

Street News

VOICES FROM
OUR STREETS
SUMMER 2012

START ME UP
NIAGARA
Working Together... Moving Forward

Happy 10th SMUN Centre!

by Susan Venditti

The heat has made it a great time for me to sit back and reminisce about Start Me Up. Thinking back is cooling and relaxing especially when there are good times to remember. So excuse me as I write along August's memory lane.

August 2002: The first SMUN Centre affectionately called the WAC opened at 234 St Paul Street. This new venture for Start Me Up Niagara (founded in 1999) had been in the works for three years and we hoped it would enhance programming offered from our office at 288 St Paul. The building had 2 floors and we thought it had enough space for the 40 individuals we anticipated serving. Almost as soon as we opened the numbers coming exceeded the estimates and space we had to accommodate them so we dreamed up ways to fit all in. Lots happened. We had a retail store for crafts, a middle section for activities and in the back corner a kitchen. The basement workshop produced products to sell in the store and other locations.

WAC was open 7 days a week and relied on participant volunteers to keep it going. Volunteers like Sheldon, Carlton, Jeanette, Eddie, Darren, Jen, Mark, John, Rob, Roy,

Sherry, Laura, Pat, and Tony pop into mind along with the faces of staff Larry and Wendy. It was a happy place except when your time for lunch was up and you had to leave so someone else could use your chair. I'll never forget Sherry staying all night cooking turkeys for our first holiday



meal, the single potato masher manned by a succession of volunteers who turned 100 pounds of potatoes into "delicious". I remember volunteers tracking the number of coffees some drank during the day, making sandwiches for the summer hostel that participants operated independently for 6 months, holding craft shows and sales and sharing so much with us all.

WAC closed in June 2005. It was a sad day when I announced to the participants that WAC could no longer continue. Its lease was up. Its funding finished. As I stood in tears voices came from around the tables. "Don't worry we can do this again!" We did but had to take a detour for a few years opening weekends, Mondays and Fridays at First United Church. Volunteer effort for a while and then slowly building, adding resources to open 7 days a week. We rented a huge green room with high ceilings, no windows, no air conditioning, occasional heat, a piano and an amazing kitchen. The best part was enough space for all who came. It was no longer necessary to limit time people spent inside as there was room for everyone. Who can ever forget the skids of canned

Puritan meatballs piled high in the corner that were turned into lunches of soups, stews or meatballs on a bun by Scott and his band of cooks? It was interesting sharing a building but the dream of our own place just would not go away. The church being sold – a crisis-turned our dream into action.

August 2009: The SMUN Centre opened at 17 Gale Crescent and for the first time all

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Start Me Up Niagara services were located on one site. It was a hot day as a few of us exhausted from moving cut the red ribbon and entered our new home. It was bright and wonderful. The Centre was ready to go from

the first moment but the offices for other programs were not so lucky. However with a lot of elbow grease, donations and some patience we embarked on a remarkable neighbourhood adventure.

August 2012: We are still here. Busy doesn't describe it. So much going on. So many wonderful people who share bits of their lives with us. Along with many volunteers, we have a succession of school placements and co-op students who are here to learn and help. People come and go. Coffee is always on. Everyone is welcome. Lunch on weekends is amazing. The number of ways to participate has increased – kitchen, garden, Street News, activities, art classes, sports. Employment and housing staff who are still dreaming about offices with doors are providing services on site. They're meeting with great success. We've added an after hours Injured Workers' Speakers

School and Resource Area, host a Monday night AA group and have a wonderful 1.7 acre garden in Vineland.

Ten years of operating the centre have passed We will continue using the same principles for the next steps of our journey:

1. Keep vision
2. Trust instincts
3. Build community
4. Start small
5. Think long term

Our next step is to buy our 17 Gale Crescent. The 'whys' are quite evident. The 'ways' are not so clear. Meanwhile we will keep our doors open, welcoming all who come and doing the best job we can with what we have.

I've enjoyed spending an hour thinking backwards. An indulgence before entering the next decade. Happy Anniversary!

Susan

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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

Working with individuals whose lives have been affected by mental illness, addictions, unemployment and homelessness to develop self sufficiency by providing opportunities to earn income, improve health and integrate into the community.



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Stewards of the Land



Even with drought like conditions this summer the Start Me Up Niagara garden in Vineland flourished. Farmer extraordinaire, Debbie Sexsmith together with partner John Blackwell managed the land to its fullest potential with the support of the loyal volunteers who journeyed to the garden Monday through Thursday to plant, weed and pick. The kiosk in front of SMUN is again a popular place for our neighbours to purchase healthy, locally grown vegetables. Those attending our weekend lunches benefit greatly from the garden. Over 85% of the produce served on the weekend is from our own garden. Corn feeds are particularly popular.

We were fortunate to have the continued support of project partners Vineland Research and Innovation Centre, Gateway, Community Living and have added St. Catharines Horticultural Society to the group. Our community donors and funders were recognized at our appreciation day, July 18 when everyone enjoyed the visit to the garden, labyrinth, the Vineland Greenhouse and tractor garage.

The Harvest is underway!



Healing Paws

by Lorne and Julie Perry

Hi; my name is Lorne Perry and I am an injured worker. I was born and grew up in Welland, I have always been around dogs even when I was knee high to a grasshopper. Laddie, my first dog was a collie; he kept watch over me in the fenced off backyard of my first home in Welland. He always put himself between the fence and me and that way I could not climb over the fence to freedom. I realize that throughout my life most of my decisions about people are based on whether the people like dogs and other pets or not. You don't have to like dogs, but if you don't you are not in my circle of friends. Ditto for girls. I gave up riding my bike when Laddie grew too old to keep up with me and it also hurt him to run. When I was 12, in the winter time, near the frozen Welland canal I shot at a rabbit and missed and the arrow went sliding across the ice. It was still a good arrow so I went out on the ice to retrieve it. Yup I fell in and Laddie went out after me and pulled me out of the ice hole and back to the edge. That is why I am here today. I had to put him down when we moved to the country because it was not fair to him to leave the city when that was all he knew and each day it was getting harder and harder for him to walk.

In 1984 I injured my right knee at work and I was pensioned off. I got a monetary sum each month that you could buy bread with but not the butter. I felt lower than a snake on the ground and at that time I found Radar at the SPCA. He was a cross between a German shepherd and a Husky and was well past his keeping time but the worker there saw something in Ray's eyes that made the worker unable to put him down. Ray was allowed to stroll the hallways and when I

opened the door to go in to have a look at the dogs he came up to me, sat down and offered his paw. How could I leave that kind of a dog there after that? Radar took over the family and we became part of his pack. One time he slipped out of his collar and walked down the road to visit his girlfriend. When he came back he sat on the end of the collar as if he had never been away.

Today, at night when my head is cradled by my warm pillow and I think that maybe I can get a few winks of sleep I can hear the piercing barks of my dearest love, my Mariah. She doesn't use the sun to wake up at 6:30, she somehow just knows it is time to get out of bed and have breakfast. Now her children have picked up the habit but I think theirs is more of hunger. I have arthritis in most of my joints. I know when the weather is going to change for the worse before the weatherman does. Mariah knows when I am in so much pain that I cannot fall asleep. Then she quietly slips under the covers. She knows which hand hurts the most and in her own way of trying to help me she licks it. When I have a bad migraine she licks my face and ears.

She guards my family and the other dogs because they are a part of me. You can come into my driveway; just don't get out of the car!! Beep your horn and someone will come out. She will not bite you but while you are talking

to me in the driveway don't put your hand on my shoulder or you will hear a soft throat growl. Just a warning, mind not an attack.

I go to bed with pain and I wake up with pain but I am determined not to let it get to me. The best time for me to work is in the morning, first thing. It is then that Mariah and Dini go out with me and stick close to me and check everything I do. If I need to use the hammer they smell it from top to bottom and make sure it is the right one for the job. Radar, Billy, Sam, Junie Moon, Aleutia Belle, Senora, Bidget, Maureen, Sidka, Chinook, Dini, Quinn, Mariah and now Muffie all help me with my constant pain. When they get into bed with me (not all at the same time), I can feel their hearts beating and my heart rate slows down to match theirs. Their body heat over a painful part helps too.

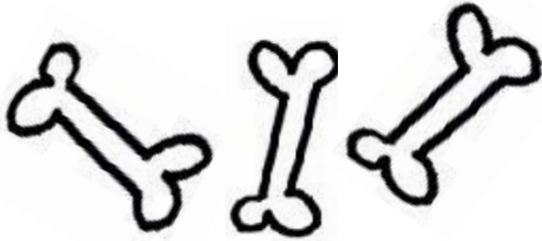
Having a pet of some kind gives you the responsibility of looking after them and all the aspects that it entails. In return they give you a reason to wake up and get out of bed. They also help me to get into bed at night too. With a dog around you, you don't have time to be depressed. Thank you for listening and remember to feed your fish!!!

Lorne is a graduate of the Injured Worker Speaker School sponsored by;



Lorne Perry with friends Quinn and Mariah

Woof!



MAD DOGS AND ENGLISHMEN

"Mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the sun together" was a medieval saying. Great Britain has a cooler climate than most of Europe and its "stiff upper lip" types lack the temperament to embrace the custom of the siesta during the hottest part of the day. The Britons inability to "just chill out" was satirized in a song by Noel Coward-which is now the name of the band "Mad dogs and Englishmen".



CAR RIDES



Every year, dogs suffer and die when their guardians make the mistake of leaving them in a parked car—even for "just a minute"—while they run an errand. Parked cars are deathtraps for dogs: On a 78-degree day, the temperature inside a parked car can soar to between 100 to 120 degrees in just minutes, and on a 90-degree day, the interior temperature can reach as high as 160 degrees in less than 10 minutes. Animals can suffer brain damage or death from heatstroke in just 15 minutes. Beating the heat is extra tough for dogs because they can only cool



DOG DAYS OF SUMMER

"Dog day afternoon" or "the dog days of summer" does not, surprisingly enough, refer to the behavior of our beloved canine companions. Dogs can only cool themselves by panting or by sweating through their paws. Excessively hot days take much out of them. The sayings actually refer to the Dog Star, Sirius. The brightest star in the summer night sky is part of the constellation Canis Major, or Big Dog. Because Sirius rises with the Sun the ancients thought that the two stars combined their blazing heat on their travels across the day sky together. In actuality, while Sirius is indeed much hotter than our own Sun, it is also 53 Trillion miles away and the heat it provides is negligible.

mom

By Dawn McIntyre

Some clean sheets, a decent meal and a shower once a week. Is that what it boils down to? What about clean clothes, haircuts, briefs, foot care, recreation; emotional support and above all proper medical care? When was the last time you checked to make sure your loved one was receiving all the amenities you so happily pay for? Check again! Our family was faced with the dilemma of having to place our Mom in a Retirement home, as circumstances prevented us from being able to take care of her on our own. Let me walk you through our journey over the past few years.

Mom was the first of 11 children born in Belgium; she came over to Canada as a war bride in 1947. She struggled all of her life, both as a child and then as an adult. Mom raised 4 children in an abusive home; how she managed I do not know. She became Grandmother to 11 and Great Grandmother to 7 grandchildren. In her spare time she worked for Parents without Partners, the Parkinson's Foundation, and she took care of anyone that might have crossed her path in between. Mom eventually became involved in Community Care and continued on with that organization for the next 30 years. What made her most happy was the little things that she received by helping people; the smiles, the kind words and the hugs from the thousands of people she was able to help over the years.

As time progressed, there were moments when the words that in the past had flowed easily from Mom's lips, now

came out in a tangled web of consonants and vowels. There were little signs as well, that spoke volumes to those close to Mom. Things changed quickly and it all came to a grinding halt when Mom ended up in the hospital as a result of some mysterious episode that to this day remains



unexplained. We were visited by a staff member who informed us that Mom could no longer live on her own. A blow to my head with a hammer would have resulted in less pain than sitting there and listening to this woman talk about my Mother like she wasn't even in the room. She was telling me something I already knew, but did not want to acknowledge. The woman I had once gone to for help, now needed mine... Mom was believed to have Alzheimers. It was the Civic Holiday, July 31st; Anne and I were given a list of homes that we could afford; we were told we had three days until

Mom's discharge and that she was not able to return to her home, so it would be wise to set up appointments immediately and get looking. It might have been my birthday, but I could have done without this gift.

Having just received all this information and feeling completely at a loss, Anne and I set out to do the impossible and find a home for Mom in three days on a Holiday week-end; somehow, we did it. We found a small but quaint little place that was within our budget. We talked to staff who assured us of the care that Mom would receive. We expressed our gratitude. I don't know how, but we were able to get Mom set up in her cozy little area and get her settled in with only a few hiccups. Mom seemed to adjust fairly well given the circumstances. Obviously, there were some tears and some ups and downs at first, but for the most part all went reasonably well. As time moved on, family visited often, Mom was by the water which she loved, she enjoyed the birds outside of her window and she was still able to go for her little walks.

For us the most difficult thing seemed to be the witnessing of a subtle dismissal of a life. After the flowers and the cards that were initially sent, all the friends she had, all the people she helped, as well as the agencies where she had dedicated so much time didn't call or stop by once. It was like they were afraid to see her like this; that the reality of the situation was just too much. It was almost as if it would have been easier if she had just passed. They were okay

asking us about her; they would tear up and tell us about how wonderful she “WAS”, asking us what her address was each time and saying that they have to get up to see her; but it was never more than that. The only evidence of those 30 years remained in a tote; full of pins, plaques, newspaper clippings, photos and little keepsakes of days gone by; all condensed into a 3x3 box.

As time went by Mom’s mannerisms changed; she began hoarding things and hiding things more than usual. Mom would fret that people were stealing her things and she was saying that people were hurting her. And she did not trust anyone. We initially thought that this was just a phase in the disease process and that Mom was becoming increasingly paranoid; it was just all so sudden and completely erratic that it didn’t seem to fit. There were so many little changes that occurred in Mom’s behaviour and health, that it was a bit unsettling. Then one day, I was called

to the home by the nurse on duty who told me that Mom had been up all night with a fever of 104. She was seeing things and her behaviours were very strange. I lived around the corner, so I said I would be right there. I arrived at the home only to find my Mom naked and delusional; she was seeing turtles on the floor and not making any sense at all. I immediately helped her to get dressed and tried to calm her down. I asked the nurse how long this had been going on and she stated that she had been charted as having had the fever for the past 12 hrs or so. I then asked, “When was the last time she had been given a Tylenol?” The response was, “as far as I know none have been given”. All I could think of was, doesn’t everyone know that you need to bring a consistent fever of 104 down? I couldn’t believe what I had just heard, but I immediately requested that the ambulance be called because there was no way I was trying to get her in my truck as dehydrated and weak as she was. While waiting for the ambulance the nurse on duty was attempting

to get Mom’s vitals with the BP cuff, upside down; I asked her to give me the cuff and I took her blood pressure myself as well as her temperature, as I had been in the health care profession for 12 years. The paramedics came and loaded Mom up and I followed them to the Hospital. When we arrived, the paramedics began relaying her vitals and information to the nurse on duty. The look on her face spoke volumes as she shook her head and said to the paramedic, “how do they let them get to this state?” This comment insinuated to me that perhaps this was not the first time they have had to deal with situations such as this, I couldn’t help but wonder if

The woman I had once gone to for help, now needed mine... For us the most difficult thing seemed to be the witnessing of a subtle dismissal of a life...

all the homes were like this. They hooked Mom up to an IV, took a series of tests and blood work, gave her some antibiotics and sent her on her way with a prescription at 3:15am. I had no choice but to bring Mom back to the home.

We started to notice that Mom’s belongings were disappearing. At first we just thought that Mom was packing them away, but at a closer look we realized that this was not the case at all; things were actually missing. One day when I came to pick Mom up for the day I walked in to find her room was bare; I questioned the staff member who seemed shocked that I was not aware of what had transpired. She then told me that the day staff had decided to pack Mom’s things away because she kept rummaging and packing and unpacking her things and they noted in the log that they were worried that she would hurt herself doing so and that the family was NOT to return any items to her room. I had no problem with the reasoning behind the actions as Mom had

been doing this for some time, however, I believe that since Anne and I were both POA over medical and financial matters as well as family, that one of us should have received a phone call telling us of this decision. These were Mom’s belongings that were in her room, which she paid rent for. Who were they to decide what Mom could keep or not? Bottom line is, they had no right going into her room and removing her things without our consent. With all these little things gnawing at our souls, our senses were heightened and we began paying closer attention to things that had been happening within the home. We soon realized that the cause of Mom’s increased anxiety and behaviours were not just medical; the constant worry and comments that she was making about the people from the home throwing her out, were well justified.

That week-end I made arrangements to remove Mom’s packed belongings from the building. While in the process of doing so, I noticed that Mom’s refrigerator was missing; and as usual no one had noticed that it was gone or had any knowledge as to where it was. At first I thought that maybe Mom had given it to another family member, so I made a few calls to find that this was not the case. I contacted the Administrator/Owner to inquire about the missing fridge and left several messages as well as a hand written note left in his office. Three days passed and still I had not heard anything; at this point I was quite angry and returned to the home to talk to the nurse on duty. I could not believe it, but she disclosed to me that this was not the first time something like this had happened and she felt awful. I listened to her stories of what transpires in the home and after a lengthy conversation she agreed to show me the log book if I promised not to reveal where I got the information. Of course I agreed as my need to get to the bottom of this far superseded any alliance issues that I had at the time. The log book clearly stated that the Administrator had

taken the fridge out of her room and had taken it home. I could not believe what I was reading, and unfortunately, because I had sworn myself to secrecy I could not do anything about it until I was approached. This stunt (as well as having 2 rent cheques cashed in one month) and the medical issues had me reeling. I left a message for the Administrator asking him to contact me as I needed to know the whereabouts of my Mom's refrigerator, requesting that he contact me as soon as possible. We did not receive a call for 3 days. At this point I was livid and as a result, I left a less than friendly message on his phone stating that I would be contacting the police if I did not hear anything in the next 24hrs. He called my husband's phone right away and admitted to taking the fridge from my Mom's room. He stated that he would take full responsibility for what had happened as it was 100% his call to remove the fridge. He stated that he did not leave the premises with it but he just "lent" it to another resident as he felt my Mom was not using it. He then told us that he was unable to return the fridge; apparently, while it was in possession of the other resident it broke. My husband said that he did not know what to say because it was not his call, but that he would relay the information. I had gotten the admission, which I felt was all I needed to nail this guy; boy was I wrong. Later in the day the nurse from the home called me and asked me to come to the home as there was an envelope there for me. I opened the envelope to find \$125 in it; no note, no apology, just the money. I sealed the envelope back up wrote unacceptable on it and gave it back to the nurse and asked her to make sure the Administrator called my Husband or myself. In the mean time I contacted the Police, who basically said to me to take the money because it is a difficult situation; he also encouraged me to make a complaint because if enough complaints go in against him there will be a trail and eventually there would be enough to charge him. His actual words were, "If it walks like a duck, and it talks like a duck, then well you know..." Not exactly what I had expected, so I forged on. My next call

was to the renters review board requesting their assistance. The response I got there was, I can make a complaint as well as take him to court, but ideally all I would get was the cost of the fridge. I made the formal complaint; they sent me the paperwork to start court proceedings that would take approximately 1-3 months. I still have them. I then thought, I'll take it to my

The one thing we wish for the most, is that after struggling all her life, we could give her a safe environment where she can live out the rest of her years with some sort of quality and peace of mind

MPP. He was very warm, kind and seemed somewhat empathetic over the phone, but after relaying my story I was told he really didn't know what could be done. He asked me to send him an e-mail with all the information I had just given him and he said he would get back to me. I am still waiting for his reply and this situation happened in August 2011. I then called OSSA which is the organization that governs all Private homes and they said the same thing, type up the information, send it to them and as soon as there is someone available they will do an investigation. I was curious as to the time frame that this would include and she said that there are very few investigators and several homes so she could not give me anything concrete.

So after all of this, I called the

Administrator and told him that we would take the money and expressed that this sort of conduct was a form of elder abuse and that he should be ashamed of himself. Two days later we received a call from the nurse on duty stating that the home had called CCAC and they would be coming in on Wednesday to see Mom. They were requesting that Mom be relocated due to the fact that they felt that she was now a flight risk because she went for a walk and didn't tell them. We informed them that no one from the family would be available for that visit and that we would be rebooking with CCAC on our own; we also let them know that by law they cannot have this meeting without one of us being in attendance.

When we had the visit with CCAC we were instructed to put Mom on a list for long term care; we asked about the situation at hand with the theft, bullying, and lies and we were instructed that if we were not happy we could look for alternate living arrangements for Mom. The worker said that unfortunately there are very few options. I certainly didn't need the worker to tell me that as this was a statement I had quickly realized was alarming reality. If you don't have money, you are bound tightly by the law. We couldn't believe it, but Mom seemed to be so upset, anxious, depressed and fearful all the time we

felt we had few options and began looking for another home that would be suitable and affordable for Mom. The decision to leave was confirmed when I was called at home because Mom's finger was swollen, black and blue and needed to be looked at. When I got to the home Mom's hand was the size of a baseball, and black and blue was an understatement. Once again nobody knew what had happened, but it was apparent that she needed medical attention. Her index finger (wearing one of the few pieces of jewellery she had left) was dislocated. Off to the hospital again to have the ring cut off and her finger set. We started looking for a new home the next day.

We found a home that was a locked facility and catered to individuals with different types of dementia. We met with the

Administrator and discussed our situation, telling them what we were looking for and the concerns that we had. We were encouraged to place Mom in this home, and were told of all kinds of wonderful stories about past residents and the things they offer and how the home was designed to care for those with memory issues. We were assured that Mom would be a great candidate for the home; it had a garden she could go into at any time, and there was a chiropodist and a hairstylist on staff. The only item that didn't seem manageable was the \$1700.00 price tag that was associated with the shared accommodations that she would be living in. Mom is on a fixed income of \$1300.00 and our family once again was faced with the reality that our limited resources were playing a huge role in Mom's quality of life. Once again we were faced with a challenging decision. As much as we would never measure our Mom's care or worth in dollars and cents, the fact of the matter is, that is what it boils down to. Can we afford this? After discussing the whole situation with Anne and weighing the pros and cons we felt that Mom deserved a better quality of life and a place to feel safe, so somehow we would figure it out and find a way to make it work until her name came up on the list for long term care. Mom was finally going to be safe.

Mom had a terrible time settling in here; she never was good with change and the Alzheimers and stress did not make this move any easier. To this day Mom will not let us hang anything in her room and she still packs and unpacks her stuff on a daily basis. After moving Mom to this home we felt we would finally be able to relax a little; boy, were we wrong. Since the move Mom has been hospitalized several times, she has had many little issues, all revolving around the same complaint. There is a Doctor on staff, but I am not sure what information is being relayed to him as each time we visit we end up at a clinic or we get calls from the staff whenever there is a situation.

There have been at least 4 occasions where I came to pick Mom up for the day and ended up taking her to the hospital because she was dehydrated and full of

infection. The last time I was called, I instructed them to send her to the hospital by ambulance and I would meet them there; she ended up having to have a stint put in her kidney. I am at the hospital so much that I asked the nurse if they had some sort of frequent flyer miles I could get hooked up with. It is no joking matter, but it is certainly at the point of ridiculous. They have "lost" her health card, her medical alert bracelet, her glasses and who knows what else. I have yet to receive a receipt of any kind. I put in a complaint and was given the personal e-mail and phone number of



Mom on her 84th Birthday, 2012

the Administrator; she stated that I could call her or e-mail her with anything at any time. I did, and have never received a response to any phone call or e-mail I have sent. As stated earlier there is supposed to be a Chiropodist that visits the home on a regular basis - we pay for it because Mom has diabetes and has to have her feet cared for; we assumed it was being done. We also pay for her haircuts when she needs them. Recently, we had Mom overnight and decided to give her a nice hot bath, when we saw her feet we could not believe it, Mom had been in the home since July; it was now February and her feet were in awful shape. The next day we brought forth our concerns again, only to be told that the Administrator and another staff member were fired for theft, abuse and misconduct. We were also told that they do not have a Chiropodist that comes in; it is just one of the staff that takes care of the residents feet. They do have a hairstylist there, but she hasn't been paid in a while so she hasn't been doing it and there is no registered staff

on duty. All I can think of is what have we been paying \$1700.00 a month for as well as additional monies for services? While I was standing there with my jaw on the floor trying to digest all this information, I was also told that they were not even aware that I had kept my Mom overnight! They had just done shift change and had I not come in, she would have been making an emergency call to the police and then to me to tell me that Mom was missing. I left with a heavy heart.

Since these incidents, there have been several changes made in the new home that definitely seem promising; however, the experiences have left us with a less than desirable taste in our mouths, and our optimism is low.

I have called CCAC a few times and initially they had stated approximately 6 months for the wait time. As someone waiting under these circumstances, it is very difficult and frustrating. I am hoping against all odds that Mom gets placed in Bella senior care, as we are close by; Mom has been through enough, and the ability for me to be so close to her and assist

with her care would be immeasurable after all she has been through. I go to school, work, care for my children and maintain a home as well as do the best I can for Mom. The one thing we wish for the most, is that after struggling all her life, Iwe could give her a safe environment where she can live out the rest of her years with some sort of quality and peace of mind. Unfortunately, it just seems to be so far out of my reach.

For those of you who have loved ones in similar situations; I would suggest you take a second look at the homes they are residing in. Are your loved ones getting the care that you have been promised? Are they safe? Are you getting all the services that you are paying for? Maybe things are not always what they seem.

Because of all the phone calls, advocating, and pressuring that Anne and I have done, Mom is now in a long term care facility in St Catharines. Here she is receiving much better care. However, we have still had our moments; and we still need to be very involved in Mom's care. ■

Poetry...

In Memoriam- Faye Sager Dyson 1969-2012

By Paul Shtogryn

I found out with sadness of Faye's death this spring. Along with Faye there was me and Chris Taylor who were left from the original Street News meeting on November 8, 2006 after an article appeared about panhandling
Faye, like me was a former reporter as you probably didn't know
She worked for the Victoria Colonial Times and was there for the first deadline
December 6th and our first 2 article
I also got to know Faye as a newbie in the recovery program at the time
There are not many originals from the original Street News
Faye was unique, Faye was one of them
She was much too young, may she rest in peace

Lyrical Nation

by Marvel Fassbender

I fill my holes full of water
I raise my dirty cup
Got no hell below me
Got no God above
Say, hey to the driver
Ride that open road
Got no time for sleeping
Got us a heavy load
Bless the crowded memories
Score one for the host
Tell you 'bout my secrets
Tell me about your ghosts
Workin' hard at something
Watchin' time roll by
I ain't no damn exception
Let's live hard and die
Some lie for it
Some cry for it
Some get high for it

Some die for it
I feel run down
I feel a weight on me
Maybe the devil's comin'
Do what he please
I've be'n told lies
Be'n made a fool
I was doin' time
'Til the day I found you
Always on my mind
People try to tell me
But I can't hear
I need you now
You gotta 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

Word unspoken,
thoughts in time
Eyes wide open, heart in bloom

Chiron Return

by Rainbow

It's my Chiron Return, and I'm turnin' 50
I'm looking foward to it with glee
for the older I get, the more I truly see
the only limits to my creativity
are the ones that have been self imposed by me!

Chorus

I need to be, spread my wings and fly free
I'm a unique individuality
I'm exploring my potentiality
and I'm seein' all my crazy possibility
as I learn to co-create my Reality!

I've planted my seed and now I gotta' grow it
so it's carpe diem, and I ain't gonna blow it
I'm a sparkly little Rainbow and now I gotta' show it
for the Source has ordained me as a Spirit Centred Poet

So it's twinkle, twinkle, little Rainbow Star
gonna show my sacred colours both near and afar
there'll be no more hiding of my gifts in a jar
'cause it's time for me to raise my personal bar
and I'm claimin' my potential as an Avatar!

Chorus

So no more feelings of alienation
I'm a daughter of Spirit (and of the Pagan Nation)
I deserve respect and admiration
'cause I've worked darn hard for this feeling of elation
so I'm open, God, and waitin' on your inspiration!
this is my life, Bubba, this is me-
It's my Chiron Return, and I'm turning 50!

*Chiron (K-EYE-RON) Return = astronomical configuration
between 48-52 years. The "Wounded Healer" returns to where
it was when you were born*

*- rules All Wounds, the Process of Healing them and the
Wisdom thus aquired
- named for the Centaur Teacher and Healer
- associated with Sagittarius and Virgo*

"Heaven's Most Precious Flower"

Geoffrey Ascroft

One day I will find you
I just don't know when
When I walk through that garden
Of loved one's and friends,
There you'll be in blossom
In God's heavenly fold
In that most precious garden
With colours of gold

Yes-maybe the angels
Are really flowers you know
Those treasures God's chosen
For his garden of gold
The most radiant blossom
It's the one I would choose
Heavens most precious flower
My love, would be you

And I'll walk through that garden
With the wonderful view
Heavens most precious flowers
Some old and some new,
But of all these dear flowers
You're the one I'd still choose
When I enter that garden
With the wonderful view

when and then

by MIDC

when I wake
to early moon glow
star shine bright time
warm feelings
letting anger go
walking in the grass
barefoot bold foot
keeping eyes open
hummingbird nector
sweet life I'm, told
it does not matter
if the water is warm or cold
sweet natures tangerine
I'll dance and sing
with life unfold

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The Deacons Bench



SPIRITUALITY OF HOSPITALITY, PART 1

"I am a stranger and a sojourner among you; Genesis 23.4

There are a lot of reasons why we welcome strangers, and share conversation and food with each other. Hospitality expresses human kindness, gives the host and the guest the joy of meeting another person, and says publicly that every one is of equal value and dignity. In the Old Testament scriptures, there is a 'spirituality' of hospitality.

The environment of the desert in most of the Middle East is harsh. Travelers depended on the hospitality of the people who live along the way. Access to shelter, and water, and food was a matter of life and death. Strict codes of conduct obligated the host to protect the traveler and the foreigner (the alien) and to provide food, water, and shelter. These codes of hospitality came to be expressed in the books of the Law; for example:

"The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of

Egypt: I am the Lord your God." (Leviticus 19.34) and "When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, do not pick everything; some shall be left for the alien, the orphan, and the widow. Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I am commanding you to do this." (Deuteronomy 24:21-22)

The phrases that make this a "spirituality" are: "for you were aliens in the land of Egypt," and "remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt." The time when the Israelites were foreigners and slaves in captivity in Egypt, and wandering in the desert for forty years was their most intimate experience of the presence of God, and of God's love and protection for them. They looked back at their hunger, slavery, and alienation in Egypt as the great moment when God was there for them - as the great moment when they knew that they could not take care of themselves - as the great moment when they knew that they could depend on God for everything.

So Deuteronomy and Leviticus are not

saying 'love the stranger (the one who is on the outside looking in), and provide food to the alien, and the widow, and the orphan because you've been there and you know how it feels.' The law in Deuteronomy and Leviticus is saying 'do those things because that is where you experienced God's presence before - and where you will remember it again.'

When I am comfortably a citizen of the place I am in - with rights, and protection, and security, and power...and when I have so many grape vines that I can afford to let the hungry pick what they need to survive - it's easy to forget that everything I have is a gift from God...and it's easy to forget that I need God, and we need each other. We want to think that we are strong and independent ... but we are all aliens, and widows, and orphans. Life is fragile and precarious... whether it is in an ancient middle-eastern desert or in a modern Canadian city. We rely on God and on each other - and that is expressed in hospitality. Hospitality is the exchange where guest and host both discover that all people on earth are equally loved by God - and that all life comes from God, is sustained by God, and returns to God.

may you be blessed with peace and goodness,

deacon maurice ofs

Up and Coming at the Centre

St. Catharines Injured Speaker School
Beginning Sept. 13th
Call Kim @ 905-984-5310 ext 11

Harvest Festival
October 13th, 11-3pm
Centennial Park

Fundraiser Pasta Dinner
Wednesday, September 19th
5-7 pm
Eat in - Take Out \$10

Safe Food Handling Course
September 5, 12 & 18th
@ SMUN, 6-9 pm

SMUN Annual General Meeting

Wednesday August 29th
Doors open at 7pm
Meeting starts at 7:30

Grand Opening

Niagara Injured Worker Centre
September 25th, Doors Open @ 4pm
Ribbon Cutting @ 6 pm

Art with Reg
Tuesdays 1-3 pm



Qi Gong with George
Thursdays 2:30 pm

Turning the Tables on Social Assistance

by Angela Browne

The Social Assistance Reform Commission was appointed in the fall of 2010. Many of us have concerns about this review and what is going to happen once it reports back to the government and its recommendations are made public.

This review was a key plank in the province of Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy, which included Bill 152, the *Poverty Reduction Act*. This is no lie. All political parties passed this legislation in 2009 with much fanfare at the time and substantial public support. Originally conceived from the Province's *Poverty Reduction Strategy* released December 4, 2008, the Commission would review all social assistance programs and make recommendations that would reduce the complexity of social programs and reduce poverty in Ontario. The legislation enacted ensures all stakeholders, particularly persons living in poverty and/or who are at risk of poverty, would be part of the consultation, redesign and implementation process. However, like the Drummond Report (which reported publicly on February 15th of this year), Social Assistance Reform Commissioners Frances Lankin and Munir Sheikh were given marching orders from an austerity minded government.

Don Drummond, Frances Lankin and Munir Sheikh know that Ontario cannot cut its way to prosperity. They also know that welfare rules that forbid people to grow assets, build a business, or form families, militate against poverty reduction; these individuals would be making quite different recommendations if they based their analysis solely on best practices and the actual objective of poverty reduction.

However, beholden to an austerity agenda, Lankin and Sheikh are euphemistically expected to create a

miracle by finding so called "efficiencies" in the two social assistance programs in Ontario, namely, the Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program.

It seems that the myth of employment being the sole route out of poverty further prevails. A fix of the labour market is not on the Ontario Government's agenda. We only need to look as far as the federal government recent "reforms" to the Employment Insurance program, temporary foreign worker program, and related initiatives, such as eliminating employment equity requirements from the Federal Contractor Program and reducing budgets for important enforcement bodies, such as the Canadian Human Rights Commission. As federal Finance Minister James Flaherty stated, "There is no such thing as a bad job".

Both Minister Flaherty and the rest of us know he will never have to do a "bad job" again. Lest all the "bad jobs" that Canadians refuse to take because they pay too little, lack any benefits, offer inconsistent and irregular hours, and potentially destroy the soul of the bearer should they even last more than a mere few weeks, are now the new pathway for poor Canadians. If you dare make a claim for Employment Insurance and by extension, social assistance, you may be asked to take one of these jobs, never mind that you are trained as an engineer, a teacher, a social worker, a manager, or even an artist. Simply put, we are taking the willingness to work and dreams of inclusion by persons with disabilities, and delivering them to the worst jobs that nobody else will take, perhaps for less than minimum wage.

In fact, it is posited that a substantial raise in ODSP would make it "unfair" to those

that already work in these "bad jobs". Poor people on social assistance "deserve" to be poor (!) because low wage workers in "bad jobs" are also poor, so why should people on social assistance, including people with disabilities, have it "better" than those in bad jobs hence assuming there are even enough "bad jobs". The "answer" to reforming social assistance is to get people out of welfare poverty into working poverty! So much for the *Poverty Reduction Act*! Never mind thinking outside the box and asking why we have so many "bad jobs" to begin with ... Another theme is to divide people with disabilities between those who "can" and those who "cannot" work, as if it were that simple. Ability to work is not related to the severity of one's disability, but more the social, economic, educational and attitudinal barriers held against persons with various kinds of disabilities. Two people with the exact same disability and limitations may have a very different set of opportunities and barriers. Virtually none of these issues are properly reflected in the report.

Moreover those deemed employable often lose a substantial portion of their income benefits, even if they cannot find a paying job. There is no rationale for lowering the incomes of people deemed employable, as I have yet to see housing prices, grocery prices, transportation costs, and so forth, be lowered accordingly. If we drop the already inadequate allowances of \$1,064 monthly income for persons with disabilities to the welfare level of \$599 per month, what do you *think* is going to happen?

The number of job vacancies will not increase just because more people are thrown on OW rates. Their chances of finding a job might even drop, given that it costs so much to conduct a good job search. Interview

clothing, stable housing, a telephone contact, references, transportation, and so on, are not free the last time I checked. Moreover; employers almost universally said that they would not hire social assistance recipients. If *they* will not, who do they believe will? Unless government somehow forces employers to hire people from the Ontario Works or ODSP rolls, and to accommodate all disabilities, the marginalized will always be marginalized unless the labour market gets a true “fix” and employment opportunities are created for everyone.

Statistics Canada recently reported that there are between six and eight unemployed persons (meaning people who are already currently looking for work) for every single job vacancy. That means if we filled every single job vacancy that exists, there will still be another five to seven persons without work! The Social Assistance Reform Commission is supposed to look at ways to make sure these remaining people do not lose their homes, their health or their families, but instead, it appears the Commission wants to cater to the needs of wealthy corporations. Working poverty is becoming more and more of a problem without any apparent attempt at a resolution.

Another set of recommendations include merging the ODSP program with Ontario Works into one program. That means punitive rules as they currently exist for people on ODSP will *never* be changed (despite the fact that this group of people have a completely different set of needs than those who are deemed employable). One example that many in the disability community wanted to see changed is when a person receiving ODSP marries or lives common law with somebody. The income and assets of their partners should not be considered when evaluating one’s continued eligibility for ODSP. As somebody who has worked in this community, I see how this particular rule has forced many persons with disabilities to remain with abusive partners. In some cases, they are cut off when their partner or spouse refuses to cooperate by not handing over pay stubs to ODSP officials. Most others do not bother to even entertain entering into relationships, or they attempt to “hide” the

fact they are involved with anybody for fear of losing their financial independence. While it may be expected that family income be counted together for those in receipt of unrestricted Ontario Works benefits, as these people are expected to work themselves off welfare, this rule hurts those with disabilities who are not likely to ever earn enough to become financially independent. In these cases, it is unfair and discriminatory to pose the full burden of support on the other spouse. Merging ODSP with Ontario Works

There is NO rationale for lowering the incomes of people deemed employable, as I have yet to see housing prices, grocery prices, transportation costs, and so forth, be lowered accordingly

is certainly going to cement this and many other counter productive rules (such as the fastest route to a job) that do not serve people with disabilities or encourage them to fully develop to their potential, while retaining their independence.

Finally, there were a number of proposals concerning employment supports. Employment and education supports are very important, but I fear the proposals will not result in this. There are merits to consolidating all employment supports under either Employment Ontario or through a local service agency, but one would want to know what this means. We need to make sure that everybody who is seeking employment, education and training, has access to the necessary programs that will help them do

so. Greater use must be made of successful head hunting agencies that are experienced in placing professionals into jobs; perhaps by contracting with them to assist qualified OW and ODSP recipients in accessing the higher paid jobs, while supports for disability and other related issues can be provided by other agencies.

This means service coordination, (something Employment Supports Service Providers were once allowed to do), where providers can work together to achieve best outcomes for each client, while sharing the fees for each direct service provided. Somehow, this has become lost under the new delivery model. People with good educations are often told they have “more qualifications” than the employment support worker has. They are then told to negotiate their own accommodations. This is a set up for failure. It should be the role of the job developer to work with employers with suitable leads to aid in devising appropriate job descriptions for suitable candidates. This also means that service providers need more resources and training to be able to partake in these discussions and educate targeted employers about their duties under the *Human Rights Code*, as well as to assist them in placing qualified candidates in their organizations.

If the Social Assistance Reform Commission and Ontario Government truly want to reduce poverty and increase participation in the paid labour force by all persons, including persons with disabilities, it must not be based on threats to the person of loss of benefits or reduction in income supports. Persons who are not likely to engage in paid work should still receive sufficient benefits to allow them to not have to live in poverty. Self employed workers should be able to deal with their business in the same way other business owners do. Serious labour market reform is a must, including increases to minimum wage, and easier rules to develop and organize unions or other workplace structures that encourage mobility and advancement. Otherwise any poverty reduction goals will all be for naught.

Excerpt from an article by Angela Browne - guest writer - for full article see Angela's blog -

<http://brownneassociatesblogspot.com>

Healthy Kitchen *by Susan Grimard*



It's summer and we have an abundance of food coming into the kitchen which is used for meals on the weekend. One of our meals included corn on the cob with cucumber and cherry tomato salad. Another was Caponata with produce exclusively from the garden. It came with the help of a volunteer who was given some eggplant from the garden that she promptly turned into a delicious gift of Caponata to share at the Centre.



Susan in the kitchen

Caponata is a blend of eggplant, peppers, onions, potatoes and tomatoes seasoned with basil, parsley, garlic, oregano, salt and pepper. A very versatile dish it can be enhanced with whatever you have in the fridge. For a small amount you can sauté the eggplant, onions, garlic, celery, add tomatoes, small precooked potatoes. Add seasonings to taste. Simmer for 20 minutes or so. Adding lentils or meat (like little meatballs) is also tasty. Let your imagination be your guide for this summer healthy meal. We are fortunate to have the bounty from the Smun garden at the Vineland Research and Innovation Centre. One meal was 100% from the garden, most are 80% to 90% from our garden.



Debbie at the farm

The SMUN kitchen is also blessed with many other donations including that of the Tzu Chi foundation who volunteer once a month at a Sunday lunch. They always bring delicious home made vegetarian spring rolls for a special treat for the regular 100 plus guests. Their generosity also includes food donation such as lentils, beans and sauce.



We are fortunate with the many meals provided from the garden. Debbie and her crew have been very busy and the SMUN community continues to reap the benefits.

Tzu Chi Foundation Members serving

**For Employment Help
Call Faye
905-984-5310
ext 15**

**For Housing Assistance
Call Kyle
289-686-0639**

**To Volunteer
Call Tony
905-984-5310
ext 17**

**Thanks to Silver Spire
United Church for your ongoing
support of Start Me Up Niagara
A special welcome to
Rev. Bill Thomas and
Rev. Jane Capstick**



Answer for Suduko from page 16

4	6	9	2	1	3	8	5	7
5	7	8	9	4	6	3	2	1
3	2	1	7	8	5	4	6	9
8	5	7	6	9	4	1	3	2
1	3	2	5	7	8	9	4	6
9	4	6	3	2	1	7	8	5
2	1	3	8	5	7	6	9	4
6	9	4	1	3	2	5	7	8
7	8	5	4	6	9	2	1	3

Emergency Resources

Shelter Information - 211

EMERGENCY SHELTERS	PHONE	ADDRESS	BEDS	HOURS	RESTRICTIONS (Age, sex, addiction, etc.)
Abbey House	905-684-9736	115 Dufferin Street St. Catharines, ON L2R 2A2	8	24hrs	females and females with children; 8 weeks clean
HOPE House	905-734-8492 905-734-8302	116 Division Street Welland, ON L3B 3Z9	21	24hrs	accommodate men, women & families; no alcohol or drugs
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	905-684-7271, ext. 43230	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 905-984-5310 17 Gale Crescent Monday-Friday, Holidays, 9-3 Saturday-Sunday 11:15-1 Open to all

Meals

Salvation Army Booth Centre 184 Church Street	Daily 8:00am, 12:30pm, 5:15pm	\$2.50-\$3.00
St. George's Breakfast Program 83 Church Street	Daily 7:30am-8:30am	no cost
RAFT (ages 16-24) 172 Church 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 Family of Businesses

Happy Being Me
 Steve K-Lentinello Computer
 Wendy Brown Photography
 David Allen Computer
 The Happy Spinster
 Hilton Tobin - Skin Care
 Paint It - Clean It
 Donna's Mobile Beach
 Niagara Bags of Rags

Business Supporters

The Laundry Tub
 Minuteman Press
 H2O
 Tree'n'Twig
 Vineland Research &
 Innovation Centre
 Con Gusto Artesan Bakery
 Starbucks at Fairview Mall,
 4th Ave and Scott at Niagara
 Wrights' Brothers Produce
 Rysons United School of Music
 Royal Crown Printing
 The Peanut Mill
 Donut Diner
 Liberty Cycle
 Niagara Growers
 Fresco's Euro Grille
 The Office Tap 'n' Grill
 Stoke Seeds
 Marinelli's True "Italian Pasta Sauce"
 Pharma Viva Pharmacy
 Rich's
 Sheehan & Rosie Insurance
 Village Wellness - Healing Centre
 Canadian Tire Financial Service
 Costco
 Meyers Fruit Farms
 De La Terre Bakery
 Simply Delicious

SUDOKU

Sudoku is a number grid. The aim is to fill in the missing numbers so that all horizontal columns, all vertical columns and all 9 mini grids contain the numbers 1 to 9. They can be in any order. Good luck! Answer on page 17.

	6		2		3		5	
	7						2	
3		1		8		4		9
		7		9		1		
			5		8			
		6		2		7		
2		3		5		6		4
	9						7	
	8		4		9		1	



Yes, I want to support Start Me Up Niagara

Enclosed is my donation for: _____

\$25 \$50 \$75 \$100 other\$ _____

Please direct my donation to: Street News

The Centre, 17 Gale Crescent Where it is needed most

OR - Go to www.startmeupniagara.ca - 'Donations' - and follow instructions

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Postal Code: _____

THANK YOU. Please make cheques payable to:
 Start Me Up Niagara, 17 Gale Crescent
 St. Catharines, ON L2R 3K8 (905) 984-5310

