

The Public Good

The newsletter of the Public Good Society of Dartmouth

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A Message from the Chair

Over the past year, we have achieved much success as we worked hard to keep the Connections that Work project in operation. We received a significant anonymous donation because of the value this work has had in connecting people to much needed services and assisting to build self-reliance. We have maintained a Board with three levels of government and strong community based advocates from business, community and mental health, community services and ecumenical backgrounds, and residents of Dartmouth. Our project, Connections that Work, has assisted many people in our community who experience difficulty accessing services and navigating systems.

In the coming months we will work to gain charitable status for The Public Good Society to broaden our financial possibilities so that this project can reach a level of sustainability.



The 2009 Board and resource people of the Public Good Society of Dartmouth

Along with the management of this project, we found the time to have a *Strategic Directions* day to explore and solidify our vision, goals, values and objectives. Our new found vision will guide our future directions and extend our work to a broader population.

Our vision – to make our community of Dartmouth and area the best it can be for people who live, work and play here by addressing complex social issues and their root causes.

Within these discussions we worked to set future goals for ourselves. One of our goals is to provide opportunities for solution focused dialogue among social service providers, community and business leaders and people working towards self-reliance. We firmly believe we have a shared responsibility with those who serve the community and we wish to partner and work collaboratively.

We know this will not happen without clear objectives. So our next step, to achieve collaborative action and work to optimize the co-ordination of services, is to host a forum or think-tank to look at solutions. Our plan is to provide the environment out of which new and creative approaches might emerge. The Public Good Society wishes to be a catalyst for new and creative approaches. So please stay tuned for more information on our upcoming forum.

Respectfully,
Terrance Brennan
Chair, PGS Board of Directors

Notes from the Public Good Society

- Thanks to funding from the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services, the “Connections that Work” project has been extended until March 2010.
- Between January and September 2009 a total of 81 clients were referred to a range of at least 15 employment related services in Dartmouth. Of the 81 clients, 18 have since become employed. Most of the others have been moved closer to employment.
- In the month of September alone, the PGS facilitated three information sessions about service providers for clients at local food banks.

From the Front Lines

From August 2008 to the present I have served as the Project Facilitator for the Connections that Work program with The Public Good Society. It has been a great honour to carry out work that has a tangible impact on the lives of our most vulnerable citizens.

Although I am not the first staff person to work on this program I am the first to work without an office. The strategy is to visit the food banks in north end and downtown Dartmouth, not to mention Margaret House and other places where the poor gather for support. I meet clients without aid of office or well-known organization.

Still it works. In the first 12 months I documented 120 clients, a caseload I continue to update. In addition to meeting the clients over coffee as they wait for their food, taking them to their first appointments at the agencies, and meeting all of the available agencies in our community, I call the clients on Mondays to see where they are in their search; for a job, for community, for health care, for education. It never ceases to amaze me that just when I think calling the clients, week after week, is a waste of my time and theirs, I discover a client has a new need, has found a job, or desperately needs someone to talk with them.

Making connections in the community often pays off in the end, even when you least expect it. One woman I met had just been released from prison. She needed help collecting her things, scattered among many friends in HRM. The next day her best friend called to ask me to help her son with multiple disabilities. I picked him up and took him to one of our employment agencies the next day.

“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.

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Thanks!

The Public Good Society of Dartmouth would like to thank area food banks for all of their assistance over the past year with our Connections that WORK project. Project Facilitator, Kevin Little, has valued their support as has the Board of the Society.

The project seeks to provide a support network, connecting individuals to services they identify as necessary to take steps toward self-reliance and employment. Their generous provision of space, time and other support enables Kevin to meet with people in a welcoming setting. As a result, they make a positive difference in the lives of those our project serves.

Some would say the program pays for itself as some fifteen people found jobs with my assistance. But I would argue that the most important gap “Connections that Work” filled was the moat that separates clients from services. Being a bridge between agencies and clients requires listening to people most ignore. I have heard stories few will know, like the man who painted all his life and showed no one his work. Finally, one day after sitting and talking to him for the 50th time he invited me to his home. I had the privilege and honour of affirming someone who had never ever heard the words “that’s beautiful!” That same man told me that his caseworker “saved my life!” Later I returned home and called that worker and left a voice mail. I have a hunch caseworkers don’t get a lot of messages like this one, but I wanted to be sure she knew what a blessing she had been.

Thank you for giving me this unique opportunity to serve.

Kevin Little,
Project Facilitator

