

A-WAY EXPRESSIONS

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE CUSTOMERS, MEMBERS AND FRIENDS OF A-WAY EXPRESS

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Employing people with mental health challenges since 1987

Alterna Savings: Raising The Bar On Banking



Ted Brown, Manager Community Account Services, receives a "Celebrate Difference Award" from A-Way this spring.

This spring A-Way chose to show our appreciation to Alterna Savings as an outstanding customer. And A-Way and Alterna have something important in common. Both organizations offer much more than an ordinary company.

A-Way delivers a high quality service while providing employment to survivors, and Alterna Savings offers a progressive alternative to the traditional bank model.

Alterna does supply a full range of standard financial services to its

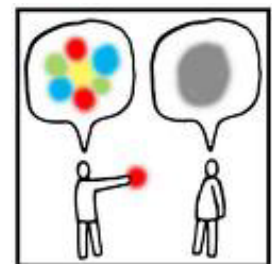
customers. But their customer is not just someone with an account number. Customers are members, and members are owners, which means they have a voice in how the company functions. They are assured profits will go back into operations, and also to serve communities.

Giving back to the community is an integral part of Alterna's philosophy. As a financial co-operative they report on social impact as well as fiscal, with a commitment to returning a minimum of 2% pre-tax profits to support community projects. In 2011 Alterna's contributions more than doubled that commitment. They invest in community through micro loan funds and a unique community account product. Alterna supports projects that build community focusing on two areas: poverty reduction and education. In addition they have what's called the Spare Change Program. Members can sign up to have the change in their account balance swept once a month into one of three pools serving issues related to homelessness, environment or children. And

it's always less than .99 cents per person, per month! Twice a year the Community Grants Committee distributes the Spare Change funds to local causes, where every penny really does count.

Staff at A-Way are proud and appreciative for having worked with Alterna Savings since 1996. At some point during the day chances are good that at least one of our couriers will deliver to Alterna. We wouldn't be "stamping out stigma one step at a time" without them.

Mike Moniz



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RECOVERY- ON MY TERMS

A person* once described to me the definition of 'recovery' as it relates to someone with a mental health challenge. I was surprised to hear that it was possible, and also relieved, and hopeful. She said: "From the inside it means there is hope to flourish in new ways and to no longer be defined by the illness. I believe that anyone can recover. This does not mean they are cured, but able to live fully in life, according to personal choices. For each it is a unique journey."

On the subject of being hopeful, you will be pleased to hear that one of our staff is engaged in facilitating a self-directed recovery program. It's called WRAP which stands for Wellness Recovery Action Plan, and it represents a survivor-led offering of support for people on their recovery path. It started in the mid 90's and no doubt has countless testimonials of success, as the people who attend choose to be there. They choose for themselves the decisions that impact their own quality of life, at their present level of ability.

Myrna Schacherl is the facilitator of the WRAP sessions, and doing this work is part of the forward motion of her own journey. Myrna completed the certification for doing this work while employed at A-Way. She's worked here for almost 11 years starting as a courier, then teaching computer skills to staff, for 9 years in Collections, reception relief when someone is sick, and she takes the minutes for board and management meetings, a task I personally know to be a real challenge, and she does a great job! She's now applying her university computer knowledge to producing statistical reports from our database.



For anyone who's interest is piqued, you can contact Myrna (pronounced 'meerna') at peersupport@accentonability.org. One WRAP group has been completed, and Myrna hopes to organize more in response to demand from A-Way staff and the community. No one is excluded from a group and all are considered peers, or equals. And what you learn might help

you in a crisis, or it might help you to take the next step in whatever direction you choose.

**Peggy Birnberg was the Executive Director of Houselink for 19 years, and served as Chair on the A-Way Board of Directors for several years. Sadly, Peggy passed away on February 8th, 2013. See the newsletter profile article in our Spring 2010 issue on our website for Peggy's story.*

Maureen O'Donnell



WE ARE PLEASED TO INTRODUCE
MEREDITH COCHRANE
AS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF A-WAY EXPRESS.
SHE BEGAN IN THIS POSITION AT THE
BEGINNING OF MAY 2013.
WE WHOLEHEARTEDLY WELCOME YOU MEREDITH!



When I was 5 years old, my mother always told me that happiness was the key to life. When I went to school, they asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up, I wrote down 'happy'. They told me I didn't understand the assignment, and I told them they didn't understand life.

John Lennon

SPOTLIGHT ON:

ROCCO ZAPPONE

Rocco was recently chosen for the 2013 Richie Award from CAMH, and it's a pleasure to see his tenacity and hard work recognized. The announcement stated: "Your commitment to employment, volunteerism and moving forward in your recovery has been truly inspiring and you deserve to be celebrated!" It goes on to say: "[Rocco] understands [his] value in contributing to the work environment and the value of employment in [his] recovery."

Over the past year or two my exchanges with Rocco have always been a pleasure, as he has a bright light and a positive attitude. His personal story unfolds with the twists of a hard story to read, yet he speaks of his future with optimism, always. He's often talking about or asking about better ways to do things and enjoying the small things in life, like the satisfaction of a good meal well cooked, or a busy day on the road.

Rocco works at A-Way as a courier, and he does it well. He also has plans for other things. He started his working life as a supermarket stock boy and worked for several years as a general labourer. He studied trades for a building maintenance certificate in plumbing, drywall and electrical. But drugs and alcohol were to get in the way of building a foundation for himself through work or in making a home, and he found himself homeless for most of 15 years. At one point he was working full time but chose to remain homeless, for reasons that are best understood by others in that circumstance. Rocco spoke of a tragic incident at an early age that I will not elaborate on, but it seems to me that ensuing years carried pain he tried to mask. Undeniable pain.

A turning point came with Caritas, a farm run by an Italian priest whose dedication to those suffering with addiction gave Rocco what he needed to find his personal strength. Then therapy at CAMH set him on a course with medication that he's taken since. It would still be a couple of years before he gave up drinking in '06. Until then life was full of



Rocco relaxing in the Dispatch office after his shift.

procrastination, looking only for the means to get the next hit that would tranquilize the inner chaos. That's not who Rocco is now. In fact that story sounds like it's from a different person.

He's a member of The YMCA and works to build his physical health. He started volunteering at the Daily Bread Food Bank and now is at the STOP Community Kitchen every Wednesday. He sees a nutritionist and talks about different ways of improving his diet and personal habits. He works on relationships that mean a lot to him, like the bond with his mother and sisters. He wants to be humble and hard working, and he is both of these. He pictures working as a security guard in the future, work that will involve meeting people which is something he wants and that would suit his personality.

Rocco wants to forgive himself for mistakes in the past and move forward so that he can help his mother to stay in her home. He worries about paying into his pension and wants more substantial hours, so he plans to take a computer course that will open doors, particularly with security work. We wish you all the best Rocco on that road of yours, and hope it's filled with success in every step.

Maureen O'Donnell

MIXED GRILL



Linda Chamberlain, co-founder of the Dream Team in Toronto, shares her amazing story in 'Not Anytime Soon'.

The life & times of Linda Chamberlain

Linda is known and loved in the survivor community, and she works tirelessly as an advocate for housing the poor and mentally ill. Her story is inspiring. It's available at:
Hard copies for \$10: jsbb@rogers.com
Electronic versions for \$5: openpolicyontario.com/pictures/.

Every closed eye is not sleeping, and every open eye is not seeing.

Bill Cosby

One day, Larry went to see his doctor and told him that he hadn't been feeling at all well. The doctor examined Larry, left the room, and came back with three different bottles of pills.

Looking at Larry he says, 'Take the green pill with a big glass of water when you wake up. Take the blue pill with a big glass of water after lunch. Then just before going to bed, take the red pill with another large glass of water.'

Startled to be taking so much medicine, the man stammered, "B.....B.....B.....But Doc, exactly what is my problem?"

The doctor replied, 'Larry, you're not drinking enough water.'

ONE OF THE HARDEST PARTS OF LIFE IS DECIDING WHETHER TO WALK AWAY OR TRY HARDER.

We now regularly conduct customer service training sessions with our staff. If you have a comment of any kind on the service you receive please pass it on to: maureen@awaycourier.ca

Raisin cookies that look like chocolate chip cookies are the main reason I have trust issues.



Willy and Vicky
Willy, our office dog, hanging out with an injured bird on Victoria Day. That's just the kind of guy he is.

A-Way is a member of:

Social Enterprise Toronto

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YOUR TRANSIT COURIER
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On the road to recovery