

CALGARY Street TALK

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APRIL 2008 VOL. 12 NO. 4

A SPARE CHANGE NEWSPAPER

Photo by James Witney



Child
development
is everyone's
business

Barb Higgins
on the
One World Gala
page 8

Glen Olsen R.I.P.

CST was saddened to learn of the death of vendor Glen Olsen in March. We hope to have more details for our readers in a coming issue.

Vendor Code of Conduct

Calgary Street Talk vendors are proud of their newspaper and the people who sell it. They each sign a Code of Conduct that stresses the importance of a high standard in customer service because they realize that the conduct of one affects all the others. On occasion, certain persons obtain copies of *Calgary Street Talk* and sell them without authorization; this can be accompanied by undesirable behaviour. The authorized vendors and the publishers are anxious to eliminate such incidents.

If you witness or experience any unacceptable behaviour, please report it directly to the offices of *Calgary Street Talk* at 221-8780.

Vendors Needed

Calgary Street Talk has openings for new vendors. If you are looking for a way to earn money while learning new skills, this is the job for you. We require our vendors to be genuinely interested in working and trying to improve their circumstances. We currently have a number of excellent locations available.

For more information, please contact *Calgary Street Talk* at 221-8780.

Top Sellers

March's top sales leaders were #7 **Andie Wolf Leg** and then #217 **Carolyn Miller**, followed by #2 **Bob Bland**.

Vendor Incentive Program

#242 **Eugene M.** is a go-getter who works tirelessly, even on weekends.

We are dependent on supporters to donate to our Vendor Incentive Program. We like to award at least one \$25 food gift certificate to deserving vendors each month to recognize initiative, improved sales or to acknowledge participating in the *Calgary Street Talk* program.

For information about the Vendor Incentive Program please call 221-8674.

In Memoriam: Caroline Moulding



Photo by Gordon Christie

Caroline Moulding, a long-time CST vendor, passed away recently of cervical cancer. She was 58 years old. At a memorial service held at CUPS on March 19, many of her friends testified to her selflessness despite her many struggles in life. Not only did she put the lives of others before her own, but she lived her life with joy. Being with Caroline was an invitation to happiness. One of her customers, Collette G., sent the following note: "Even though I didn't know her for a very long

time, I always knew if I went to the corner of 1st St. & Stephen Ave in front of the Bay, I would see a smiling face. Also, if someone needed a hand with something and she could help, she was right there. I loved her and will always miss her."

Caroline initiated her partnership of 20 years with Bruce S. after she left an abusive relationship. She had known him as a family friend, and decided to make him a proposal: "Would you like to have me?" Bruce responded to her sweetness and generosity, and they became each other's best friend. She will be sorely missed by him and her circle of friends and admirers. ■

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Save money and support mental health services by attending



CALGARY
ASSOCIATION
OF SELF HELP



The Sale will be held

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Saturday April 19th from 10 am - 3 pm
at 1019 7th Avenue SW**

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Free parking behind the building; the C-train 10th Street
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Background information:

Calgary Association of Self Help is a community mental health centre that provides client centered, flexible services promoting the abilities of adults with mental illness. This is accomplished through our crisis intervention and prevention, support counselling, skill development and social recreational programs.

For additional information contact:

Ms. Corinne Wilson, Fund Development/Communications Officer
Calgary Association of Self Help, 1019 7th Avenue SW, Calgary, Alberta
T2P 1A8, Phone 266-8711 ext. 247

Street Talk Distribution

Here is a list of authorized active *Street Talk* vendors, each of whom works his or her own hours. The best time to find one is during the morning,

- Vendor #1: "Saint"- Pete**
17th Avenue & 7th Street SW
- #2: Bob Bland**
6th Avenue & 2nd Street SW
- #4: Mike Abhar**
4th Avenue & 1st Street SW
(A.M.)
Eau Claire Market (lunch & early P.M.)
6th Avenue & 4th Street SW
(late P.M.)
- #7: Andie** 23 Ave. & 4 St. SW
- #19: Norm "The Mayor" Mansell**
City Hall, 8th Ave. & Macleod Trail SE
- #68: Rob Champion**
Plaza Theatre, Kensington
- #187: Bruce S.**
8 St. & 9 Ave. underpass AM
4 St. & 9 Ave. underpass PM
- #217: Carolyn Miller**
- #242: Eugene M.**
The Bay at 8th Ave. & 1st St. SW
- #251: Ed Gorman**
18th Ave. & 4th St. SW
- #253: Darrell S.**
- #273: Ray R.**
Safeway at 410 - 10th Street NW
- #381: Wade A.**
9th Avenue & 1st Street SW
- #383: Gordon E.**
12th Ave. & 14th St. SW
- #397: Lois O.**
6th Ave. & 4th Street SW
- #442: Stephen Gale**
- #509: Barbara Randle**
Kensington Safeway
- #515 - John Beck**
- #519 - Ed Legault**

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A SPARE CHANGE NEWSPAPER

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COMMUNITY
CUPS
HEALTH CENTRE

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Calgary Street Talk is produced to offer an income, business-skills development, and a voice for people on the margins of our society. Vendors pay 60 cents per copy and resell to the public. Please buy only from vendors with an I. D. badge. The opinions expressed in Calgary Street Talk are those of the writers; they do not necessarily reflect those of the newspaper, its advertisers, publisher, or CUPS.

Calgary Street Talk welcomes your comments, questions, suggestions and article ideas. Please write or telephone. Letters to the editor are assumed to be for publication, must be signed, must include phone number, and may be edited for length.

Worth noting . . .

People spend a lifetime searching for happiness; looking for peace. They chase idle dreams, addictions, religions, even other people, hoping to fill the emptiness that plagues them. The irony is the only place they ever needed to search was within.

- Ramona L. Anderson ■



Photo by
James Witney

The Moonlight Lounge Gala

raised funds for many programs at CUPS' One World Child Development Centre - including transportation.

For more coverage of the gala, see page 8

FROM THE PUBLISHER'S DESK



We are sad to announce that Paul Drohan, editor of Calgary Street Talk, has taken an extended leave of absence. Herman Pontes will be Acting Editor during his leave. We remind potential contributors that submissions for Calgary Street Talk should be sent by the 10th of the month.

We will miss Paul's warmth and humour, as well as his compassion and willingness to go the extra mile for CUPS clients & staff. We wish him and his wife Anita well in their country retreat, and hope to see him back at CUPS in the not-too-distant future. ■

Whether I fully appreciate it or not I have come to know that on any given day I can always rely on being appreciated, listened to or supported by someone in my life. Whether I'm feeling well, looking my best or even in a good mood there's always someone who I can count on to lift my spirits or go to for at least a chat about the state of the world, but as I watched the daily lunch hour crowd shuffle by yet another member of Calgary's growing homeless population, I wondered if he was a person that could say the same thing.

I tried to imagine what it must feel like to be looked at with a combination of pity and distaste, to have people walk past you, doing their best to make believe that you are invisible, or just an annoyance in their otherwise important day. Regardless of whether the homeless are panhandling, seeking shelter in a warm area like a bus stop or simply wandering down the street, they are viewed as an eye sore by many others. But what could possibly be more dehumanizing than to ignore another person completely, as if they weren't there at all? What does it say about how we view the unfortunate side of the human condition when we look past them as they are speaking, or continue as if we heard or saw nothing? Is it so difficult to offer a smile, a nod or even a hello? Imagine the difference that a small gesture like that would make to someone that so regularly is subjected to avoidance, distaste and disgust.

How difficult it must be to maintain hope in such circumstances! The stories that bring an individual or a family into a state of homelessness in the first place are extremely diverse and complicated. Most people on the outside looking in fill their minds with visions of alcoholism, drugs or other addictions that lead people into a life of homelessness. It's a way of wrapping up the problem in a tight little package where the responsibility and blame can be firmly fixed on the person who is homeless, instead of stopping to consider unaffordable housing, mental illness, poor social infrastructure and a lack of services tailored to the needs of an individual or family could be to blame.

Our reactions of aversion, fear and judgment only add to an existing problem that is overwhelming. Is it really our place to judge whether someone deserves to occupy the position in which they find themselves? How can we truly know and understand their experience? Even if we could somehow attribute their situation to some particular event or a poorly made choice, what gives us the right to act as though they are somehow lesser human beings? How do we know that we wouldn't have made the very same choices ourselves in the same circumstances?



From Where I Stand

By JON BATEMAN
For Calgary Street Talk

After all, when you consider the usual mixture of mental illness, domestic violence, personal bankruptcy, addictions or disaster that pull people into a unique homeless situation, there isn't a person among us that doesn't face at least a slight risk of occupying such a position. Perhaps that's where the aversion to homelessness comes from: the bold and unsettling reality that each of us could potentially find ourselves in a similar situation. Homelessness is not a circumstance born purely of laziness or lack of motivation. Often, it is as a result of a series of incidents in which some of the circumstances were probably beyond the control of the person affected.

But isn't that exactly the reason for us to show our humanity, our compassion and our support to those that are currently in a less fortunate position? Not everyone has the means to make a great monetary donation to the homeless, but it shouldn't keep those that care from volunteering their time towards projects that help, whether it be a food drive, supporting a clothing or blanket hamper, or by donating a pair of clean socks. Even more importantly though, it shouldn't keep us from at least making eye contact with those in need, from offering a smile when appropriate, or even conversing with a person you see regularly in your neighborhood or in front of your office.

When I step back and look at my own life, it has been at the times when I've felt at my worst that I truly needed to know that someone acknowledged my struggle against the pressures of the world. There are situations in life that we often have to overcome under our own power, but that doesn't mean that the support offered by others doesn't motivate and inspire us to greater things. We can put money into affordable housing initiatives, we can create shelter space and we can even offer programs and services designed to help the homeless, all of which are very important in the fight to eliminate homelessness.

However, I think it's the smaller things that we do everyday as people that often will make a personalized and deep impression on the minds and hearts of those with whom we interact. It's those interactions that will build their confidence and hope in humanity. Maybe we can't take away the problems, provide the safe shelter or even offer money to the outstretched hand, but we can be a positive sign of support to a person who is feeling hopeless, simply by acknowledging their struggle. ■



God in a Dark Place

BY MARINA GIACOMINI

... Director of Housing and Supports for CUPS Community Health Centre

On March 13, Marina received The John Hutton Memorial Award for Social Action/Policy from the Alberta College of Social Workers. The award recognizes Registered Social Workers in good standing who have made an outstanding contribution to the profession of social work and the community through advocacy, social action, policy development/analysis, program development or political action aimed at enhancing social functioning, service delivery systems and the environments in which we work with our clients. CUPS congratulates Marina on this recognition, and on the fine work that led to it.

– Ed.

This is a story about my 10 year old son, Jonah, and the day he reminded me about why compassion and connection is one of the simplest yet most profound ways to experience God in another human being.

One day about a year ago, Jonah and I were off to get our hair done. “Jonesy”, as I like to call him, is this wonderful, vibrant, snake, snail and puppy dog tail kind of guy who almost always has dirt under his fingernails, smiles and laughs easily, and has an over-abundance of energy that at times threatens to drive the adults around him crazy. Jonesy is enthusiastic about wearing his hair long and wildly colored.

As someone known to have a love for wild hair colors, I don’t place a lot of restrictions on how Jonesy crafts his appearance and I am open to spending a bit of money on a colorful hairdo for him as a yearly treat.

On this particular trip to our hair salon, a pricey one on 11 Ave. SW., we had to park at a meter a block over by the bottle depot. This is a well-known hang out for a number of Calgary’s homeless individuals. As I was plugging coins into the meter, Jonah took it upon himself to strike up a conversation with

a man pushing a shopping cart full of his belongings up the street.

Jonah had a loonie. I’d given it to him to buy some gum or candy. He instead decided to offer it to this man, asking him if the dollar would help out that day. The man said, “Well that is very nice of you but I’m all set for today – you hang on to your money.” He then looked at me, gave a thumbs up, and mouthed the words, “What a nice kid.”

A couple of hours later, upon leaving the hair salon (good color takes time you know!) we were walking to our car and along comes the same gentleman. He’s holding some McDonald’s coupons in his hand and when he sees us he asks Jonah if he still has that loonie. I assume we are about to make a trade – the coupons for the dollar. I’m wrong. The man had been waiting for us to give Jonah the coupons to go along with his dollar, with a suggestion that today would be a great day for Jonesy to take his mother out for lunch! I am stunned! Here is a man who obviously has seen better days, offering money out of kindness to my son after we’d just spent a ton on our vanity!

Meanwhile, Jonah is becoming distressed as he fumbles through his pockets trying to find his loonie, now lost, probably falling out during a jumpy, fidgety moment. The man tells him not to worry and reaches into his own pocket pulling out a loonie and a toonie and insists that Jonah and I take it, along with the hamburger coupons and a couple of packages of Kool-aid powder. He tells us that it makes him feel good to give something to someone who had been kind to him.

As we were driving away that day, Jonah was very thoughtful, and taken with the entire encounter. He says to me, “Mom, I think that man might live in that alley and it’s a scary, dark place. He was so nice. Do you think that was God?” I’m sniffing and say something about the Bible and Jesus mentioning that we would meet Him in the poor and the marginalized. Jonah

■ see ... GOD IN A DARK on page 14

Nations thrive by helping families

By CAROL GOAR
Toronto Star columnist

Economists are leery about work-life balance. It is too abstract, too incompatible with market principles.

Governments treat family-friendly policies as a frill, a grudging concession to working women.

The media play up images of female executives rushing to daycare centres in their power suits; female lawyers struggling to meet their quota of billable hours after their kids are in bed; female celebrities wrestling with maternal guilt.

The issue is much bigger than this, says the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. Yesterday, the Paris-based international organization released the most comprehensive study ever done of the tug-of-war between work and family life.

Its conclusion: Countries that want to raise their standard of living, improve their fertility rate, reduce child poverty and narrow the pay gap between men and women have to get serious about offering parents healthier choices.

It is not just a matter of easing workplace stress, says Babies and Bosses. It is a question of how – sometimes whether – individuals contribute to a nation’s economy.

“As long as there are people who are constrained in their choices about work/family balance, the result may be both too few babies and too little employment or unsatisfactory careers,” says the 215-page report (available at www.oecd.org).

It is a synthesis of five years’ work, reviewing the policies of Canada, Britain, Sweden, Finland, Australia, New Zealand, Portugal, Switzerland, Japan, Ireland, Austria, Denmark and the Netherlands. Statistics for other OECD countries such as the U.S., Mexico, Germany, France and Spain are also included in the study.

Here are its principal findings:
Access to affordable preschool care is vital.

Without it, some women postpone or forgo having children. Others sacrifice their career to raise their children. Many make compromises – shortchanging their children or their employers – that eat away at them and impose an unfair burden on their co-workers.

For single mothers, the options are especially stark. Trapped between governments that require them to work and daycare centres that charge more than they can afford, they make tenuous babysitting arrangements or find ways to stay on welfare.

Canada fares badly in this regard. Child care costs 21.3 per cent of the average industrial wage, compared with 4.5 per cent in Sweden, 9.1 per cent in Germany, 19.5 per cent in the U.S. and 33.8 per cent in Switzerland. (The OECD average was 16.3 per cent.)

Parental leave programs make a big difference.

They give mothers (and fathers in some countries) time to bond with their newborns while allowing them to stay in the workforce.

They encourage young couples to start families, rather than holding off until they can afford to interrupt their careers.

And they provide children with full-time personal care in the crucial early months of their lives.

Canada’s policies place it in the middle of the pack. It lags behind most European countries, but is ahead of the U.S. and Japan.

After-school care is badly needed.

By keeping schools open after classes, governments could go a long way toward aligning parents’ and kids’ schedules, alleviate pressure on workers to leave early and reduce the number of latchkey children.

Denmark and Sweden are the only countries with well-established programs. Britain and the Netherlands are moving in this direction.

Employers are unlikely to act on their own.

■ see ... NATIONS THRIVE on page 14

“Governments treat family-friendly policies as a frill, a grudging concession to working women.”



Vibrant COMMUNITIES Calgary

BY CONNIE JOHNSON

Inspired, Determined and Committed Calgarians

Alberta's 27th general election was held on March 3, 2008. According to the unofficial poll results, only 41.3% of enumerated electors voted, an all time record low for an Alberta provincial election. Globe and Mail writers, Katherine O'Neill and Dawn Walton, called the turnout rate an "abysmal low" (March 4, 2008). On March 5th, Peter Loewen, an Associate at the University of Montreal's Canada Research Chair of Electoral Studies, explained to CBC News that Alberta's voter turnout rate is the lowest for a Canadian provincial election in 50 years. While these findings may discourage some Albertans, it strengthened the resolve of many dedicated volunteers aiming to increase civic engagement and build collective action.

Lorna, Kathleen and Minal first met at a Poverty Talks Action Meeting, a gathering designed to encourage the public and politicians to take action on poverty related issues. The three women were so inspired that they decided to participate in subsequent meetings. By the third meeting, the group agreed to formalize.

In doing so, they named their collective Women Together Ending Poverty. They also drafted a Statement of Purpose, mandating their shared goal of helping to raise all people out of poverty.

Says Minal, "When a room full of women gather with backgrounds rich in diversity to make change, there is no stopping us!" Minal speaks equally passionately of their first mobilization, supporting International Women's Day 2008. "I was inspired to see my sisters on stage speaking publicly around issues of housing, a living wage and the economic disparity that women experience around the world. I felt strength in our solidarity around these issues!"

While the group Women Together Ending Poverty includes only women, they aim to help all people living in poverty, under the common understanding that by improving the lives of women, children and men will also benefit.

Women, however, are overrepresented among low income populations. Says one Poverty Talks participant (name withheld), "Women are more likely to experience poverty". In Calgary, 1 in 10 women workers over the age of 25 earn less than \$12 per

hour – less than a Living Wage.

Not only are women overrepresented among low income earners, but, as the Canadian Labour Congress points out, women also earn less than men; women in Canada who worked fulltime, full-year jobs in 2005 earned just 70 cents for every dollar earned by men.

According to Barbra Byers, the Executive Vice-President of the Canadian Labour Congress, "Canada's economy has a problem – it pays women less than men. It pays women less even when we are just as skilled, just as educated and work just as long. It leaves us with less to live on when our working years are over and it rewards us less when we invest in higher education or put career ahead of family. The bottom line is women are still not equal, not even close, when it comes to the bottom line".

The challenge of improving society for all is a daunting task. Yet Kathleen, Minal, Lorna and the many other volunteers of Women Together Ending Poverty accept the challenge, advocating for universal accessible and affordable childcare, affordable housing, a Living Wage, and the redistribution of wealth through tax reform.

If the strong and empowered voices

of Women Together Ending Poverty have it their way, Calgarians will reengage in the political process, people will vote, and they will email, write to, phone and speak with their political representatives, voicing their support for immediate action addressing the root causes of poverty. I do not doubt for a minute that these inspired, determined and committed Calgarians will accomplish this goal.

If you would like to learn more about Poverty Talks, please visit www.povertytalks.ca or phone Poverty Talks Coordinator Grant Neufeld at (403) 262-2934. If you would like to join or learn more about Women Together Ending Poverty, both Grant and the Women's Centre can provide more information. The Women's Centre is located at 646 1st Avenue NE Calgary. Its telephone number is (403) 264-1155, and its email address is womens-centre@shaw.ca. ■

(Connie Johnson is Interim Director of Vibrant Communities Calgary, a local non-profit poverty-reduction organization. For more information about Vibrant Communities Calgary please visit www.vibrantcalgary.com.)

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Desperate HOUSEWIFE

The following article is adapted from a recent sermon by Rev. Dr. Rod Sykes, St. Andrew's United Church, Calgary, www.andy-church.org. It reflects on a reading from the Gospel of John, 4:5-30 -Ed.

The greatest gift you can give a child is to affirm his or her value. Our offspring need from us a roof over their heads and a good diet. They need a secure community in which to play and grow. They deserve an education fit to fulfill their great potential. But they need something else from us: a sense that it is good that they are here. Every child needs an adult in his or her life who conveys to that child a sense of delight in him or her.

This is more than a tenet of psychological wisdom. It is part of the image of God in us. It is part of how God wants us to be. The creation story in the biblical book of Genesis portrays God looking across the whole of creation and pronouncing it "good, very good." Every human being within creation is "good, very good." God intends that we too should recognize this, so that in the kitchen or the classroom or the church we should pour upon every child that same delight that God takes in the simple fact of his or her existence.

People who are never shone upon in that way are at risk in two ways. First, they may learn not to be honest, not to stand forth as the person they really are, but learn instead to play a role, acting out somebody else's script for their life. This isn't really a conscious strategy. It's just that when you're told over and over again that you don't measure up, that you don't fit in, that you haven't got what it takes, that you are no good -- you come to believe it. Since you have no worth, you try to become somebody else.

The second risk is that the true you gets stuck inside as a wounded child, nursing a great and angry grief at your

core, cut off from everything and everyone. No one knows you, the real you, perhaps, you wonder, not even God.

In the time of Jesus, children and women so easily got pushed to the margins, sidelined by poverty, or the death of the working male in the household, or indebtedness that forced the family to give up its small garden plot to the rapacious expansion of the wealthy landowners. And then too easily also could they internalize their denigration, forced to play a role, furious at the world.

What does that feel like? One way to describe it is spiritual thirst -- a terrible dryness of one's soul. That is the central image in this story of the midday encounter at a deserted well between Jesus and a Samaritan woman. This metaphor of dryness speaks powerfully to the many people today, who have been denied the basic affirmation that they belong. Their true self, hidden from others, has become parched and shrivelled.

As the story begins, Jesus said to the Samaritan woman at the well, "Give me... a drink." He took the initiative, he made the overture, because he recognized in her that profound spiritual thirst. He broached the subject, this deep hidden subject of her desperate need, by suggesting that he too was thirsty.

There were three factors that were keeping her true self hidden and dry. First, she was a Samaritan. He was Jewish. That alone would have distanced them from each other. Jews in Judea at the time of Jesus typically regarded her people to be religiously inferior, holding to practices imported from other religions and straying from the true Law of Moses. In her surprise that Jesus had actually spoken to her, she asked, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" She "knew her place". It was a shock that Jesus could see past her despised ethnicity and cared enough to speak to the person within.

Secondly, she was a woman. Females in a society like the ancient Middle East (in fact like the Middle East today) suffered very close constraints on their liberty. Such societies are structured around categories of honour and shame. A woman would bring terrible shame on her family were she to speak in public to a man not of her family. This detail appears in our text. Jesus' disciples gave voice to this deeply held attitude about social propriety. What John describes as their "astonishment" (verse 27) that he should be speaking to a woman was actually closer to offense or even outrage.

Thirdly, she was living with a "man not her husband" -- cohabiting with someone outside the norms of marriage. This housewife was no wife, formally and legally speaking. Jesus observed: "You have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband." Some commentators have taken Jesus' comment here as a criticism of her sexual morals. But the explanation could be quite otherwise. Perhaps she was so incredibly unlucky that she had been widowed five times. Perhaps she had run into a string of ultra-fussy men who, finding her displeasing in one small way or another, had each divorced her. In that society she could be dismissed as easily as that. For whatever reason, she was not ready to jump back into marriage. You know our saying, "Once burned, twice shy" -- what about five times burned?

In fact, her circumstance of cohabiting with a man "not her husband" might indeed have been the actions of a decent but desperate woman. In that society every respectable woman had to be attached to the household of some man. Otherwise she would have had to become a beggar or a prostitute in order to stay alive. We need to be very careful not to make damning assumptions here, and Jesus may not have done so. What is really important is the undoubted fact that, whatever was her circumstance, it brought her intense shame. That would

be why she came to draw the daily water for her household not in the early morning, when the other village woman would be there, but at noon. Although this forced her out into the heat of the sun, at least she was away from the heat of their gossipy censure.

To this woman, thrice distanced from him, by her nationality, her gender, and her shame, Jesus gently spoke. In the course of their conversation he assured her that she was worthy. She could be loved. She is loved -- by God. Jesus was inviting her to be open, instead of closed; to be real instead of acquiescing in the social roles foisted upon her; to trust God enough that an honest approach to the Holy One would be met with unconditional love in return. For the first time in her life, perhaps, she was recognized and affirmed as the potential object of God's delight.

So she returned to her village with her true self on display: no longer a despised Samaritan, no longer an oppressed woman, no longer someone "living in sin", but a beloved child of God, known by God. "Come," she cried to others -- others like her -- "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done!" Jesus had offered her spiritual living water, for he saw into the core of her being and invited her to move from that truth about her towards the truth about God's unconditional acceptance of her.

In the time of Jesus, women and children tended to be marginalized. In our time, that remains too often the case. Each day the ministries in which CUPS engages encounter women and children who, in effect, are "Samaritans" in our midst. They need good food, adequate shelter, a good community in which to grow. And of equal importance each one needs also this great gift that any person deserves -- to be affirmed in his or her value, so that he or she may stand forth and be known as they truly are -- a beloved child of God. ■

BARB HIGGINS...

'A Jewel of an Evening'



Barb Higgins is co-anchor & co-producer of CTV Calgary's News at Six. She was the MC of The Moonlight Lounge, a gala to benefit CUPS' One World Child Development Centre, held March 14 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel. Below she reflects on the words of the evening's headliner, Jewel, as she performed for an audience of 400. - Ed.

"She's Hot!!!" That's how a co-worker reacted when I told him Jewel would perform later that night at the Hyatt Hotel. People paid \$250 a ticket to raise money for CUPS and the One World Child Development Center.

Fast forward to the Hyatt that night. Jewel steps onto a very small stage. She is alone. Her guitar rests on a stand and she leaves it there. She walks to the microphone and I don't even remember her saying hello. In an unusually quiet voice, she begins to tell us how a boss once thought she was "hot", and that's how she became homeless.

"When I was 19, I went into work one day and my boss wanted me to sleep with him. I of course told him 'No'. The next day was pay day and he refused to give me my check".

The room at the Hyatt is stunned into silence.

"I didn't have a lot and I'd been living paycheck to paycheck. That was the last straw. After he didn't give me my money, I lost my apartment. Then I couldn't afford first and last months' rent to get a new apartment, so I spent the next year living in my car."

The audience stays absolutely quiet.

"I know what it's like to be on the street so I'm really happy to be here in Calgary to play for you tonight to raise money for CUPS".

She played a song called "Hands". She wrote it after the first time she thought about stealing a can of food from a store. She says, "I looked at my hand as I reached for the can, and it was in that moment I decided it was up to me, and I would not let go of my dignity."

HANDS

*Poverty stole your golden shoes
It didn't steal your laughter
And heartache came to visit me
But I knew it wasn't ever after*

*We'll fight, not out of spite
For someone must stand up for what's right
'Cause where there's a man who has no
voice*

There ours shall go singing

*My hands are small I know
But they're not yours, they are my own
But they're not yours, they are my own*

I am never broken

In the end only kindness matters

I think most of us in the Hyatt that night were stunned. Jewel is a gorgeous young woman. She has long blond hair, the camera loves her and she has a huge and effortless voice. She dates rodeo cowboy legend Ty Murray, and has for 10 years. To look at her and listen to her you'd think she has life by the tail. She does - but she didn't always.

Later in the concert she tells us more of that time in her life when she struggled. "I was still living in my car, but I got a meeting with executives from a record label and I was really excited."

"I had to wash my hair. I didn't want to meet with them looking like I did so I went to a bathroom in a Denny's restaurant. Do you have Denny's up here?" The audience answers "Yes". She says, "Yeah, I think they're everywhere".

"So anyway, I go into the bathroom and I'm washing my hair in the sink using the hand soap on the wall and 3 women come in. They're dressed all nice and they just stare at me. One said to the others, 'Well, she seems pretty enough. I wonder what happened?'" Jewel acts it out on stage, as though she has her head in the sink. "All of a sudden I felt so embarrassed. I wanted so badly to tell them 'I'm meeting with a record company and I have to look nice'... but they just keep staring at me."

Jewel is still smiling as she tells us her story, but her movements are agitated. Her arms are flailing as she relives how she wants to plead with the women not to judge her. I feel frustrated myself as she tells it. I feel how frustrating it would be to know you're a good person, to know you have talent, and yet people can't-or don't want to-see beyond the surface.

She looks into the crowd and says, "I wish I knew where those women are now so I could show them, and say, 'See. I had talent.'"

As I sat in the audience I thought of my Mom, of all people. Mom has a deep belief that every person has something to offer the world. Whether we're a

mechanic,
have some

As I sat
her time b
ble shame
break that
have been

She's re
American

Time, Ro
first album
She's a hu
stage with
\$250 per
found mys

How m
something
was right,
not all ha
son who'
could sha
break.

Homele
take from
Jewel, I fo
out on be
to give the

After he
wondered
our streets

Evening'

an accountant, a doctor or a singer, we all
something we can add to the world.
and listened to Jewel sing, I thought about
being homeless. I thought what an incredi-
e it would have been if she didn't get that
t turned her life around. She never would
able to share the gift of her voice.
ceived 3 Grammy Award nominations, an
Music award and been on the covers of
Rolling Stone (twice), *People* and *Vogue*. Her
n, Pieces of You, went platinum 11 times!
ge talent... and there she was, standing on
h a guitar, entertaining a crowd that paid
ticket to see her. "She was homeless?" I
self thinking. It's really hard to believe.
any other people are homeless, who have
g to offer our society? I really think Mom
we ALL have something to offer. We might
ve platinum records to sing, but every per-
s living on the street has something they
are with society. Many just need that first
ss people are often painted as those who
a society - but that night as I listened to
und myself wondering what society misses
cause homeless people aren't in a position
e gifts or talents they have.
earing her story and listening to her sing, I
how many more "Jewels" are out there on
s? ■

Alone

by Collette Wolfe

I didn't want to admit it
It was easier to lie
And hide the hurt and emptiness
To smile instead of cry
I didn't want to face the fact
That my life is full of pain
And I long to stop my bleeding
heart
And maybe smile again
I feel so forgotten
So betrayed and so alone
Without a trace of forgiveness
And no soul to call my own
I did not want to admit the fact
I cannot spread my wings
All my happiness has melted
Into tears and other things
It's hard for me to hide the fact
That my body has no home
And return to loneliness bow my
Head and cry alone
I wish that I was the happy
Little girl again and I don't like to
Pretend to be happy by taking pills
I feel so alone ■



ng client of CUPS' One World Child Development Centre. The Moonlight
e Gala benefits One World programs. Photo by James Witney

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good business practices;
buy ONLY from authorized vendors.*

Boy honored for his story prompted by homelessness

A foreign photographer snapping pictures of Toronto's homeless sparked 10-year-old Brennan Wong to pen his prize-winning story for the Genworth Financial Canada Student Writing Contest.

"I was a little sad because we are such a developed country and it is embarrassing that we have homeless people here and someone from another country was taking pictures of it," Brennan said in an interview.

The Grade 5 student at Richmond Hill's Crosby Heights Public School was first runner-up. Genworth donated \$5,000 to Habitat for Humanity of York Region in Brennan's name. He also received a gift certificate of \$100 from Chapters-Indigo.

City of Langford and Genworth Financial Canada help 20 families achieve the dream of home ownership

Reprinted from The Toronto Star, Jan. 26, 2008. In a great example of public and private sector co-operation, 20 families have been able to achieve the dream of home ownership in 2007 through the City of Langford's Affordable Housing program and support from Genworth Financial Canada, The Homeownership Company.

"We're very proud of our partnership on affordable housing with the development community, which has provided an \$8 million subsidy to our initiative at no cost to the taxpayer, and we're thrilled for the families who have been able to become homeowners as a result," said Langford Mayor Stewart Young.

Under the program, 20 Langford families have been able to buy three-bedroom homes for roughly 50% of the market price, with the difference being subsidized by developers. As well, Genworth Financial Canada has made access to homeownership easier and more affordable for many of these families by contributing a customized mortgage default insurance program that combines significant premium savings with lower interest rates over the life of the mortgage.

"We are very pleased to partner with the City of Langford on this outstanding affordable housing initiative. We believe that private sector businesses have a role to play in promoting sustainable, healthy community development," said Peter Vukanovich, president of Genworth Financial Canada.

Langford's Affordable Housing program is an award-winning initiative, honoured by the Planning Institute of British Columbia with an Excellence In Planning award.

A total of 27 affordable housing units have been constructed and sold under the program since 2005, with another 51 affordable units already secured or pending through rezoning measures.

Brennan's story:

Isn't it funny we always want to go home when we are tired?

Why do we always support the home team?

Why does our computer always start at the home page?

What is this special feeling that we have for a place called home?

Home is where we find shelter, comfort, food and safety.

Home is where we begin our lives under the nurture of our family, and the guidance of our parents. The school and the playground may be exciting, but home is where we come to rest our tired bodies.

Going home sometimes means more than going back to your house; it means going back to where you belong, with your family.

What makes a home?

The windows are the eyes that scan the neighbourhood for dangers.

The furnace is the heart that pumps out the heat during our cold winters.

The attic is the brain that stores a lot of junk!

The kitchen is the stomach that never stops growling. However, it is the parents and the children that make the home complete.

The home is a very important part of everyone's life.

What about the homeless people?

Without a home, they have no shelter, comfort, food or safety.

What can we do to help the homeless? We can organize some fundraising campaigns or persuade the government to set aside some money for them.

Do you want to take some positive action with me?

My dream is a world where there are no homeless people.

First of all, people should have jobs. Second, they should make decent wages. Third, they should be able to afford their own home.

Everyone should remember what Dorothy said in the movie, Wizard of Oz: "There is no place like home." ■

About the City of Langford:

Located on the southern end of Vancouver Island, the City of Langford is a young and growing community of more than 23,000 residents. It offers a variety of business opportunities, affordable housing and a wide range of services and amenities. Langford is within easy access of the rest of the Greater Victoria metropolitan area. In addition to previous initiatives to support affordable housing, the City of Langford adopted an Affordable Housing Policy on March 15, 2004.

Additional information about the City of Langford is available at www.cityoflangford.ca.

About Genworth Financial Canada:

Genworth Financial Canada, The Homeownership Company, works with lenders, mortgage brokers, real estate agents and builders to make homeownership more affordable and accessible throughout Canada. The company combines global experience in mortgage insurance with technological and service leadership to deliver innovation to the mortgage marketplace.

At Genworth, we believe in delivering value to the communities where Genworth's people live and work. Genworth's partnerships with Habitat for Humanity and other charitable initiatives are tangible ways to demonstrate commitment to affordable and accessible homeownership. In helping to build homes, we help to build a brighter future for both our young people and for people in need.

Additional information about Genworth Financial Canada is available at www.genworth.ca or through mortgage lenders.

The ideal of happiness has always taken material form in the house, whether cottage or castle. It stands for permanence and separation from the world.

-- Simone de Beauvoir ■

The Origins of the 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness

In Jan. 2008, The Calgary Committee to End Homelessness launched its 10-Year Plan. A number of North American cities have implemented such a plan with considerable success. The following article traces the idea of the 10-year plan back to its roots. It originally appears in Social Work Today, Vol. 4 (2004) No. 1 p. 14. -- Ed.

By David Surface

Nan Roman had what she calls an “epiphany” at a conference from social workers in Berkeley, Calif. “I was speaking at this conference,” says Roman. “A retired social worker came up to me. We were talking and she said, ‘You know, I used to see families all the time who’d lost their housing and we’d find them another place to live. Now when they come in, we say, Oh, you’re homeless, and we send them to the homeless shelter.’”

What the retired social worker said resonated with Roman’s own experience. “I’d been working for a community action agency here in DC,” says Roman. “We were seeing some homeless people, and mostly we were dealing with that by finding them places to live. We were just beginning to refer people to shelters. That was the period when there was a shift at the community level—where we used to provide people with services and get them back into housing as quickly as possible. Instead, we started referring people to the homeless system.”

That was when Roman realized that “it’s what we do that defines homelessness as much as the experience that people have.” At the National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH), Roman, its president, works not only to redefine homelessness, but also our nation’s entire approach to solving the problem.

Changing Perspectives

The problem of homelessness in America started to emerge in the 1980s. “At that time, we thought it was an anomaly, an emergency situation,” says Roman. “The thinking was that people needed to be taken care of in the short term, and that when the economy improved, the problem would go away. But that’s not what happened.”

Another person who realized that the problem of homelessness was more complex and deeply rooted than originally thought was Elizabeth Boyle, MSW, secretary of the NAEH. “We realized in the mid-to late ’80s that this wasn’t a temporary problem but more of a structural problem,” says Boyle. “We began to look into the root causes. There were many—lack of affordable housing, mainly. Also, the loosening of

the family structure, the loosening of the safety net of social services. So many elements were playing into all of this.”

Boyle and Roman first worked together for The Committee for Food and Shelter, a nonprofit organization incorporated in 1983. The purpose of the committee was to access federal services for homeless people and cut bureaucratic red tape.

Roman, who became involved with The Committee for Food and Shelter in the mid-’80s, traces its evolution. “They did an exceptional job of accessing surpluses for food and shelter. They’d worked with Second Harvest and food networks. They’d brokered agreements with the Department of Defense and Human Services to make commodities, cots, blankets, buildings available for shelter, and food.”

But, then it became clear that just meeting survival needs was not enough. As Roman puts it, “There were bigger forces at work. In 1987, we started focusing on housing issues and changed our name to the National Alliance to End Homelessness.”

Re-evaluating Needs

To say that housing, or the lack of it, is at the root of homelessness seems like a no-brainer; yet, it was an idea that was not readily accepted when Roman first put it forth.

In the ’70s and ’80s when Roman worked at the National Association of Neighborhoods, she and her colleagues focused on residential displacement. “We realized that if we kept tearing down affordable housing buildings and converting them to condos and co-ops, there would be a shortage of affordable housing in cities. We were scoffed at by liberals and conservatives alike. They said that homelessness will never be a problem in the United States because people will not tolerate it.”

Time, of course, proved the critics wrong. By the mid-1980s, homelessness had become a national problem. What was not as obvious to the public at large was that the homeless assistance system that had sprung up to deal with the problem was not having the desired effect.

“We were all doing what we were supposed to be doing,” says Roman. “Yet, people keep coming into our system from all these other systems—mental health, veterans, foster care. We can’t control it. For every person who goes out of the back door, two more come in the front door.”

Using New Data

Roman cites two main forces that were behind the development of the alliance’s plan.

“First,” says Roman, “there was a new

body of research from the University of Pennsylvania. All we had previously were these point-in-time counts that cities would do. These new data were more illuminating. [The information] described the dynamics of the problem better. It showed that people were different in how they used the system. Secondly, we also saw that the homeless system was getting bigger and bigger, but the problem was getting worse. Nationally, there were 40,000 programs to help homeless people. Everyone was doing exactly what we thought they should be doing, providing services, yet there weren’t fewer homeless people—there were more.”

Boyle agrees that the new data on homelessness from the University of Pennsylvania had a galvanizing effect. “We had data coming in that clarified who the homeless people were, why they were homeless, and what could best be done to end their homelessness,” says Boyle. “Because we had this information, we’ve been able to clarify how to solve the problem rather than Band-Aid it. We couldn’t have gotten to this step without that data.”

The Plan

The alliance’s plan to end homelessness is comprised of four steps:

1. Plan for outcomes: Collect better data at the local level, and create an outcome-driven planning process that involves all mainstream agencies whose clients are homeless.

2. Close the front door: Reduce incentives for other assistance systems to shift the cost of serving the homeless to the homeless assistance system.

3. Open the back door: Get people out of the homeless system and into permanent, supportive housing as soon as possible.

4. Create the infrastructure: Increase the supply of affordable housing and make the incomes of poor people adequate to pay for necessities such as food, shelter, clothing, and healthcare.

Re-examining Incentives

“One of the foundations of our 10-year plan,” says Roman, “is that if you have an infrastructure into which people can be shifted, they will be shifted into it. If all these other programs can shift cost into somewhere else, it will happen—not because anyone is evil, but because everyone is pressed for resources.”

“The system does present incentives to hospitals and prisons to dump people rather than give them the proper case management—because it doesn’t cost as much,” says Boyle. “It’s more expensive to have caseworkers on staff, to retrain, re-educate, and re-socialize people. It’s not easy to do that.

It’s expensive. We want to reallocate the money that goes into the shelter system. We need to require that our system help mental health, prisons, and foster care agencies all do the proper termination case management.”

Boyle recognizes the good work done by the current homeless assistance system. “What we’ve done—the shelters, the services for homeless people in the past 20 years—has been great. Now, we have information that helps us move on. It’s a reallocation of funds and a rethinking. Thinking smarter. Using our money smarter.”

Focus on Outcomes

Roman explains where the time frame for the plan comes from. “The idea with the Ten Year Plan is that this isn’t something you turn around in a day—it takes time. It came from the notion that there are around 200,000 chronically homeless people, and that if we apply the current resources for housing from HUD [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development], that would do about 15,000 units per year. Over 10 years, that’s 150,000 units.”

This practical focus on specific, measurable outcomes distinguishes the NAEH from other, larger agencies. “I think that’s the role of organizations like ours more than government agencies,” says Roman. “They strive to improve things and coordinate better, but they don’t seem to pick an outcome and direct resources toward it. Coordination is a factor in improved outcomes, but coordination alone doesn’t result in the outcome of ending homelessness. We could have an extremely well-coordinated system that keeps people homeless for years and years.”

The Plan In Action

Roman cites San Francisco as one American city that’s successfully implemented aspects of the alliance’s plan. “There’s a program in San Francisco called Direct Access to Housing,” says Roman. “It’s run by the public health department. They noticed in their emergency rooms that they had a relatively small group of patients who were extremely expensive because they were constant users of acute care health systems. They decided to look more carefully at those folks and found that a good percentage were homeless. They decided to start providing housing because they found that it would actually be less expensive to provide housing.”

Another city that’s done well with the plan is Columbus, Ohio. “They saw that they had folks who were living in the homeless system and had spent years there,” says Roman. “At first, they were con-

■ see ... TEN YEAR PLAN on page 14



“Get a job”

The social policy response of the new millennium

By TIM WILD For Calgary Street Talk

Maybe it's the time of the year, but I've been thinking quite a lot about aging lately. There are a number of reasons for this pre-occupation. First, I recently celebrated a birthday, and this often causes me to stop, reflect and conduct a (not always fruitful or helpful) “life review”. I go over what I have done and what I have failed to do, and consider what I should do in this next segment of my life. I suppose it helps me deal with the malaise of post-industrial capitalist society.

Second, the youngest Beatle, George Harrison, would have turned 65 on February 25th, an event that serves to put both the Sixties (the age) and the Sixties (the decade) into context. It also points to the demographic diversity of seniors, and to the cultural, social and economic impact that the retirement of the older cohort of the “baby boom” will have on our society. The third reason was the advent of the frantic bustle, excitement and good will, and frenetic buying spree of the season. No, not Christmas, but the even more significant RRSP season, when people look longingly to the after-work life and carefully squirrel away money for a time when the government funded pension plans crumble...or at least that's what some neo-conservative pessimists and mutual fund salespeople predict.

Finally, there was a seemingly minor announcement associated with the recent Federal Budget; a decision that served to institutionalize an important – yet largely overlooked – social policy initiative. In the Budget, the government indicated a desire to remove “disincentives to work for seniors by raising the current Guaranteed Income Supplement earned income exemption to \$3,500 from its current maximum exemption level of \$500.”

Disincentives – that's an interesting word. Certainly, there might be economic disincentives that prevent a certain number of seniors from working, partic-

ularly if they are on the cusp of eligibility for low-income supports, and additional income might (barely) push them over the top. There are also a number of additional reasons why an older adult might want to enter or re-enter the work force. Despite its inherently alienating character, there are benefits to working beyond simple economic return. Some older adults work for mental stimulation, others to provide activities to help pass time, and still others for socialization. However, some will work simply because they can't afford retirement. And there is certainly a large dif-

ference in terms of developing a social policy that allows seniors the choice to work for the non-financial and important dimensions of work, and one that tacitly forces low-income seniors to work in order to compensate for inadequate state funded pensions.

**... *Disincentives* –
that's
an interesting word ...**

ference in terms of developing a social policy that allows seniors the choice to work for the non-financial and important dimensions of work, and one that tacitly forces low-income seniors to work in order to compensate for inadequate state funded pensions.

Overall, this reveals a problematic policy direction. Rather than making our system of pensions, particularly the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS), more effective and financially viable, government policy seems to locate the resolution of poverty within the market – in that it rests on the debatable assumption that these “retired” people always have the option to work if their retirement / post-65 income is inadequate. I would also hazard a guess that this policy thrust will result in even less willingness on the part of the Federal

Government to address the inadequacies of the GIS as an income support programme, and will lead to even higher income exemption levels in the future. Obviously, this will then create its own structural demands, and for low-income seniors the promise of a semi-comfortable retirement will prove to be largely illusory and a cruel hoax. Ultimately, this policy directive will take choices away from seniors, and what should be an adequate social provision, funded through general state revenues, is sacrificed to ideology, market requirements and fiscal retrenchment.

As mentioned in an earlier piece, social policy has gone a long way to reduce poverty amongst our country's senior population – particularly older women. It is a solid initiative. However, these newly minted changes will undermine those advances and will hasten a return to the condition when pre-65 poverty is replicated in old age.

And, talking about the market taking the place of authentic social provision, we can also look at changes made to the provincial Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) programme. The amount provided to AISH recipients increased recently to \$1082 per month, an increase of about \$32 per month or about a dollar a day. Yet, given the fact that the current poverty line income for a single person is approximately \$1731 per month [and higher for

a person with dependents], the income provided to the severely and persistently handicapped through this programme ensures, at best, basic survival at the poverty level. However, the Provincial Government decided that the income exemptions should also be increased for this group – so that a segment of AISH recipients who were capable of some level of work could increase their take home pay, and raise their standard of living slightly closer to the poverty line. But, again, where's the choice? Is this realistic? If people face significant barriers to employment, surely the primary solution to their financial circumstances and poverty shouldn't be employment?

I suppose this isn't surprising. Once again, resort to the market reinforces the notion that our value is determined by our participation in the limited economic relationships of the current mode of production. However, the income exemptions contained in both the GIS and the AISH programme are, essentially, a further and unnecessary slap in the face for many of our marginalized fellow citizens. The market has already failed these people – so why look at it to resolve the problem? Rather than ensuring that government income support programmes provide an income that is above the poverty line, we are telling people who face numerous barriers to “get a job” because the state owes you nothing. This is wrong – it is the income provided through these support programmes that needs to be increased, not the exemption levels.

Oh well, I suppose we can be thankful for low paid service sector jobs, with few if any benefits, because many of us will never be able to retire. Still, my guitar gently weeps! ■

(Tim Wild is a social worker who is interested in the relationship between public policy and social justice. His column appears each month.)

ROB'S CORNER

By ROB CHAMPION, Vendor #68

Say of the Day: First

Could it be that man's quest for more wealth and power in the end will be his ultimate destruction?

Do you believe?

Do you believe in the endtimes?

Do you believe in the second coming?

Do you believe that Canadians have lost their compassion for those less fortunate?

The Alberta Crunch—are we losing something?

Alberta may be losing ground to other provinces in the race for the number one economy. Recently Alberta placed third highest, behind Manitoba and Sask. for expected growth rate in 2008. I believe that a lot of people who come to Alberta don't realize what a crunch there is for housing until it's too late, and neither business, labour groups nor government are saying much about the current crisis, other than that there are labour shortages in this province.

Did you know?

-That Calgary ranks top when it comes to the high cost of living.

-That Calgary has one of the best and most extensive bike path systems, anywhere.

-That the high cost of living here is driving people out and back to where they came from.

-To avoid congested roadways, traffic jams, and the high cost of filling up at the pump, take transit, ride a bicycle, walk, job, roller blade or skateboard. These are also better

ways to discover your city.

Rob's 2nd Say of the Day:

Be kind to a stranger today. A friendly hello would surprise & be okay!

A Bad Sign:

-When you've left the keys inside the car and you're locked out, that's a bad sign.

-When you thought the person you have been dating was the right person, your soulmate, then all of a sudden you find out they have been cheating on you, that's a bad sign.

-When you're driving on a long trip, you suddenly realize you're out of gas, and you have no cash, and can't find your credit cards, or they are maxed out, that's a bad sign.

Rob's Tips for the Day:

Slow down. Be aware of your surroundings, either on the road or on a bike path. Safety & courtesy should always be at the top of one's list when one is out & about. Enjoy your surroundings.

My 3rd Say of the Day:

You won't find me downtown, unless I'm paying a bill, going for a coffee, or picking up more papers at CUPS. However, you will find me in Kensington, over by Higher Ground or by the Plaza Theatre—evenings, working!

Note: Kensington is a great place to come visit, and explore!

Lastly:

Everyone should have a say—rich or poor! ■

Food for thought!



RON MURDOCK...
From the
politically
incorrect side

Ann Coulter is a person that came to my attention in the last year. Being at the opposite end of the media pack from where Coulter is, I started to take note of how she has risen into the media spotlight. To gain insight into where her viewpoints are at, I got her book

"The Church of Liberalism: Godless" from the public library.

It was at one point that being a Liberal meant being able to weigh matters from both ends of the spectrum before coming to a decision. Now a Liberal is to boast they have risen above the muck of humanity to set up their own state sanctioned religion with their own brand of miracles, blessings and high priests also known as spin doctors. I regard myself as being open minded and liberal enough but to be associated with the politically correct liberalism is a weight I don't want dragging me down to Davy Jones Locker or some politically correct cess pool.

I agree with Ann Coulter in that Official Liberalism has done its very best to eliminate God from all aspects of Life. But has Coulter ever questioned that Organized Religion seems to be liberal themselves in using revisionist history in presenting their material and how they portray God? Many religious founders lived hundreds, if not thousands of years ago. During these time frames how much of what's been said been misinterpreted or twisted out of context? Can we trust any religion that wants to put a theocracy in place? I would put Liberals under the same microscope here. Hey people! It's time to start learning how to think and stop being what to think. School is out; we're dealing with real life now.

One thing that concerns me is Christian dominion over the world. How many of them would use this wisely as opposed to using it for corporate profit, personal gain or ego gratification.

Coulter claimed that the USA was "the only democracy that nearly single handedly smashed Hitler's Germany." I guess Coulter forgot, never knew or ignored that Canada and Britain did their part in World War 2. These two countries were there from the start and were quite effective in turning the tide against Germany. Coulter seems to think liberals will try to get away with as much as possible in crime. To turn the tables around, what would conservatives try to get away with? Plus Coulter made an incredible remark in that AIDS/HIV/STI's does not exist. Maybe she should visit the nearest local AIDS office where she lives or does her work.

I agree with Coulter when she wrote "Liberals have an unparalleled capacity to create a myth when the truth will destroy them." But then so does everyone else.

Coulter finds Michael Moore being one of God's special creatures a complication in the belief of God. Well Ann, for your

■ see... RON MURDOCK on page 14

COMMUNITY

CUPS

HEALTH CENTRE

EVERYONE
deserves a place to call HOME.

*A house is made of walls and beams;
a home is built with love and dreams.*

*Home is the place where it feels right
to walk around without shoes.*

God in a Dark Place

■ *continued from page 5*
decides this was indeed God.

One morning a few weeks later, Jonah and I are about to do some work cleaning his bedroom; I notice some coins sitting on his bookshelf beside his piggy bank and tell him to put them away so he doesn't lose them. He says that these are the coins the man gave him the day we went to the hair salon. He has decided not to spend them, but keep them where he can see

them as a reminder of the day he met God.

I believe that each one of us is not only the face of our Creator, but also the body and the hands. We all have the capacity to serve one another, and even through the simplest acts of kindness we can experience the most profound times of connection and love. I learned this from a fidgety ten-year-old and a poor man with a shopping cart. I think I met God that day too. ■

Nations thrive

■ *continued from page 5*

Companies that offer flexible hours, work sharing and other family-friendly arrangements report reduced absenteeism, lower staff turnover and enhanced productivity. But the business case is not strong enough to convince most corporate executives.

This means governments have to take the lead, using tax measures, public programs and moral suasion.

Life was simpler, the OECD acknowl-

edges, when families consisted of a breadwinner, a homemaker and a brood of children. But that hasn't been the case for half a century.

Canada can catch up to reality or its politicians can pursue "bigger" priorities: Handing out tax cuts, playing partisan games and dissecting the alleged ethical lapses of a prime minister who left office 14 years ago. ■

Originally published in The Toronto Star, Nov 30, 2007. Carol Goar regularly writes columns on social issues for the Toronto Star.

10 Year Plan

■ *continued from page 11*

sidering relocating shelters; then they thought, 'Why would we build another shelter? Why don't we build housing instead?'

In praising the Columbus project, Boyle once again stresses the importance of data. "Columbus is one of the best and earliest programs," says Boyle. "The main thing was that they got the data properly. They did the proper research, got a really good exhaustive count, and then they took the information they gathered and used it extremely well."

Is there a specific sequence of steps that a city must take to "sign off" on the NAEH plan?

"No," says Roman. "If they tell us they've got a plan, that's fine. We just have a general framework suggesting that they need a data system, that they look at prevention and back door stuff. I'd say Columbus is doing better with the plan than any other city, and they're just implementing the strategies—they don't have a plan. What you need is an outcome orientation. Some places have spent a lot of money and time on developing a plan, and they're still no closer to solving the problem. What we're trying to say is that if you have an outcome orientation, you're going to have a real effect on the problem."

Why, then, has no one tried this approach before?

"We didn't know any better because we didn't have the data," says Boyle. "When a problem arises, it takes people a little while to figure out what to do about it. There

wasn't the money to come up with the data. When you're working with a nonprofit, you often don't have the money to come up with the best solutions."

And how will the alliance know when its plan is working? "Through data systems," Roman answers. "Congress has required HUD to work with communities to establish homeless information management systems, so we'll know some things from that. We have to have fewer homeless people. On a community level, the data makes it possible to know what 'fewer' means."

Roman acknowledges the widespread belief that homelessness is an insoluble problem that may always be with us, but insists that this belief is based on a misperception.

"Homelessness in the scope of things is a pretty small problem," says Roman. "We ought to be able to solve it. It's not poverty, it's not housing—it's related to those problems, but it's much smaller than any one of them. We ought to be able to solve it." ■

(David Surface is a freelance writer and editor based in Brooklyn, NY.)

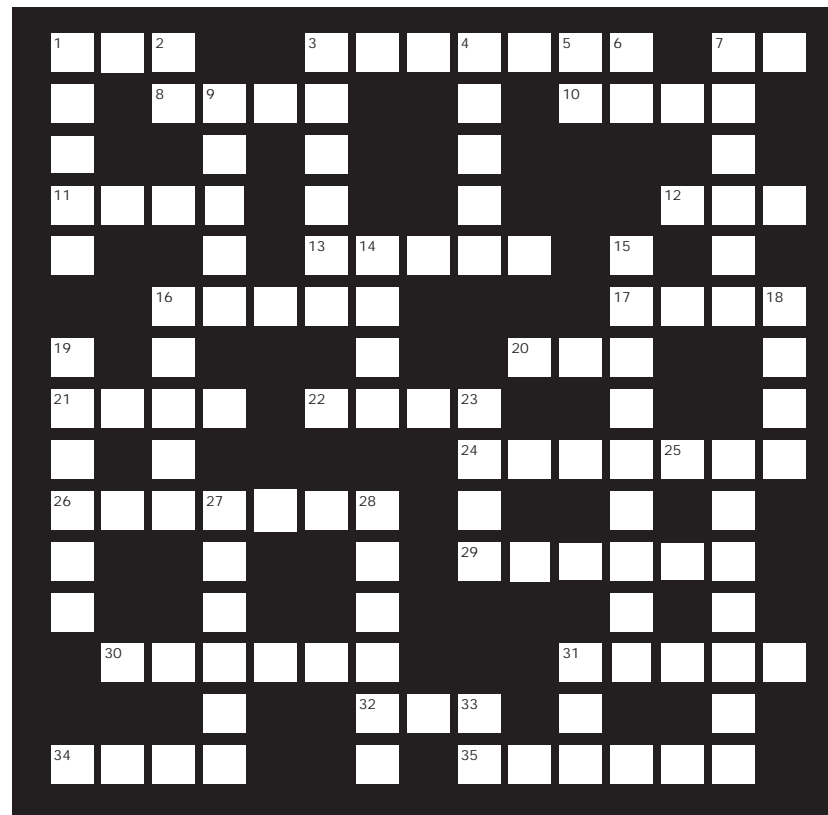
RON MURDOCK

■ *continued from page 13*

information, anyone of us could be a complication in the belief in God. I think it may be time for Coulter to find some humility and not be so concerned about having to be right all the time. ■

(Murdock is a former Calgary resident and Calgary Street Talk vendor who now lives in Nelson, B.C. He can be reached at doc.ster@hotmail.com.)

PETE'S SCRABBLE CROSSWORD



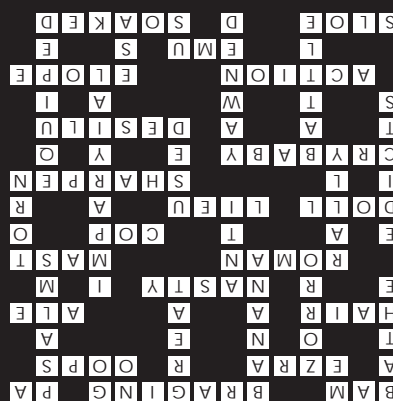
ACROSS

- 1) Just like that!
- 3) Tooting one's horn
- 7) Ma's mate
- 8) Poet "pound"
- 10) Fumbler's word
- 11) Tresses
- 12) Pub fare
- 13) Ill-mannered
- 16) Director Polanski
- 17) Sailboat must
- 20) Perp. pursuer
- 21) Barbie or Ken
- 22) Stead
- 24) Hone
- 26) Big suck
- 29) "I love Lucy" studio
- 30) Director's shout
- 31) Flee to wed
- 32) Flightless bird
- 34) Wild plum
- 35) Thoroughly wet

DOWN

- 1) Soak in the tub
- 2) Not you
- 3) Potassium source
- 4) Really swell
- 5) Bond's nemesis
- 6) Depart
- 7) Biblical songs
- 9) Fictional swordsman
- 14) body or knock lead-in
- 15) Unbiased
- 16) Type or race
- 18) Undecided
- 19) Proclamations
- 23) Not new
- 25) Supplied
- 27) Strongly oppose
- 28) Gaped
- 31) Nasa counterpart
- 33) Not them

Solutions below



PETE'S THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

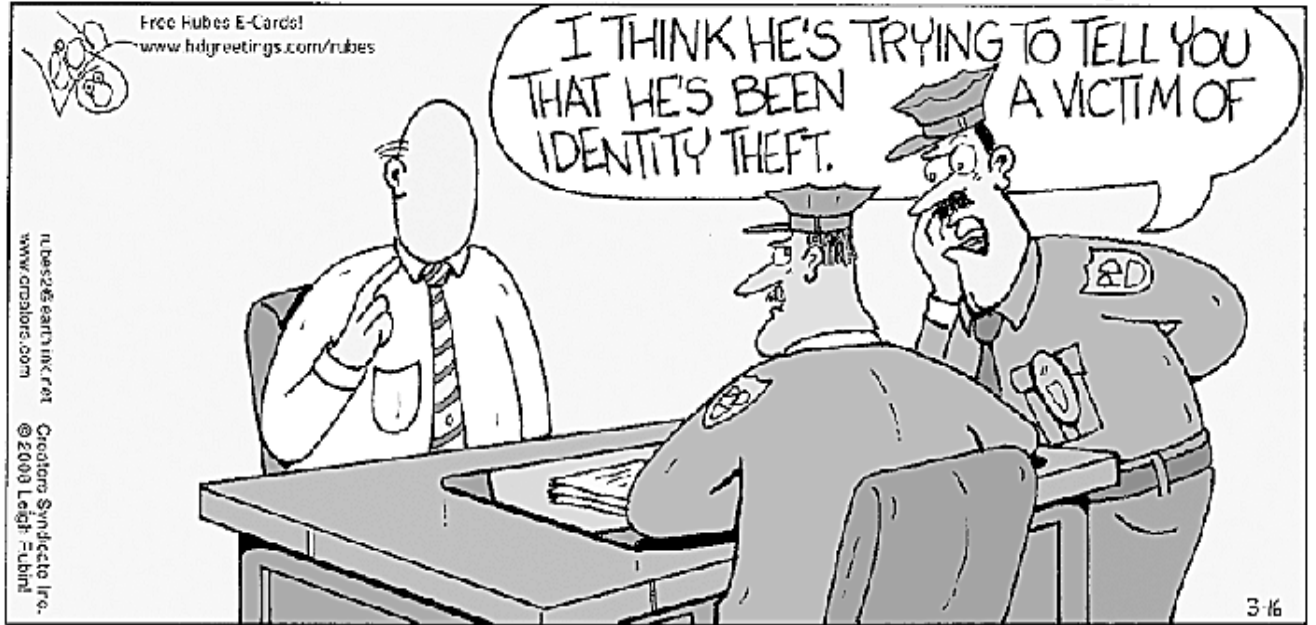
If your nose runs, and your feet smell, you are built upside-down.



Peter 100% Cottontail

RUBES®

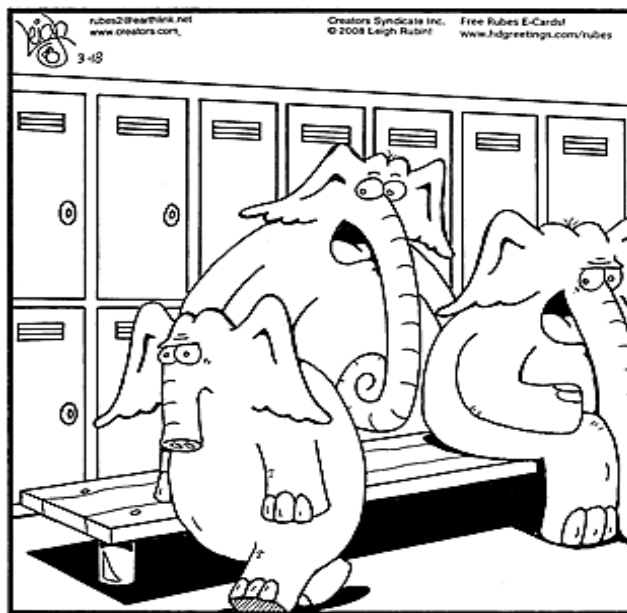
By Leigh Rubin



3-16



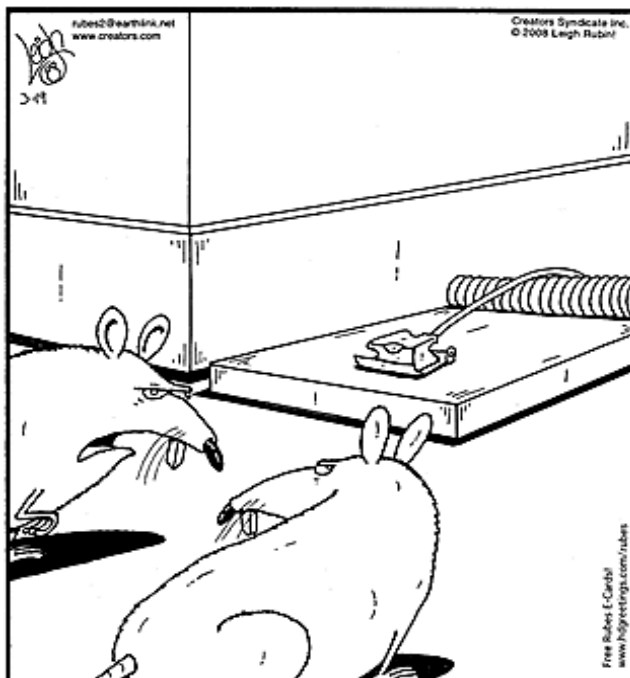
When chickens hit middle age



Stewart came to loathe the high school years, with their daily dose of locker room mockery.



Later, after it was over, Spencer wondered whether he had overlooked any obvious signs.



"What baffles me is that despite our relatively high intelligence, we keep falling for the same old stupid trick. Well, here goes nothing ..."



"Here you go, little friends. ... There's lots more where that came from! Remember, we all have to help each other out."

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