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OASIS

focus

A PUBLICATION OF ONTARIO AGENCIES SUPPORTING INDIVIDUALS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS.

Bethesda's Story

“TRUE FRIENDS” MAKE MOVE TO NIAGARA

St. Catharines Standard (ON)
Monday, October 15, 2007

MARLENE BERGSMA Standard Staff

After almost 80 years of living in an institution, the province's decision to close the Huronia Regional Centre could have been traumatic for Clifford Hipwell.

But last week, the 85-year-old developmentally delayed man moved from Orillia to Niagara, and, to his delight, he came by police car, because Hipwell is an honorary member of the Ontario Provincial Police.

Hipwell's move in an OPP cruiser, personally operating the siren as he left Orillia, was one of the many efforts made by Bethesda Community Services, the Vineland-based Christian agency that provides treatment and residential support for 1,100 child and adult clients in Niagara, Hamilton, Brant and Haldimand-Norfolk.

Hipwell and three other men, all in their 70s or 80s, were selected to move to Niagara because three of them have some connection to relatives living here, said Shelley Schwoob, Bethesda's residential manager.

Most of Bethesda's clients live in supportive housing - in group homes scattered in neighbourhoods across Niagara, Schwoob said. But Hipwell and his best friend Albert Ponchyshyn, 85, and Stuart Joint, 72, and Thomas Pickett, 77, all needed to stay together and they all needed an institutional setting.

"It was important for them to move together. They are true friends," Schwoob said, explaining why Bethesda spent two months converting a series of classrooms in the main building of its Fly Road campus into a four-bedroom, barrier-free suite for the four men. "With the needs they had it was evident we had to bring them to (the institutional setting of) Fly Road," Schwoob said. "We were sensitive to their age and the number of years they had lived in an institution.

"Normally, the trend is to place them in group homes, but this was a smoother transition."

Once Bethesda was notified earlier this summer that the four men would be moving to Niagara, staff made frequent trips to Orillia to meet the men, to introduce themselves, to show photos of what life would be like here (including assurances there would be both a Wal-Mart and a Tim Hortons they could visit) and to get to know each man's daily routine.

In Hipwell's case, they learned he has an avid interest in security and safety, and, over the years, had taken on the "job" of ensuring all the doors of the once-3,000-bed institution were safely locked at night.

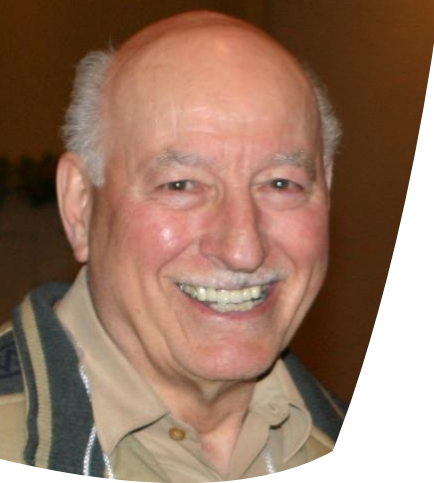
The Orillia OPP detachment is right across the road from Huronia, Schwoob said, and family connections between an OPP officer and a Huronia employee led to Hipwell being given an OPP hat. A coat and pants soon followed, and then Hipwell was made an honorary officer, riding each year in the OPP float in the Santa Claus parade.

It was important to Hipwell that moving from Huronia would not rob him of his duties, said Schwoob, so Bethesda contacted OPP in Niagara to help with the transition.

That's why OPP Const. Jim Cook drove to Orillia last Tuesday with a Bethesda staffer to pick up Hipwell, why Cook let Hipwell operate the lights and siren when he left, and why a bagpiper was in Vineland to welcome him with music upon his arrival.

"It was really important for him to realize that the OPP were still going to be a part of his life," Schwoob said.

And that's also why Joint came with two trunks of seasonal decorations (his new room and his motorized scooter are festooned with Halloween garlands and lights) and why several of the men have been given new jobs here, except for Ponchyshyn, who says he's semi-retired.



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The major item we had to deal with this summer was funding, or lack thereof, for members.

promises were made to provide an additional \$2.40 an hour for hourly paid employees throughout Province to be effective this year. This underscores the benefit of working collectively through the Network so as to speak with one voice on matters of such importance.

Our Labour Relations Committee has been busy. On behalf of the Provincial Network organized a forum, which was oversubscribed, on October 24th to review what happened during the summer and discuss where we should go from here. In addition to this they arranged four sessions across the province featuring Ontario Safety Association for

Community & Healthcare, **“This year marks the 10th Anniversary of OASIS ”** Effective Leadership for Executives and the Worker Safety and Insurance Board Workplace Health & Safety, Workers’ compensation issues and disability Management information for Executives. Another meeting had also taken place with WSIB in an effort to have a signal rate established for all workers within the Developmental Sector.

There are still problems to be addressed such as the wage gap and recognition of salaried employees. At the same time the Network will be meeting to develop a pre- budget presentation, again with the assistance of Counsel. Michael Humes, one of the Directors on the OASIS Board is chairing a

committee to identify problems in supportive housing and make recommendations.

This year marks the tenth anniversary of OASIS and your Board decided it was time to review our operations and make plans for the next decade. Dave Ferguson is heading a committee to review the By laws for your consideration and Don Seymour is chairing a committee to develop a strategic plan. In this latter connection we are conducting a survey of members to ascertain the scope of your activities and obtain your thoughts on a number of issues. We aim to have the by laws and the strategic plan out to

you prior to the next Annual Meeting in Niagara Falls, plans for which are well under way.

We were pleased to report that Community Living Windsor and Community Living Essex County will host the 2009 AGM and Conference and Simcoe Community Services and adjacent agencies will host the 2010 AGM and Conference.

Something else to watch out for. The “Expert Panel on Standards and Training” has completed its report but MCSS was reluctant to release it while the election campaign was in progress. We hope it will be released by year end.

Last but not least, it seems that the membership likes receiving the Newsletter electronically. All the comments we have received have been positive. As a result of this we will be using this format to send the newsletter to our members. We would encourage you to send it to your Board and management team if you are not already doing so.

This resulted in strong union action, strikes at a number of agencies in the South West, a political move to settle the strikes by giving in to the union demands and the resulting chaos this created for agencies throughout the Province. It seems the Government was unaware of the consequences that would ensue from their hasty decision.

Working through the Provincial Network we decided that representations had to be made at all levels-to the Ministry of Finance, to MPPs and candidates from all parties who were running in the election and to the senior officers of the Ministry of Community And Social Services. You were asked to meet with candidates in your areas and inform them of the problem and seek their support and that has certainly helped. The Provincial Network retained the services of the firm Counsel Public Affairs Inc. to assist in this program and weekly conference call meetings were held with them in August and September in which your OASIS representatives were active participants.

A number of meetings were held with MCSS by Geoff McMullen, Chairman of the Network, and associates together with members of the Human Resources sub committee of the Network, on which we are well represented by Dave Ferguson and Andy Rotsma. The result is that

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But Ponchyshyn still gets paid for helping with the dishes, Joint sorts and delivers the mail and Pickett helps with odd jobs.

"Things like that were part of their routine, and they were important to establish here," Schwoob said.

Bethesda staff are delighted with the new residents, and honoured to be able to provide a home for them, said Brian Davies, Bethesda's Executive Director.

"They are sweet men," Davies said. "They are really sweet. They remind me of my dad."

UPCOMING OASIS BOARD MEETINGS:

January 16-17, 2008 Toronto

March 19-20, 2008 Chatham

If you would like to have a representative attend an upcoming meeting, please contact Andy Rotsma at 905-844-0146 ext 270

UPCOMING OASIS EXECUTIVE MEETINGS:

December 13, 2007

February 14, 2008

April 17, 2008

All meetings held at Community Living Oakville

EXPERIENCE THE WONDER OF NIAGARA

We hope you will join us in

Niagara Falls at the Doubletree Resort Lodge & Spa

For the

11th Annual OASIS Conference & General Meeting
May 7, 8, 9, 2008

Featuring Keynote Speakers
Craig and Marc Kielburger

Your Hosts
Niagara Support Services & Niagara Training & Employment Agency

More Information to follow soon!

CREATING A NEW STRATEGIC PLAN

OASIS

In 10 years OASIS has grown from a small umbrella group of six founding members to become the largest Developmental Services umbrella group in the province of Ontario.

Now, with 139 member agencies the influence of OASIS ensures a strong pragmatic voice for Developmental Service Agencies with both elected and non-elected provincial government representatives.

To ensure the continued success of OASIS, the OASIS Board has begun work of creating a new strategic plan. On October 17th the Board of Directors held a day long planning session, led by Don Seymour. The Board reviewed OASIS mission and values, growth successes and challenges faced over the past 10 years. The Board also reviewed current activities as well as the

social and political environment that impact our response to the various pressures placed upon the membership. After a lengthy SWOT analysis discussion the Board ended the day ‘**star gazing**’ into the future.

This completed “ the Board reviewed the first step towards a new vision and strategic plan for OASIS. The next steps in the planning process will include consultation with member agencies already begun through the recent OASIS Member Questionnaire. Consultations will

also be conducted with other Developmental Service stakeholders, such as government and other provincial Developmental Service Umbrella groups.

The OASIS Board is hopeful a draft document including strategic goals, objectives and action plans will be ready sometime in February for membership review and input. Membership input to this process is absolutely vital. Please ensure you complete and submit the on-line OASIS Member Questionnaire. With your input, OASIS’ new Strategic Plan will ensure the value of your membership into the future.

To facilitate the sharing of ideas, resources, systems and information, OASIS will liaise with government on behalf of member organizations with the goal of improving the development of cost effective quality supports for individuals with developmental disabilities.

OASIS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Gerald Sutton, President
Sherry Kerr, Vice-President
Brian Young, Vice-President
George Braithwaite, Past President
John Bedell, Treasurer
Ann Kenney, Secretary
Judy Reid, Member at Large
Molly Croke
Denis McClelland
Bonnie Dinning
Jane Joris
Michael Hume
Brian Dunne

PROVINCIAL NETWORK ACTIVITIES

This brief overview of Provincial Network activities will encompass the summer of 2007 and until mid November time frame.

Our principal activities included;

Technical Document – The Provincial Network engaged Lynn Eakin to draft a paper, the objective of which was to provide the Ministry planners with practical advice regarding the implementation of Transformation. Members will have received this paper and be familiar with its contents. This paper was funded by the member organizations of the PN and submitted to the Ministry in September.

Pre Election Planning –with professional guidance, the Provincial Network, produced campaign material to assist members in their effort to educate candidates and to suggest opportunities for sector representatives to establish a presence and a profile for the sector at public events and all-candidate meetings.

Summer of ’07 Strikes and ongoing Labour Issues - Members will have an intimate knowledge of the origins of our current labour challenges. The Provincial Network has been fully engaged in discussions with the Ministry in a concerted effort to ensure compensation and benefit equitability across the sector. The Provincial Network letter dated 12 September to agencies is germane. It is regrettable that the longstanding internal (between agencies) and external “**wage gap**” issue has been temporarily derailed; however it is appears that the Ministry committed to a timely resolution. Finally, you will also be aware that the Provincial Network hosted a very successful **labour forum** which gave voice to a range of topics that will be of concern in the months ahead. OASIS is justifiably proud of the excellent work of the OASIS labour relations committee in organizing

and executing this highly topical activity on behalf of the Provincial Network.

The foregoing is a small sample of work of Provincial Network. In closing, it is worthy of note that while individual provincial organizations are in no way diminished through their participation in the Provincial Network, their collective **common voice** has proven effective in gaining government attention through the 2007 budget process and recent government generated confusion and angst on the labour front.

FOCUS is published quarterly. Ideas and articles are welcomed. Please contact the Editorial Committee.

Look for the next FOCUS in the Winter of 2008.



Ontario Agencies Supporting Individuals with Special Needs
Agences ontariennes de soutien pour les personnes qui ont des besoins spéciaux

The OASIS Labour Relations Committee

Hosts An Information Session On:

“ED Survival Skills

***Everything You Wanted To Know Before Getting
Voted Off The Island!”***

This Session is restricted to ED's & Senior Managers only
& will focus on the 'pre', 'during' & 'post' periods of an ED
position.

on

February 21, 2008

9:30 A.M. to 3:00 P.M.

at the Cambridge Holiday Inn

(200 Holiday Inn Dr, Cambridge, ON)

***Please note that the Labour Relations Committee
will host a Wine & Cheese networking event between
7:30 pm 11 pm on February 20th for those registered to attend
the Information Session***

COST:

\$125 per person from OASIS member agency

\$175 per person from non-OASIS member agency

(lunch included)

Registration & Payment Deadline is February 15, 2008

Registrations will be held only with payment. Attendance is limited, so register early.

Cancellations will receive credit towards a future OASIS LR Information Session.

OASIS Room Rate of \$99 (1-888-465-4329 or 519-658-4601 for reservations)

(Please note that this rate is for a standard room & available until Feb. 14/08)



Ontario Agencies Supporting Individuals with Special Needs
Agences ontariennes de soutien pour les personnes qui ont des besoins speciaux

Please register the following to attend the OASIS Labour Relations Committee Information Session:

Name:

Organization:

Position:

Phone: _____ *Fax:*

E-Mail:

Make Cheque Payable to: OASIS Labour Relations Committee

VISA / MASTERCARD:

Name on Card:

Expiry Date:

Mail form & payment to: Community Living Oakville
301 Wycroft Road, Oakville, ON L6K 2H2
Attn: Jadzia Weir

Will attend Wine & Cheese: Yes _____ No

Registrants will receive a confirmation by email so PLEASE ensure you provide your email address above

***RSVP by Phone to (905) 844-0146, by Fax to (905) 844-1832
Or by E-Mail to: jadzia@oakcl.org***