

## Thank You!!

All of the A-Way Staff and their families would like to thank our most kind donors for the A-Way holiday season. The following businesses very generously donated items to make the Christmas season that much warmer for our folks:



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## A-Way's 2006 Annual General Meeting

The Applause Community Development Corporation's AGM was a successful event. Our guest speaker was Laura Pisko-Bezruchko Senior Director of Planning, Integration and Community Engagement for Toronto Central LHIN (Local Health Integrated Network). David Reville, A-Way's Board Co-Chair took the podium in the interim until our guest speaker was prepared to give her presentation. David wasted no time in getting down to business and managed to address many of the areas of business on the agenda including some by-law changes. We had a good turnout, including a surprise visit from our local MPP Michael Prue. Members who were present voted on the slate of Pam Jolliffe, Neil Mc Quaid, Faisal Muhammed and Myrna Schacherl re-running for election. The four candidates will stand for another two years. We had two couriers stand for the open employee position Doug Quinn and Wendy Young. The couriers introduced themselves and gave a short speech, including what they had to offer the board, their vision and strengths. It was a close race as both candidates put forth good speeches. Wendy Young was elected onto the Board for a two-year term. I am sure we will see Doug Quinn on the Board in the future. A-Way is the Consumer/Survivor Lead organization for the Toronto Central Local Health Integration Network.

Laura Pisko-Bezruchko gave a presentation on what health priorities within the mental health and addictions sector will look like. Certainly, there was a passionate and very inquisitive audience hoping there will be positive change in the mental health sector. Linda Gomes won the raffle after doing an agency evaluation, a handy backpack from Mountain Equipment Co-op. The sandwiches and veggie trays downstairs fed a sociable tired lot. Happily, nearly all the desserts were eaten with no shortage. Thank you to "Out Of This World Café" for catering our AGM.



Laura Pisko-Bezruchko  
 at the A-Way AGM

Wendy

## Toronto Central CSI Network: Working for Change

In March 2006, The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care funded A-Way to facilitate Consumer Survivor activities within their LHIN, as well as connect with the other LHIN Networks to contribute to consumer survivor input provincially. The regional directive resulted in a Consumer Survivor Network being established. This Ministry-funded position would give the consumer survivor communities across Ontario the ability to participate in the new mental health restructuring by coordinating regional voice(s) of consumer survivor initiatives (CSI), thus establishing a role for them in the new LHIN process.

In the absence of any prescribed parameters, the CSI Network Leads (13 leads for 14 regions across Ontario) developed their own way of approaching this opportunity, and each is as unique as the region in which they operate. In Toronto Central, we formed a CSI Network that meets monthly to discuss how and what our role in this new mental health environment should look like. Our Network, which has been meeting monthly since September 2006, is comprised of all 8 CSIs that operate and provide services within the Toronto Central LHIN boundary.

### Summary of Network work to date:

- Discussion of findings (conducted between April and July 2006) and identification of top three priorities which would guide future agendas
  - Defining a consumer survivor initiative formalizing our group
  - Identification and consensus on common principles and governance standards
  - Exploration of broader policy issues that would direct or help create our purpose (such as best practices, standards of operations for CSIs eg. Reporting criteria, fidelity standards that are used to evaluate projects)
  - Voting mechanism established
  - Established formal name for this working group
  - Established membership criteria (to follow at end of document). Due to the establishment of this membership criteria, OPDI no longer had a role at this table. However, they were encouraged to share resources where appropriate
  - Struck a sub-committee to create a position paper in response to the IHSP (released on November 20)
- Discussion on identified projects that would enhance existing community capacity

In addition to the CSI Network activities, the Network Lead has been involved in various ad hoc committees related to the LHIN process and sits on another major mental health sector network comprised of key stakeholders in the mental health and addictions sector. It will be the continued work of the Network to encourage the LHINs to put into action the foundational activities that are consumer/survivor focused. For example, they outlined in their Integrated Health Service Plan that they would “use and support others to use alternative businesses and peer support.” It is our responsibility as a Network to hold them accountable for their promises to our community; however, their responsibility to us is equalled by our own to them in assisting them to achieve their overarching goals of tighter integration and access in this new mental health atmosphere. We are there as a resource to the LHINs and it is our expectation that they will use us in a central role as they put their implementation framework to the test.

Pam Lahey, Consumer-Survivor Initiative Network Lead Staff, Toronto

## Voices From the Street Moving Forward

The main purpose or goal of Voices From the Street is to strengthen the voices and practices of people and communities living in poverty through their participation in a public education process and in the development and implementation of anti-poverty policies and programs.

The Speakers' Bureau- Voices from the Street- was a pilot project initiated in 2005, through the collaborated efforts of the Gerstein Centre, the Ontario Council of Alternative Businesses (OCAB) and the Parkdale Activity- Recreation Centre (PARC). The city of Toronto's Supporting Community Partnership Initiatives (SCPI) funded it, to train eight to twelve individuals who had experienced mental health issues and/or been homeless. The project is based on the idea that people who are or have been homeless are important members of our communities. We realize that we need to address the stigmas associated with those experiencing homelessness or in danger of becoming homeless, in order to change public perceptions and attitudes. When we can give a "voice" to those individuals on the fringes of our society, we can finally challenge the doctrines that prevent changes to happen and allow positive, long-term solutions to be realized.

The Speakers' Bureau received a development grant from the Atkinson Charitable Foundation to help form crucial relationships with various community organizations and individuals involved in policy. Our next step will be to expand the scope of "Voices from the Street" to include a more diverse and larger number of individuals to take better and more timely actions on opportunities that we have uncovered.

The steering committee from the three agencies involved is now looking to build upon the success of "Voices from the Street" and establish the bureau as an ongoing and sustainable resource for the media, the public, community associations, and policy makers. The following steps will accomplish this:

- Expand the Speakers' Bureau to include at least sixteen additional participants. This will involve a train-the-trainer approach, using our current members to assist in facilitating the curriculum with future members. There will be new training component for current and newer members that will inform and build the capacity of all participants to influence public policy and decision-making
- Continue to employ a member of the bureau as a coordinator, to conduct outreach, marketing our services, and to co-ordinate speaking engagements with the individual Speakers' Bureau members.
- Develop a website to promote the work of "Voices from the Street" to a broader audience
- Work with partner agencies and our Advisory Board to gain access to forums where policy decisions are made and facilitate the inclusion of our members in policy discussions.

"We believe that respect and recognition are essential to the development of marginalized communities.

Wendy Young



**VOICES FROM THE STREET**  
The Toronto Homeless Speakers Bureau



In Memory Of Manny A.

At A-Way Express Courier Services, we received the sad news of losing a colleague who passed away January 1, 2007. Manny A. was a courier and the secretary on our A-Way Board. He was elected onto the Accent on Abilities Board in November. We will miss his quiet friendly nature, his patience and his perseverance of typing out the Board minutes. Softly spoken, outgoing he has touched many of us here at work. I know that many of our customers will miss him. In solidarity of our grief, we acknowledge the hole left in our A-Way family and mourn our loss.



## A-Way 2006 Christmas Party

On Friday, December 8, A-Way held its annual Christmas party at the neighbouring Danforth Mennonite Church. The party was a great success. It was attended by a large number of staff and guests.

### A-Way Express Courier

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2168 Danforth Avenue  
Toronto, Ontario  
M4C 1K3

Phone: 416.424.2266  
Fax: 416.424.4528  
Email: info@awaycourier.ca

### Toronto's transit courier



A team working under the supervision of Laurie Hall and Mary Sharp from A-Way organized the party, preparing gift bags, preparing and decorating the church basement where the party was held, and cleaning up afterwards. They did an outstanding job (although I am biased since I was one of the people who helped with decorating and cleanup).

A fine turkey dinner was provided by Out Of This World Café (also a survivor business) along with a wonderful vegetarian lasagne alternative for those of us who were vegetarian or vegetarian-inclined.

Santa (Gord Martin) and two of his elves (Mary Sharp and Richard Smith) made an appearance. A large gift bag with a variety of nice gifts was provided to each employee, along with each of the children who were present among the guests.

In addition, there were a large number of draws for a wide assortment of generous prizes donated by a wide variety of businesses from the community.

Jim Toudy did an awesome job as the party D.J., and provided a diverse and entertaining selection of music throughout the evening.

One guest, who had not been to an A-Way Christmas party before, remarked that she was impressed by the way the staff were treated more like members of a family than like employees.



Special thanks are due to former board member Elizabeth Gray and current board members Catherine Brown and Jane O'Hara (as well as a number of persons who wish to remain anonymous) for generously donating time and money to provide gifts, to the businesses (which are listed on the front page) who kindly donated raffle prizes, and to everyone else who participated in any way to make this event the festive and enjoyable success that it was.

By Doug Quinn,

Typing by Helen Huot