

The Public Good

The newsletter of The Public Good Society of Dartmouth

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Dartmouth's Sonny & Cher

I have been working as the Community Outreach Facilitator with the Connections that Work program for 3 years now. I am grateful everyday to the Board of The Public Good Society of Dartmouth for giving me this unique opportunity to shepherd some of the most marginalized people in our community to employment programs, literacy programs, education programs, in short anything that increases their capacity to enjoy life.

Because I work alone I sometimes feel a tad envious when I hear other non-profit staff speak about "team". But I am proud that over these three years I have reached out to staff in the government, non-profit and business sectors to assist clients I meet. There are times when a specific client requires a lot of intense "teaming" between myself and a Department of Community Services caseworker, a non-profit agency staff person and other outreach facilitators in our community. But these experiences are largely situational, meaning the opportunity arises as the need emerges and then recedes as the clients either moves forward or drifts away, their cell phone no longer in service.

A year ago I was contacted by the new Capital Health Wellness Navigator, Heather Beaton. Heather was off to a fast and effective start, assisting many Dartmouth residents in finding programs and services that enhanced their wellness. But Heather is a self-starter and she recognized that many of her early clients were middle-class, missing were the marginalized folks in our communities. So Heather was reaching out to me to see if there were ways she could connect to this vulnerable population.

My first step was to invite Heather to the foodbanks, soup kitchen and community centres I visit on a weekly basis. Heather was so keen she came to all of these events right away and mixed easily with clients, volunteers and staff. People took an immediate liking to her.

Since then Heather and I have collaborated to assist tens of clients to find mental health, general health



Heather Beaton and Kevin Little

and various other kinds of wellness programs. Too often the clients I meet have been without a doctor or access to mental health care for many, many years. These are people who fall between the cracks of our health care system.

What Heather does is provide an approachable presence, a steady resource that clients can rely upon, and follow up to ensure that these clients don't fall through the cracks again.

So now at the foodbanks, even when Heather is not there in person, I reference her to clients in my opening introduction. I have Heather's cards and I am confident that when I give one to a client, Heather will call them back and make a significant difference in their life.

It works both ways. When a client Heather is working with starts to get back on her/his feet and begins looking for employment/literacy/education opportunities she calls me, she gives my card to the client, and she knows she can rely on me.

Heather's response, whenever we have successfully worked together to assist a client, is to say "isn't it great when we can team together". I could not agree more. Just call us the Sonny and Cher of community outreach services in Dartmouth.

Kevin Little
Community Outreach Facilitator
The Public Good Society

Thanks to funding from the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services, the "Connections that Work" project will continue helping people in Dartmouth until March 2012.

Standards for Residential Occupancies [or 'Minimum Housing Standards']

Do you know that there is a minimum standards by-law in HRM? It states that owners "shall maintain the rooming, boarding and lodging house in a clean, secure and sanitary condition at all times..."

In the section on Rooming, Boarding and Lodging Houses it states, among other things, that there shall be locks in working order, no more than two persons per sleeping room, windows of a certain size to let in natural light, and appliances in working order – basically all that a person needs to live in a safe, secure and healthy home. This is our community standard in an ideal world.

However, we all know of rented 'homes' – whether a room, apt, or house – that do not meet this dictated standard. Some don't even come close. Sometimes the locks don't even work. This is the most basic requirement of our homes: a secure place to sleep and to store our essential possessions like food and documents. Why should anyone pay rent for less than this?

Yet some landlords continue to collect the rent each month and do not spend any of it on necessary building repairs. Why is this allowed to continue?

Minimum standards is a complex issue, where tenants who want to complain are afraid of eviction, and landlords who don't make repairs threaten to close the building if they are forced to comply. Perhaps this is a worst case scenario and there is some common ground.

The Public Good Society of Dartmouth will provide an opportunity to discuss minimum standards in a solution-oriented forum in coming months, including how to complain and how to appeal. Please tell us your stories about sub-standard homes: thepublicgoodsociety@gmail.com.



Welcome aboard!

The Public Good Society would like to welcome our new board members who are adding a great deal of knowledge, skill and experience to our Board of Directors. We appreciate members who are willing to give of their time to provide service and support to others in our community of Dartmouth and assist us to find new and innovative ideas to continue our work for the public good.

* Joanne Bernard has been the Executive Director of the Dartmouth based organization Alice Housing for 7 years. Her casework and interests are very much aligned with the front-line services of The Public Good Society of Dartmouth and she is looking forward to this new volunteer role serving the community of Dartmouth.

* Dennis Pilkey, our new Treasurer, is semi-retired doing occasional consulting work with an emphasis on research and the use of statistics in program planning and management. Prior to retiring he was Director of Nova Scotia Community Counts, a community oriented source of a broad range of statistics. Previously, as Director of the Nova Scotia Statistics Agency, he represented the provincial government on provincial, regional and national committees involved with statistical data and outcome measures.

"The Public Good" is published twice a year by The Public Good Society of Dartmouth.

For more information on the Society see our web site at www.publicgoodsociety.ca.

The Society can be reached at:

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All donations are eligible for a Charitable Tax Receipt.

The
Public Good Society
of Dartmouth

The 2011 Annual General Meeting of
The Public Good Society will be held on
November 28th, 5:30-7:30 pm at Christ
Church Hall, 50 Dundas St., Dartmouth

Guest speaker:
Mervyn Horgan, Acadia University
"From Social Isolation to Social Insulation:
Some Strategies for Making Good on Inclusion"

Refreshments will be served
& all are welcome to attend!