

LET'S TALK

JUNE 2005, VOL. 30, NO. 1

Building Bridges with Canadian
Ethnocultural Communities

Community Adult Mentoring
and Support Program

THÉRÈSE-CASGRAIN
HALFWAY HOUSE



Correctional Service
Canada

Service correctionnel
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Contents

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JUNE 2005, VOL. 30, NO. 1

COVER



Thérèse-Casgrain Halfway House

To help ensure successful social reintegration, CSC reinforces ties with many partners in the community, including halfway house professionals who play a vital role supporting, advising and accompanying offenders. In this feature, we meet Ruth Gagnon and Christine Champagne who tell us about the contribution of the Thérèse-Casgrain Halfway House in Montréal.

Photo: Benoît Aquin

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FEATURES



Commissioner's Editorial 3

Thérèse-Casgrain Halfway House 4

Thinking BIG 6



Building Bridges with Canadian
Ethnocultural Communities 7

Transportation and Conservation 8

Community Adult Mentoring and
Support Program 9

New CSC Publications on the Web 10

Visit CSC's New
History of Corrections 10



CSC to Launch Web Portals 11

Information-Sharing Increases Safety
CSC Develops an Action Plan 11

Employment and Employability 12

Outreach Gets the Message Across 14



Relationships, Innovation and Courage
Strengthening Community Ties 16

Speakers' Bureau
Touching Hearts as Well as Minds 17

Unique Distance Learning Program
Lethbridge Community College 18



Leadership Renewal 18



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COMMISSIONER'S EDITORIAL

Our Leadership Agenda

Marking 30 years of publication, this issue of *Let's Talk* is both timely and important. It centres on our role in the community and celebrates the excellence that our people and our partners demonstrate every day in serving Canadians through strong community corrections. It also marks one of the core elements of the Leadership Agenda that the executive group of the Service has accepted for the year ahead.

At the CSC Executive Development Symposium, May 10-12, I challenged our executives, and by extension the entire Service, to take up two critical initiatives. First, I challenged the Service to focus even more intensely on robust, safe re-entry for every offender. We must bolster our capacity to develop specific, precise plans for offenders' re-entry, engage all necessary partners and community resources to ensure that the correctional plan is achievable, provide clinical intervention support throughout the sentence, assist offenders to put a roof over their heads, ensure that necessary, positive and appropriate relationships are in place in the community, and assist offenders to find a job and help them to structure their time.

Robust re-entry is our expertise, it is our profession, it is our vocation, and it is within our grasp to accomplish even more. We have the people, the skills, the knowledge, and the relationships needed to take up and meet the challenge I've put to you. The people and their stories featured in this issue are powerful testimony to this.



Second, I challenged the Service to renew and reinforce our commitment to a drug-free environment in all units and community correctional centres. We continue to emphasize that drugs are not compatible with rehabilitation, secure environments and effective, safe reintegration into communities. We must rigorously use every authority we have under law and policy to prevent drugs from entering our institutions, and we must ensure consistent application and implementation of all our technology and procedures to eliminate drugs from our institutions.

To move forward on this agenda, we rely directly and heavily on you and our partners. Achieving even better results on robust re-entry and drug-free environments will require all the energy, ingenuity and collaboration you and our partners can muster. I know I can count on you to meet these challenges because there are many more stories of excellence in the Service than could possibly be told in one issue of *Let's Talk*. ♦



Lucie McClung
Commissioner

Correctional Service of Canada



Thérèse-Casgrain Halfway House

A PILLAR OF THE COMMUNITY

It stands in the heart of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, a residential sector north of Sherbrooke and east of Décarie in Montréal, in a well-established neighbourhood where artists and intellectuals, anglophones and francophones mingle and coexist, a parish that is open and sensitive to social conditions. Standing tall and proud, and never losing sight of its objective — the successful reintegration of women offenders into the community — is the Thérèse-Casgrain Halfway House.

BY **Djamila Amellal**, Communications Officer,
Communications and Citizen Engagement Sector

“The Thérèse-Casgrain Halfway House (TCHH) was the very first community project of the Société Elizabeth Fry du Québec (SEFQ), an agency established in 1977,” says Ruth Gagnon, Executive Director of the SEFQ. “TCHH opened its doors in 1980, which makes it the oldest halfway house for women in Quebec. Its mandate is to promote the reintegration of women in conflict with the law. We therefore work very closely with the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC), Quebec Correctional Services, and the community.”

A Highly Stimulating Environment

TCHH — so named to mark the contribution of Thérèse Casgrain, former chair of the Human Rights League, who strove to promote the rights of women and the marginalized members of society — offers an ideal environment for the

successful reintegration of female offenders. The two wings of the building house the headquarters of the SEFQ and the living quarters for offenders: 32 beds in total, plus a large kitchen and reception rooms. TCHH is, thus, an incalculable asset for both offenders and the community at large. It is open around the clock and accommodates women aged 18 to 80, with a full-time staff of 15.

“Most of our clientele comes to us from Joliette Institution and Tanguay Prison, and we are currently caring for some 32 offenders,” Ms. Gagnon notes. “In the case of federal offenders, we have service agreements with CSC. I sincerely believe that their surroundings have a great impact on people’s motivation, and this house offers an excellent means of reintegration for women. When they get out of prison this house is a starting point for them. With ready access to the Métro, for example, they are close to urban life without being over-exposed to it. They are sheltered and protected in a neighbourhood like this.”

Building Awareness for the Cause

Needless to say, a project like this prompted lively reactions and some apprehension among local residents, who saw their safe, quiet world being disturbed by the presence of offenders. Accordingly, in conjunction with CSC, SEFQ staff quickly set to work to raise awareness by organizing a variety of activities, including a public meeting to provide information and a forum for the residents to talk about their fears.

“It was a mountain we had to climb, and the first year we kept open house,” says Ms. Gagnon, with a measure of pride. “We met the neighbours. We raised their awareness, we made them feel safe, and we eventually developed good relations with them. Now we’re part of the scenery.”

Christine Champagne, the current clinical director, adds: “We had to prepare our residents for this; they were given clear and strict instructions. Discretion is always the watchword.”

Partners in the Solution

TCHH does outstanding work with offenders, and it does so in close cooperation with staff at CSC, the Ville Marie Area Parole Office, the Outremont police station and the community

network. "For us, everything begins with a call from a caseworker at Joliette Institution inquiring about bed space at TCHH for an offender whose parole date is coming up," says Ms. Champagne. "We generally take anyone, except cases of extreme violence and arsonists. Our residents learn to cook and clean, and they learn respect for their neighbours. They go out, alone or with volunteer accompaniment depending on their degree of autonomy."

Programs That Build Bridges with the Community

TCHH takes an average of 40 offenders a year from Joliette Institution of varying status — day parole, statutory release, temporary accommodation. They stay for up to eight months.

Close cooperation between TCHH and Joliette takes many forms. Various programs are offered, both inside and outside the institution.

Community Integration and Temps d'arrêt Programs

"Six months before the expected date of release into the community on parole, or with the accelerated parole review procedure where the date is always preset," says Amélie Bordeleau, Coordinator of Custodial Programs, "I go to the institution as required by the Community Integration Program. I meet with offenders, I set up groups of five or six of them who can work well together. I use their needs as my baseline, and we talk about parole, suspension and the halfway house to help prepare them for release. We hold eight group sessions and close the program with a one-on-one interview."

She adds: "I also facilitate the *Temps d'arrêt* program, which is designed especially for offenders who have experienced a failure following release. The program involves meeting with them in the days following their return to the institution and letting them vent about their re-incarceration. I also prepare them for the post-suspension hearing. It really means calling a time-out and thinking about what went wrong."



Amélie Bordeleau

The LifeLine Program

This popular program helps offenders serving life sentences. "We are an agency funded by CSC, the National Parole Board (NPB) and community agencies," says Daniel Benson, an Inreach worker and a former inmate. "In Quebec, it is the Société Saint-Léonard that manages the agreement with CSC. The biggest part of my job is listening. I understand women offenders because I've been there. I really believe you have to get them out of their personal prison before you let them out of the institution, and the way to do it is to listen to them. We monitor offenders from the institution into the community. I move around the penitentiary, and they can reach me on my cellphone, day or night. Sometimes, one call is enough to calm things down."



Daniel Benson

Legal Services

Marie France Laforce, a trained lawyer, is the other SEFQ member who acts as legal advisor to women offenders. She provides support by travelling when needed to Joliette Institution or TCHH. "I don't take the place of the assigned defence attorney, but I try to help by providing a communication link, by debunking a good many myths about the criminal justice system, and by helping with taxes, housing and children. They trust me because I'm not a member of staff. Some of them are convinced they will have problems if they talk. I like my work because when a woman does manage to reach out, it gives me a warm feeling," she says, and you can hear the passion in her voice.

The Maman me raconte Project

It is based on an American program designed to promote and preserve a closer relationship between children and their incarcerated mothers. Ruth Gagnon and Christine Champagne are working together with the Elizabeth Fry Society of St. John, New Brunswick, which initiated the project in Canada, to make the project a reality. Mothers record bedtime stories on cassettes, which are played back to their children. It's a way for the two to keep in touch. It offers the child security,

reduces loneliness and paves the way for the eventual reunion. According to the St. John experience, this project contributes to children performing much better in school. "We are trying to make this work with the help of volunteers who will go to the institution with cassette recorders, batteries and earphones and work with jailed mothers. A splendid project," says Ms. Champagne.

Dedicated Experts

The outstanding quality of the work TCHH does both in the institution and in the community is due to the skill, dedication and passion that SEFQ and CSC staff bring to their work.

The clinical team at TCHH consists of four counsellors and the director, who share a passionate commitment. Each counsellor has a caseload of seven to nine offenders. "When they get here, they already have a correctional plan," says counsellor Anne Marie Côté. "We assess their needs and start getting them ready to leave from the moment they arrive. What we do is determined by their status and the length of stay. Our casework is highly individual. She adds: "We provide a supportive, caring presence. One day we are just a shoulder to cry on, the next we will lead a discussion group. When they leave TCHH, they have the tools. The halfway house is vital because it brings us close to our residents."

Three parole officers (POs) are responsible for supervision in the community. Carole Lemieux, an experienced PO who has been with CSC since 1979, says: "We are first of all friends and confidants, and that is what makes working with women offenders enjoyable." Since TCHH is in the western sector of Montréal, it is the Ville Marie Area Parole Office, to which it is attached, that arranges for offenders from the institution to be accepted at TCHH.

Carole's colleague, Renée Bray, adds that since 2002 they have run a special supervision program. Just before the release date, Ms. Champagne and a PO will go to the institution to talk to an offender before she is paroled. In many cases, the PO will be working with an offender she already knows



Left to right: Christine Champagne, Renée Bray and Carole Lemieux

from having worked with her at the beginning of her sentence. We continue working with them afterwards, wherever they go in the community.” Carole Lemieux finds that what makes working with TCHH so satisfying is the support of the clinical caseworkers and their feedback on the offenders’ behaviour. “It’s great. TCHH is vital to our work,” she says, and her expression conveys the depth of gratitude she feels.

The Volunteer Network — Getting the Community Involved

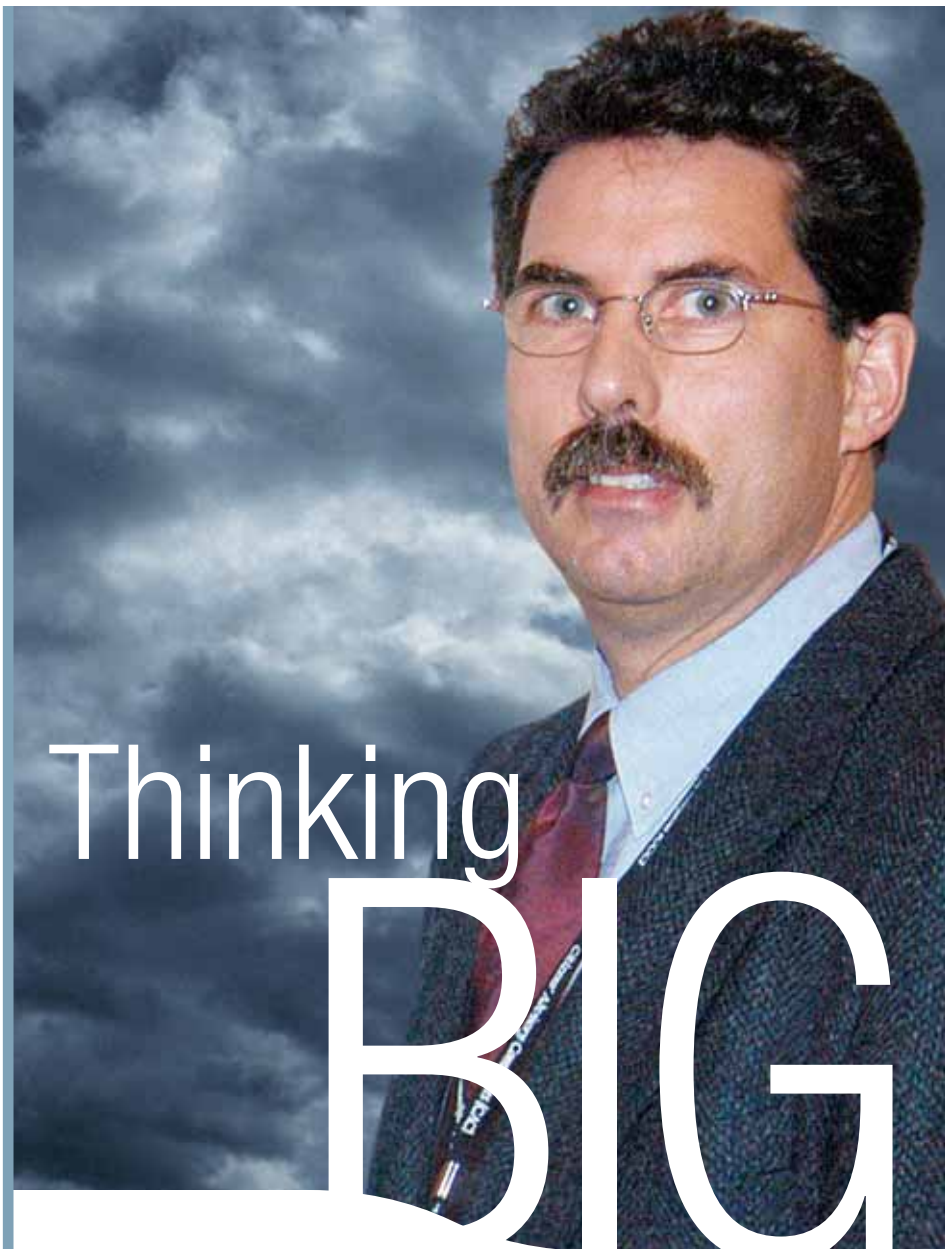
TCHH started working with CSC two years ago to strengthen ties with the community in the Montréal area, at the request of Denis Méthé, Director of the Metropolitan Montréal District at the time. “We have about eight volunteers,” says Sofia Nastasa, the program coordinator. The volunteers accompany offenders through the system, particularly those who are very dependent or have special needs due to their age or mental health. They are twinned with a volunteer to help them get used to life in society again. Volunteering offers another way of getting the community involved in the CSC’s reintegration mission. One such volunteer, André Morneau, has been trained to accompany offenders travelling by bus. “It’s not difficult, and I enjoy it,” he says.



André Morneau and Sofia Nastasa

Celebrating a Reunion in a Flourishing Garden

The executive director concluded by announcing, with great pride, that August 2005 is the date for a grand reunion of TCHH women: “This year we shall be celebrating our 25th anniversary, and the theme for the celebration will be one of reunion. In 25 years, at an average of 80 to 100 clients a year, nearly 2,000 women and a good many children have passed this way. I am proud of what we accomplish together, with the CSC and the community.” ♦



Sean Taylor is a big man with big ideas for citizens’ advisory committees (CAC) across Canada. The six-foot-five police officer from Saskatoon has been a CAC member for 13 years, seven on the National Executive Committee (NEC) and the National Chair for the last two. His enthusiasm for this very special volunteer position has grown over time despite the difficult balancing act involving his day job, family, and the demands of 105 CACs across the country.

BY Bill Rankin,
Communications Officer,
Communications and
Citizen Engagement Sector

Photo: Bill Rankin

During his tenure, Taylor and his colleagues have worked hard to raise the CAC profile from coast to coast, increasing the number of local units and further entrenching their role in the correctional system as advisors to CSC, liaisons to the community, and as independent observers. The NEC has also managed to embed essential accountability clauses into the CSC management framework in the form of Commissioner’s Directive 023, signed off by Commissioner McClung in March 2003.

“The Commissioner or the Senior Deputy Commissioner make it a priority to attend our meetings when we are in Ottawa,” Taylor comments. “And our profile within the organization has been elevated thanks to our interaction with the Executive Committee [EXCOM]. Last year we made two presentations to EXCOM — that was unheard of in the past.”

Sean Taylor at the national CAC conference in Ottawa

CACs derive their support from recommendations found in the *MacGuigan Report* and to subsequent validation in

Section 7 of the *Corrections and Conditional Release Regulations*. CSC has taken this one large step further by making it mandatory that each institution have its *own* independent CAC.

Taylor wants every community to understand and appreciate the important role that CACs carry out: giving ordinary citizens a window into corrections, providing independent community input, and increasing CSC's accountability to the public. However, he has discovered that building awareness is a constant battle that requires patience and repetition, hammering home the same messages at every opportunity. At a recent presentation to 62 group home operators, the crowd was surveyed: only three knew of the existence of CACs.

"Obviously more work needs to be done," says Taylor. "We are going to do more public presentations and publish an annual report that will be accessible at the community level. We are also working with CSC to gain more visibility by establishing a CAC portal on the CSC Web site."

Recently funds were secured to make the national CAC conference an annual event. This was an important achievement for Taylor. "National annual conferences are an extremely effective tool. There's a big-time pooling of ideas, a great way to solve problems and share best practices."

Of course, all this activity doesn't come without a personal price. Taylor admits he spends 600 hours a year away from home plus daily reading time to catch up on the latest developments. But he and other CAC members believe their efforts are worthwhile. "I work with some very dedicated people on the National CAC Executive," he says. "We put in this time because we want to see our good ideas become reality."

A recent CSC research report (June 2004) states that of the more than 600 CAC members, a high proportion are satisfied with their contributions and experiences, however, they want to increase their effectiveness in both the community and institutions, with a greater focus on assisting with programs and policies. Sean Taylor is confident that in the coming months and years this will happen. ♦

Building Bridges with Canadian Ethnocultural Communities

A major challenge to the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) is dealing with an offender population that, like the rest of Canada, is becoming more and more ethnically diverse. Community groups, agencies and representatives of CSC gathered in the multicultural city of Toronto recently to deal with this issue at the *Building Bridges with Ethnocultural Communities* conference.

BY Bill Rankin,
Communications Officer,
Communications and
Citizen Engagement

Organized by Marcel Kabundi, Manager, Ethnocultural Programs and his committee from the Reintegration Programs Division, the conference brought together people from over 30 countries of origin for three days of stimulating presentations and discussion

on how to raise awareness about cultural differences among staff and offenders and to establish helpful links for inmates to their communities. All participants agreed that strong, positive support in the community is one of the most important factors contributing to successful reintegration and to minimize the likelihood of reoffending.

The first day opened with a welcoming speech by Councillor Michael Thompson from the Mayor's office of the City of Toronto. CSC Assistant Commissioner Simon Coakeley welcomed the guests and encouraged them to use the strengths of Canada's various cultures to stop criminality and to reintegrate



"Tell me how we, together, can overcome the challenges of diversity," said Dr. Michael Bettman, CSC Acting Director General, Offender Programs and Reintegration, appealing to the audience.

offenders. He offered participants a David Letterman-style list of 10 personal commitments for overcoming the challenges faced by the correctional system and the communities it serves.

During the first two days, various speakers took the podium — from academia, the National Parole Board, CORCAN, regional ethnocultural advisory committees, legal groups, Immigration Canada, Statistics Canada and Afro-Canadian businesses. Each had their own perspective and offered unique insights into the reintegration of ethnocultural offenders.

On the third day, participants stressed the importance of leadership on the part of correctional officials and the availability of funding to support ethnocultural programs and activities as well as ethnocultural advisory committees across Canada.

The conference, a new manual and a new section of the CSC Web site that deals with ethnocultural issues were made possible with the generous assistance of Canadian Heritage and the hard work of employees from the Offender Programs and Reintegration. For more information, visit www.csc-scc.gc.ca/ethnoculture or contact Marcel Kabundi, Manager, Ethnocultural Programs, at ethnoculture@csc-scc.gc.ca or call (888) 273-3802. ♦



Thomas Yeung, a social worker and member of the regional ethnocultural advisory committee in Vancouver, offered a list of recommendations to CSC and the National Parole Board.

Transportation AND Conservation

The automobile: that almost sacred object, idealized, revered, and advertised beyond all measure. We nearly forget the way it pollutes. The selling point is freedom, with no mention of environmental impact. According to Natural Resources Canada, transportation is the largest single source of greenhouse gas emissions in Canada. You cannot stop progress, of course, but is this really progress? It is for air pollution! Nevertheless, over the past 20 years, a quiet evolution has been taking place, attempting to break the stronghold of the North American automobile industry and the conventional gasoline engine. And the fleet of vehicles operated by the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) has not escaped this effort. Mistakes, successes, failures, adjustments — the route taken by CSC's automotive fleet may be a winding one, but CSC doesn't give up, and the pursuit for sustainable development is ongoing.

BY **Paul Provost**, National Coordinator, Environmental Protection Programs

Alternatives and Obstacles

An initiative that began two decades ago, the use of alternative fuels continues supplying the 1,050 vehicles that constitute the CSC automotive fleet. It began in the latter half of the '80s, when the advent of propane as an alternative fuel created interest in some CSC institutions. But this choice proved unsustainable in the medium term, primarily because of technical

difficulties in cold weather and the certification requirements associated with refuelling. Then, in the early '90s, the development of natural gas for vehicles (NGV) found strong support at CSC. The option of a clean, economical fuel, grants for vehicle conversion and passage of federal legislation — the *Alternative Fuels Act (1995)* — seem to have been mainly responsible for the popularity of NGV. However, the initial excitement soon wore off due to both technical and human limitations: the shortage of specialized maintenance services for vehicles converted to NGV, problems with



CSC Garage Supervisor, Carl Gundlach of Drumheller Institution, fuelling a 2003 Dodge Caravan with E-85.

off-site fuelling, lack of independence, fears related to safety while refuelling, resistance to change, and more.

The Years 2000

With so many unknowns, some institutions opted at the turn of the millennium to purchase battery-electric vehicles — particularly appropriate for vehicles operating only on CSC premises — despite their limited usefulness. Finally, in the year 2000 and after, hybrid vehicles (gasoline/electric) were added to CSC's fleet. Although they are more expensive to buy, hybrid vehicles have been growing in popularity because of their versatility, reliability and energy-efficient performance.

At the same time, there has been significant interest, particularly in Western Canada, in vehicles fuelled by ethanol 85 (fuel E-85), which contains up to 85 percent ethanol.

Community Adult Mentoring and Support Program

Try to imagine yourself as having just been released from a federal prison on parole. During the time you spent on the inside, the world has changed and circumstances are such that you have no family to turn to for support, no friends, no job prospects, not even a roof over your head. How long will it be before you bow under pressure, breach your parole conditions or re-offend and find yourself back in prison?

A subsidy program offered by Natural Resources Canada for installation of above-ground tanks, coupled with a credit of \$0.70 per litre of E-85 consumed, has lent considerable impetus to use of this alternative fuel since 2003. As a result, over 50,000 litres of E-85 were consumed in 2004–2005 by the six participating institutions in the Prairie Region, for savings of nearly \$45,000 on fuel.

The Bottom of the Barrel?

Since cutting down on driving is not an option, the recourse to energy-efficient criteria when buying a car would make sense. And it will help your budget, especially if you consider that constantly rising gas prices now seem to be the norm.

The entire situation is becoming urgent. Global petroleum reserves are shrinking rapidly (about 50 years to go, according to some sources) and the social and environmental repercussions can already be felt: urban smog, greenhouse gases and climate change are a growing part of modern life that we certainly do not want to bequeath to our children.

For more information on alternative fuels, visit the Natural Resources Canada Web site at: <http://oee.rncan.gc.ca/transportation/personal/vehicle-fuels.cfm?attr=8> ♦

BY **Bill Rankin**, Communications Officer,
Communications and Citizen Engagement Sector

These are the kind of men and women that Community Adult Mentoring and Support (CAMS) assists. Based at the Victoria Parole Office, the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC)-sponsored program was created more than four years ago under the leadership of Bob Brown, former director, Victoria Parole. Its aim is to supplement parole supervision by matching carefully screened and trained volunteers with parolees who need a helping hand as they readjust to the outside world.

“The program is similar in spirit to the Circles of Support program,” says CAMS Director Honora Johannesen, “but there are notable differences, too. CAMS is for any type of high-needs offender who has not reached warrant expiry, while Circles of Support aims exclusively at sex offenders who have already served their full sentences. Circles of Support originated in the community and is supported by CSC, while CAMS is a CSC initiative supported by community members.” Circles of Support works with a group of volunteers with one offender, while the CAMS volunteer works one-on-one with the offender.

Whatever the differences, Johannesen wants everyone to know that CAMS has proven to be effective, giving offenders the kind of positive community experience they may never have had before.

Getting Started

Ideally, the volunteer meets the inmate 90 days before his/her release date. It's time enough to get to know each other and deal with compatibility issues before the pressures



Left to right: CAMS Coordinator Honora Johannesen, Vancouver Island Area Director Dave Keating and Carole Peterson, Administrative Assistant from the Church of St. John the Divine, community partner of the CAMS project.

of finding a job and a place to live eclipse any other concerns. Once the inmate is on the street, he/she meets with the CAMS volunteer on an average of twice a week to discuss problems and lay out strategies for living.

“They meet in coffee shops, parks or other public places,” Johannesen explains. “They talk about things that many of us take for granted: how to get on a bus, how to balance a budget, using a day-timer so appointments aren't missed. For many of these offenders, simple day-to-day functions present major challenges. They spend three or four hours a week together and the relationships often last for a year or more — until the offender is on his/her feet or, in some cases, until warrant expiry.”

Don Williams, a community support worker in his day job with the John Howard Society, has worked with the project from its conceptual stage and has been matched with

four offenders since the program's inception. "It's a phenomenal project," he exclaims. "I get a lot of satisfaction out of being involved. These offenders respect you highly for what you do for them. And it goes far beyond that — I know I'm doing something that makes my community a safer place for everyone."

Williams and Johannesen agree that increasing community safety involves teaching offenders how to make good use of their spare time. "Most of them work eight hours a day, sleep another eight, but it's during the final eight they can get themselves into trouble," says Williams. "It's important to point them towards constructive activities when they find themselves with time on their hands."

Canary in a Coal Mine

Volunteers become so attuned to their matches that at times they act as the canary in the coal mine, sensing when the offender may be straying off the straight and narrow. Occasionally the offender will confide in the volunteer and that is an opportunity to talk about accountability and doing the right thing. Community safety is always the first concern, and if the volunteer suspects that something serious is going on, the parole officer, psychologist or Director Johannesen is only a phone call away.

But negative experiences have been few in the program's history. Over 60 volunteers have gone through the 10-week training and, since 2001, they have assisted 104 parolees (with 42 matches in 2004 alone). To date, of the 84 matches that have come to an end, 22 terminated with a breach of conditions, three due to new charges and eight stopped at warrant expiry. Matches also end when an offender requests a transfer to another area or by mutual agreement when the offender feels that he/she no longer needs the support of a mentor.

Recruitment and Training

Johannesen works hard to recruit more CAMS volunteers — speaking at churches and schools, papering the colleges and universities with flyers and, as she says, talking to anybody who will listen. To sharpen interactive skills and help volunteers maintain enthusiasm, Johannesen arranges for them to meet periodically, for "in-service," after the initial 10 weeks of training to share their experiences and tour nearby facilities — Kent, William Head and Fraser Valley Institution for Women. She believes it's important for CAMS volunteers to see the places where their matches served their time, to soak up the atmosphere, and gain insight into offenders' ways of thinking.

A Program with Potential

Johannesen is enthusiastic about the program's potential to be used right across the country. "The template is there," she remarks. "It's not difficult to do."

Although the offenders in the program don't always succeed on the first try, they are not written off; their files remain active in the CAMS office. "Inmates come out with challenges," Johannesen explains. "Sometimes they fail and are suspended but their volunteers say, 'You go back and do your time and when you get out, I'll still be here for you.'" ♦

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CORRECTIONS IN CANADA

An Interactive Timeline

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www.history-histoire.csc-scc.gc.ca

Learn about the evolution of Canada's correctional system over the past 170 years.

View historical images, read facts and stories, and take our History of Corrections quiz.

Making It Easier to Find Information and Resources CSC to Launch Portals on Its Web Site



The Web portals are designed to gather information and resources for specific groups involved in Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) programs, initiatives, and issues. This is part of a concerted effort to make information easier to find and to organize content from across the Service into a useful information resource based on your areas of interest.

Each portal will be easily accessible through a pull-down list on the front page of the Web site.

The first portal was launched for volunteers during Volunteer Week, April 17–23. CSC will launch each portal as it becomes ready, eventually reaching a maximum of 10 portals, making information on a broad variety of topics more easily accessible to Canadians.

Using the Portal

If there is a particular portal that interests you, please:

- Bookmark the portal home page
- Subscribe to the e-mail notification service of that portal
- Use the feedback form to let us know your opinions and how we can provide you with what you need
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CSC DEVELOPS AN ACTION PLAN

INFORMATION-SHARING Increases Safety

Recently the Offender Management System Renewal (OMSR) team held a two-day workshop at National Headquarters to identify a new common vision for gathering and sharing information from the police and the courts.

BY **Marlène Zalatan**, Communications Officer, Information Management Services and Offender Management System Renewal

As announced at the very start of the OMS renewal, this is one of the latest initiatives to supplement the range of shared electronic and offender management tools. The goal is to provide shared electronic access so that CSC employees can electronically access police reports, judges' reasons for sentencing and other official documents regarding convictions.

A judge's comments at sentencing concerning an offender's potential for violent behaviour and police reports are important documents for managing the offender's sentence. They will be more readily available to case management teams through this new electronic information-sharing initiative so that case management officers can more effectively manage their cases throughout sentences.

As a result of this need to standardize and computerize the gathering and sharing of court and police reports, we consulted the regions

and assembled a multidisciplinary team responsible for following through with this project. For this reason, the national workshop included people from operational units who are responsible for gathering information.

"A number of best practices have already been implemented in some regions, and we expect to learn from them — the information sent to us by regional representatives is a gold mine! Now we just have to use it!" said Nancie Proulx, Project Coordinator.

Included in the workshop agenda were the objectives of this initiative and the business plan that will be carried out over the coming months. Following these, participants presented business process and information systems already in place in their region. Lastly, a brainstorming session helped raise the various expected results, possible challenges and solutions.

The Offender Management System Renewal is constantly trying to improve the effectiveness of practices for sharing information about offenders. The Court Information



Nancie Proulx

Management Initiative (CIMI) is an initiative for information-sharing, interoperable systems and open and transparent communication between the Service and some of its criminal justice partners. CSC's action plan concerning the CIMI is a springboard to a comprehensive vision that is consistent with the mandate of the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada — the protection and safety of Canadians. ♦

Employment

THE KEY TO SUCCESSFUL SOCIAL REINTEGRATION



BY **Djamila Amellal**, Communications Officer, Communications and Citizen Engagement Sector

Photos: **Bill Rankin**

The Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) has established the *Employment and Employability Program (EEP)*, designed to prepare offenders for the job market once they are on conditional release in the community. The initiative reinforces the findings of several studies showing that employment helps offenders reintegrate successfully into society and reduces re-offending — two of CSC's top priorities.

CSC has reaffirmed its commitment to help offenders reintegrate successfully and safely into Canadian society by implementing a strategy that prepares them for work through its many employment centres in the community.

“Five years ago, funding was received from Treasury Board through the Effective Corrections Initiative, which helped us open employment services locations, together with our partners in the community, such as the John Howard Society, which is known for having the skills and experience required to work with offenders,” said Irene Klassen, EEP Director, CORCAN. “These locations are referred to as employment centres, but they differ from the traditional Canada Employment Centres. Today, there are a total of 38 throughout Canada and they function in different ways: in Toronto, it is a location equipped with computers, reference books and contracted employment counsellors; in the Prairie Region, these services are provided by CSC staff in parole offices; elsewhere, these services are provided through contracts with partners such as the John Howard Society.”

The Program

“The EEP first takes into consideration vocational assessment results and incorporates them into the correctional plan, prepared at the time

Right to left: Robert Small and Elias Constantatos, Employment Counsellors, Toronto Employment Centre

Employability

offenders are admitted to the institution,” said Ms. Klassen. “In order to take the vocational assessment, offenders must be able to function at a Grade 9 level in language and mathematics. If they do not meet the educational requirement, offenders focus on updating their academic requirements.

Once the offender meets the academic requirement, he takes the vocational assessment to identify interests, aptitudes and trainability. The assessment results are matched with the generic work descriptions to existing employment opportunities available at the sites.”

“All offenders, however, can receive training and job skills through work assignments and vocational training opportunities; inmates may also obtain short-term trade related third-party certification. CSC has added numerous third-party certifications to further enhance job readiness at the time of release. Once the offenders are on conditional release, parole officers refer them to employment centres, where they can access a wide range of services, including personalized employability assessments, counselling, job search techniques, and training on how to prepare a résumé, in order to ultimately obtain and retain employment.”

Employment counsellors working in these centres provide guidance to offenders based on their skills profile, the job market and the expectations of employers in the community who are looking for employees with basic personal management and teamwork skills.

From Dreams to Plans

According to offenders, the EEP is effective because it helps them regain confidence and self-respect, which they need in order to go on to the next step in their lives and remain independent.

One offender, in custody for about seven years for drug trafficking, was able to find work and had this to say: “It’s a huge adjustment, getting out of prison. My parole officer referred me to the CSC employment centre in Toronto. I desperately wanted a job. Robert and Elias helped me out, first by being straight with me. They talked about jobs and lifestyles, and they gave me an idea of what would be realistic for me. It took five months and I found a job paying \$40,000.” He adds: “I am sure that without Robert and Elias’s help, I would have never found this job. They were like parents to me, pushing and encouraging me all the time. Honestly, they did everything they could to help me. I got a lot out of this process. Before, I had dreams. Now I have plans.”

Exciting Results

Ms. Klassen confirms that results so far have been encouraging. The number of offenders who found employment after using the service has increased each year. “Last year (2003/04), the number increased to 1,263 (1,193 men and 70 women) across Canada in a variety of fields, such as construction, food services and in factories. In fact, we far exceeded Treasury Board expectations, which required services for only 750 offenders per year.”

Employment Is Key to Successful Reintegration

Following up through the Offender Management System, the EEP Director keeps up to date on what is happening to offenders who have found jobs. “I see that 85 percent of offenders who found work have not returned to an institution. This is why we can say that the EEP helps CSC fulfill its Mission. As shown by research, employment is the key to successful reintegration,” said Ms. Klassen.

As for employers, she added: “I have yet to have an employer call me to report an incident of any kind in the workplace. Employers are prepared to hire offenders. I think we need to continue educating the public as well as employers to help us fulfill our Mission.”

A Best Practice

While working very hard at recruiting other partners such as Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, Ms. Klassen is proud to announce that the EEP has been recognized as a best practice by the Re-entry Policy Council: Charting the Safe and Successful Return of Prisoners to the Community — a network of criminal justice policy makers in the United States. In addition, recently, Ms. Klassen had the opportunity to share CSC’s best practice at the National Offender Workforce Development conference in St. Louis, Missouri. ♦

Irene Klassen



Outreach



Sophie Lemire

Photo: Bill Rankin

Gets the Message Across

BY **Bill Rankin**, Communications Officer, Communications and Citizen Engagement Sector

Community Outreach worker positions were first created in 2001 following a pilot project in Kingston, Ontario, initiated by Outreach Director Elaine St-Amour and her staff. The project was applauded for building awareness of criminal justice issues and for creating and strengthening ties to the community.

Sophie Lemire, based in the Social Reintegration Division at Quebec Regional Headquarters, is one of the Correctional Service of Canada's (CSC) official Outreach workers. A former parole officer, she's enthusiastic about her job and believes strongly in reintegration. She enjoys the dynamic role she plays, the interaction with people from all walks of life, and having the chance to lead projects such as public opinion surveys, art auctions, and meetings with targeted groups.

"In the Quebec Region, building partnerships with the community started long ago with Guy Villeneuve, Normand Granger, and Denis Méthé," she explains. "They all have huge experience with community and organizations. I am continuing this tradition by educating and building awareness."

From experience, Sophie has learned that messages must be tailor-made to suit specific audiences — youth, the business community, senior citizens. She spends a considerable amount of her time getting to know these groups and understanding their issues. "We try to identify activities that are the most effective at building awareness for all these groups. We try to counter distorted perceptions and fallacies about the Service or conditional release that people are exposed to in the media."

"We reach teenagers by organizing forums in high schools and connecting with other youth-oriented organizations. For businessmen, we organize half-day visits to institutions so they can see that offenders *are* a workforce, often with valuable certifications. As for older people, they want to know about safety issues."

As the general population grows more diverse, the offender population follows suit; naturally, ethnic groups have become the newest target for Outreach activities. Sophie feels it is important to connect with these groups in the community and find out what concerns them most about corrections and other areas of the criminal justice system.

"We organized the first Haitian forum in Montréal," she says with a smile. "It required a special approach. We consulted with politicians and other leaders of the Haitian community before we decided on any specific activities."

Whatever the recommendations, Sophie looked forward to being part of activities that helped build understanding and, ultimately, lead to safer communities.

On the other side of the country, in Vancouver, Lisa Bayne shares the same degree of commitment and enthusiasm for her job as her Quebec counterpart. Lisa, too, started her career as a parole officer and made the move to Outreach three years ago.

"I make a point of cultivating relationships with people who might otherwise never know anything about corrections," she says. "One of my main messages is that the federal parole officers' goal is the same as other law enforcement officers such as police: to make the community a safer place to live. We spend incredible amounts of time getting that across as well as other key messages."

Lisa has discovered that one of the most effective methods of relaying messages is through other organizations' events rather than CSC initiatives. "We've had community forums



Lisa Bayne

where the turnout has been a little disappointing. So often we tap into other events that are already happening. Piggy-backing our message on the back of other events is the most effective way to get a guaranteed audience."

Establishing a working relationship with the media before crises occur is another practice that Lisa wisely endorses. "If you wait until there's trouble, it's unlikely that you will find a sympathetic ear in the media. If you offer them good news stories and are willing to meet with them in the quiet times, you have a better chance of finding an ally or at least a more understanding listener when incidents occur."

Lisa wants everyone to know that CSC staff does an incredible job during work hours and as volunteers in the correctional system on their own time. It's a great challenge to get the message out to the community, but both she and Sophie are determined to get it across. ♦

Note: In early 2005, five positions were created for media relations/Outreach advisors.



Left to right: Marg Harlang, Brian Lang, Johanne Vallée

RELATIONSHIPS Innovation & COURAGE

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY TIES

The Correctional Service of Canada welcomes public scrutiny and invites our communities to see, understand, and become involved in our operations. Periodically, and sadly, we face difficult situations, sometimes very tragic events, in our communities that threaten to create crises of confidence in what we do and how we do it. At these times, we must draw upon the relationships we have with our community to address these crises with courage and innovation.

BY **Bill Rankin**, Communications Officer,
Communications and Citizen Engagement Sector

Photo: Bill Rankin

Recently, CSC brought together its partners in community corrections to discuss how best to deal with these infrequent but very real challenges. At the working group session entitled *Best Practices in Social Marketing and Strategic Communications*, three leaders in community corrections—two of our own staff and one of our partners—demonstrated the relationships, innovation and courage needed to help communities in crisis.

Marg Harlang, District Director for Hamilton–Niagara told a fascinating story of how she dealt with police, politicians, press and public after a federal parolee committed a serious crime, almost on the doorstep of the halfway house where he resided. Within a very brief time span, three more tragic events occurred that threatened to overwhelm Harlang and her hard-working staff. Without their presence of mind, dedication and support from Regional and National Headquarters, they

might have succumbed to the relentless pressure and the outcome could have been far less favourable. Thanks to Harlang and her staffs' diligent work, community leaders' confidence was maintained.

Johanne Vallée, Director, Association des Services de Réhabilitation Sociale du Québec, described her media strategy in response to a crisis involving an offender at a halfway house in Trois Rivières. Vallée's solid relationship with local media and her courage in the face of mounting obstacles helped to defuse the hostility expressed by community members.

Confronted with an ongoing situation in Vernon, British Columbia, Brian Lang, Director, Community Corrections, has in the last year focused his innovative energy on solving problems involving offenders, local politicians and community organizations including Vernon's Community Advisory Board in this seemingly idyllic West Coast town.

Lessons learned by the three presenters could form a management textbook for community corrections staff facing crises anywhere in Canada. Suggestions include:

- Develop closer relationships with trustworthy reporters. Do not tolerate inaccurate stories; bring them to the attention of media management.
 - Public education is essential for building understanding, trust and cooperation. Activities include open houses at community correctional centres and community residential facilities, forums, town-hall style meetings, and one-on-one sessions with police and politicians.
 - Corrections managers should be able to delegate day-to-day duties to alternates during times of crisis and devote their attention to solving problems quickly, before they get out of hand.
 - Develop customized crisis management plans that include operating principles, spokespersons and foreseeable situations.
 - The voluntary sector associated with halfway houses requires peer review and other controls including periodic rejuvenation of board membership.
- All three presenters agreed that strong partnerships with various groups within the community are the key to easing tensions and securing positive outcomes during times of crisis.

"It's all about having plenty of patience and courage," Johanne Vallée concluded. ♦

TOUCHING HEARTS AS WELL AS MINDS

Since the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) launched its Speakers' Bureau last year, the project has earned two thumbs up from audiences across the country. High schools, community groups, Aboriginal band councils, law faculties and various criminal justice partners have found that presenters — from a growing inventory of 323 at last count — are provocative, informative and often passionate about what they do.

BY **Bill Rankin**, Communications Officer, Communications and Citizen Engagement Sector

Photo: Bill Rankin

These experts make themselves available to talk to groups who typically have a limited understanding but unlimited curiosity about the complex issues related to corrections. Students have proven to be particularly interested in hearing about life on the inside from offenders and CSC staff who work closely with them.

Recently, students from Human Services Management, a new degree program at Loyalist College in Belleville, Ontario, had the opportunity to hear from a man who

has a unique insight into offenders' minds. Psychologist Bruce Malcolm, Acting Manager of Sex Offender Programs at National Headquarters, gave a two-hour presentation followed by a question and answer period to the enthusiastic group.

Dr. Malcolm is relatively new to National Headquarters, but has been the Regional Coordinator for Sex Offender Programs for the past 10 years, working out of the Intake/Assessment section of Millhaven Institution, outside Kingston, Ontario. He spoke with authority to the fourth-year Loyalist students, fielding questions about the basic organization of CSC, the assessment process, concepts of static and dynamic risk, parole and the correctional plan.

"I found Dr. Malcolm's presentation to be very in-depth; he covered the area perfectly," commented one student who plans on a career working in provincial detention centres after graduation. "What he said will even help with my research project."

"There are a lot of misconceptions out there about corrections," declared another student. "Bringing information to the public is very important. There are many groups in the community that would really benefit from hearing from the Speakers' Bureau. I think it would give the public more confidence in the correctional system if they knew more about it."

Loyalist College Instructor John Klassen was pleased to have a speaker who is both a practitioner and clinician in his field. "As a member of the Rotary Club, I can say without a doubt that club members will want to hear more from the Speakers' Bureau."

Continuing success for the Speakers' Bureau will most likely hinge on two factors: first, the regions' efforts to promote the Bureau and, second, speakers' ability to engage and excite audiences about corrections and provide information. Speakers must know their audience and their area of expertise and find ways to touch the heart as well as the mind. ♦

In the foreground, left to right: Loyalist College Instructor John Klassen, Dr. Bruce Malcolm; and students.



Unique Distance Learning Program

LETHBRIDGE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Since 2002, Lethbridge Community College's (LCC) Correctional Studies Program has offered an applied degree that builds on a previously earned two-year diploma and credits students for their work-related experience. It's fostered and approved by the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) and guided by professionals from CSC's institutions. The initial two graduates — both on-campus learners — convoked from LCC in December 2004 from what is the only applied degree in corrections in Canada.

BY **Peter Scott**, Freelance Writer

The entire program is also available through distance learning; CSC staff from across Canada are taking the classes this way. In addition, the degree program is offered in satellite courses to employees in Edmonton, Bowden, Drumheller, Calgary, Winnipeg, Saskatoon and Prince Albert. Students from all seven facilities are enrolled in the course now. Most institutions involved provide classroom space for satellite classes.

Those with a diploma in corrections studies need complete only the final two years to obtain a degree. Program Leader Ian Hepher, former director of the Lethbridge Correctional Centre, says the fourth year can be completed at the student's place of employment as a directed field study. Students without diplomas stand to

gain significant credit as a result of their CSC training and experience.

"Our curriculum was designed from corrections professionals' feedback at all levels," says Hepher. "It has been and will continue to be a dynamic process of development."

The close association with CSC in making the course content relevant has allowed the college to recognize applicants' work experience and training through an assessment process. LCC is also working with the Corrections Management Learning Centre in Cornwall, Ontario, to ensure course equivalencies are recognized. This process is expected to result in a formal articulation agreement in the near future.

The potential for distance learning for corrections staff was recognized at its inception by Floyd Wilson, Warden of Bowden Institution, Prairie Region, who represented CSC on the

steering committee, guided it through the approval process in Ottawa and is part of LCC's advisory committee.

"We wanted to get the education component on track when CSC introduced the degree requirement," says Wilson, who was Deputy Warden in Grande Cache when he joined the effort to secure a degree program. "We put in a lot of work with LCC over two or three years and managed to convince the Minister to run the program out of Lethbridge."

"They [the students] are learning nothing but material that is directly related to their needs. The curriculum is reviewed twice a year to ensure it is providing the skills and information required. It's one of the best programs for mature students in our field. There is no watered-down education component; in fact, it has been enhanced, providing a challenging and relevant curriculum."

Through the program, LCC has developed a reputation as a key source of staff for CSC.

"LCC is a great place from which to recruit," says Wilson. "They can graduate with their diploma, get a job and keep working toward their degree." ♦

LEADERSHIP RENEWAL

National Headquarters

Danielle Boisvert

Director, Canadian Management
Learning Centre

Effective January 31, 2005

Regions

Monty Bourke

Warden, Warkworth Institution
Effective February 7, 2005

Simonne Poirier

Warden, Dorchester Penitentiary
Effective April 7, 2005