avoid relationships that center around gossip. As has famously been said: "Great minds discuss ideas; average minds discuss events; small minds discuss people." Quality relationships are based on an exchange of ideas and excitement; this is what helps us grow, evolve and achieve our dreams.

2. BACKHANDED COMPLIMENTS:

Backhanded compliments are a form of passive aggression (e.g. "It's nice to

meet someone who doesn't care about the way they look" or "I don't care what they say, you're alright"). These hidden insults come from people who are radiating low vibrational energy. Good relationships will only uplift you with kind and genuine feedback.

3. COMPETITIVENESS:

Constantly being one-upped or having someone nip at your heels is not healthy. People who are happy for your successes and confident in their own accomplishments are the only ones capable of providing you with quality support. The only person anyone should be competing with is himself or herself.

4. ONE-SIDEDNESS:

Individuals who only come around when it suits them or who demand that

things should always be done their way will likely leave you feeling marginalized and unloved. Good relationships demonstrate a solid balance of compromise and mutual respect.

5. POINTING OUT YOUR FLAWS:

Being close with someone who tells humiliating stories about you, criticizes your looks or likes to post ugly pictures of you on social media can be damaging to your self-esteem. The best friends and lovers will focus on your positive qualities and care about your feelings.

Distance yourself from relationships that are toxic.

Original article by Andrea Schulman.

Sourced and condensed from Internet.



Expressions, an art collective, meets Thursdays at 15 Gale Crescent. A self directed, group run activity—participants spend a couple of hours following their own interests, eg. drawing, painting, making dream catchers, writing, colouring, visiting in community with others. It is a small group and everyone is welcome. There is always room for more. In July a few of us took a road trip to the SMUN Garden in Vineland. It was a wonderful afternoon and the garden was in full bloom. We took the scenic route out on the North Service road. Thank you Mike for the drive and tour.



Farmers Deb and Danny chat with Rev. Cheryl about upcoming visit by United Church youth on cross-country pilgrimage to Newfoundland conference.

SMUN welcomes Carol Ann to Employment services

When asked to share my experience with Start Me Up Niagara as a new employee, the first word that comes to mind is grateful. I am grateful for many reasons; a new environment that continues to be friendly and welcoming every single day, the chance to interact with an amazing group of participants who treat each other like family, working with staff who are so supportive of one another, and most importantly, I am grateful for the daily doses of inspiration I get from staff, participants and volunteers.

I look forward to meeting everyone. And to help with your employment needs.

~ *Carol Ann*

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SMUN is an ODSP Employment Service Provider

“ All labour that uplifts humanity has dignity and importance and should be undertaken with painstaking excellence. ”

Martin Luther King, Jr.



THANK YOU!

Niagara Central Hobbies

401 St. Paul St., St. Catharines will close August 29, 2015. This family business served Niagara with quality service and models, art supplies, trains, RC and more for 68 years. Time to drop by, say thanks and find a bargain -- entire inventory is marked down.

| EMERGENCY RESOURCES | | | | | | Drop In Centres | | | | | |
|---|------------------------------|---|-------------|--------------|--|------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| EMERGENCY SHELTERS | PHONE | ADDRESS | BEDS | HOURS | RESTRICTIONS (Age, sex, addiction, etc.) | | | | | | |
| Nightlight Youth Shelter | 905-358-3678 | 5207 Victoria Avenue, Niagara Falls, ON L2E 4E4 | 10 | 24hrs | males and females, ages 16 - 30; no alcohol or drugs | | | | | | |
| The RAFT | 905-984-4365 | 17 Centre Street St. Catharines, ON L2R 3A6 | 16 | 24hrs | males and females, ages 16 - 24; no alcohol or drugs | | | | | | |
| Salvation Army Booth Centre | 905-684-7813 905-684-7990 | 184 Church Street St. Catharines, ON L2R 3E7 | 22 | 24hrs | males only, ages 19 and older; no alcohol or drugs | | | | | | |
| Southridge | 905-682-2477 | 201 Glenridge Avenue St. Catharines, ON L2R 3G8 | 35 | 24hrs | males and females; no alcohol or drugs | | | | | | |
| YWCA St. Catharines | 905-988-3528 | 183 King Street St. Catharines, ON L2R 3G8 | 28 | 24hrs | females and females with children; no alcohol or drugs | | | | | | |
| YWCA Niagara Falls | 905-357-9191 | 6135 Culp Street Niagara Falls, ON L2G 2B6 | 20 | 24hrs | females and females with children; no alcohol or drugs | | | | | | |
| SPECIALIZED SHELTERS | PHONE | ADDRESS | BEDS | HOURS | RESTRICTIONS (Age, sex, addiction, etc.) | | | | | | |
| CMHA Safe Beds | 905-641-5222, ext. 254 | 15 Wellington Street St. Catharines, ON L2R 5P7 | 7 | 24 hrs | must be referred from hospital's community crisis care or mental health agency; 3 to 5 day stay; ages 16 and up; no alcohol or drugs | | | | | | |
| Men's Detox | 905-682-7211 | 10 Adams Street St. Catharines, ON L2R 2V8 | 18 | 24 hrs | men only; no alcohol, drugs or smoking | | | | | | |
| Women's Detox | 905-687-9721 | 6 Adams Street St. Catharines, ON L2R 2V8 | 12 | 24 hrs | women only; no alcohol, drugs or smoking | | | | | | |
| Gillian's Place (St. Catharines & District) | 905-684-8331 | P.O. Box 1387, St. Catharines, ON L2R 7J8 | 24 | 24 hrs | females and females with children; at risk of violence, no alcohol or drugs | | | | | | |

Start Me Up Niagara

T : 905-984-5310 17 Gale Crescent St. Catharines L2R 3K8

CENTRE Monday - Friday: 9 am - 4 pm Saturday, Sunday: 11:15 am - 1 pm
(Statutory Holidays 9 am - 3 pm)

OFFICE : 9 am - 4:30 pm Closed: 12 - 1 Lunch Closed: Statutory Holidays

MEALS

| | | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------|---------|
| St. George's Breakfast Program | 83 Church Street | Daily 7:30am-8:30am | no cost |
| RAFT (ages 16-24) | 17 Centre Street | Daily 6:30pm-8:00pm | no cost |
| Southridge | 201 Glenridge Avenue | Daily 6:00pm | \$2.00 |
| Ozanam Centre | 235 Church Street | Monday to Friday 11:30 - 1pm | \$1.00 |
| Start Me Up Niagara | 17 Gale Crescent | Saturday, Sunday 11:15am-1:00pm | no cost |

- SMUN Businesses & Supporters -

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Canada Helps on-line: CANADAHELPS.org. They help!**