

Helping Hands

Winter Issue - January 2006



Kawartha Haliburton Victim Services Newsletter

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Point of interest:

Our website has been redesigned and updated by AME Technical Services (April Eickmeier) and it looks great. Check it out: www.victim-services.org

Welcome

January already! Happy New Year to everyone! Where has 2005 gone? My name is Linda Meisner and I will be composing the newsletters in the effort of keeping everyone informed as to the progress of our organization. Doris Martyn and myself will work as a team to try and ensure that we cover all of the relevant information from one newsletter to the next. If anyone would like to add anything to the newsletters, please do not hesitate to contact me. We appreciate all of the hard work that Elizabeth Maxwell had put into the previous newsletters with Doris and she will be sadly missed.

Special Dates to Remember:

February 4/2006

Strategic Planning Day. We encourage all volunteers to take part in this day. We want to hear from you: your input will greatly assist us with the future direction of Victim Services.

March 9/2006

Death notification training will take place at the Coboconk Legion on March 9/2006 from 6:30-10:00PM. Anyone interested? – Contact Vicky ASAP.

There will be **no monthly meeting in March** due to March Break.

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Summer Barbecue

On Wednesday, August 10/05, our annual barbecue was held at the Coboconk OPP Detachment with a great turnout of 27. Pictures for new name tags were taken, police check forms were completed and new pagers were distributed to the volunteers. After an enjoyable potluck meal (hamburgers by Chef Steve Oliver), our meeting took place. Two guest speakers for the evening: Wendy Secord from the The Elizabeth Fry Society and Gisele Lalonde from Haliburton Emergency Rule Safe Space(H.E.R.S.S.).

Wendy shared with us an outline of the society's background and services. This agency works with and on behalf of women involved in the Criminal Justice System. Areas include; helping with minor offences, programs for incarcerated women –violence awareness and anger management programs, prison advocacy – putting women in contact with lawyers, checking on their children, making phone calls, helping them communicate with the outside world, as well as sexual assault intervention, court support and personal and moral support. Victim Services can refer survivors to the Elizabeth Fry Society, Tel. Peterborough(705) 749-6809 – email: efryptbo@nexicom.net.

Gisele Lalonde – Informed us of a new facility opening in late winter of 2006. The facility will start off small with 4 beds and the average stay will be 21 days. They will rely on emergency service providers such as O.P.P., Victim Services, YMCA and hospitals for referrals. They will provide crisis counselling, 24 hour toll-free confidential hotline, help with finding emergency accommodations, emergency transportation for safety and safe planning for women who need help to leave. Anyone interested in volunteering can contact either Gisele or Daisy. Contact #705-286-6442 or (800) 461-7656.

Notes from our Leader:

- 1/ Official name for VCARS is “Kawartha Haliburton Victim Services.
- 2/ Training of new recruits started Sept. 17th 05 in Lindsay. **All volunteers** were asked to attend to review “Policies and Procedures”.
- 3/ AGM took place on Sept.27/05 – Come and meet the Board Members.
- 4/ New pagers – Everyone will be paged when a call comes in but only those able to take the call are to respond.



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Recruitment Training

New volunteers that were trained in the fall:
Linda Robitaille – Minden

Jenifer Ketner – Minden

Shona Stewart-Ross – Little Britain

Gloria Acton – Little Britain

Deborah Boadway-Martin – Little Britain

Welcome to our team of dedicated volunteers!!!! All of you volunteers need to give yourselves a pat on the back for your dedication and hard work!!! Thank you.

We now have 35 volunteers!

November Meeting – November 16/2005

Great turn out – 16 members – Items that were discussed.

1/ Death Notification Training will take place sometime in March 9/2006 at the Coboconk Legion from 6:30-10PM. Vicky has volunteered to drive anyone needing a ride from the Lindsay area. Contact her if that is the case.

2/ Mileage rate has been increased to .40 cents a kilometer.

3/ Christmas Party was announced to be held on Dec.8/2005 at Eganridge Golf and Country Club.

4/ Jackets with the Victim Services name on the front can be purchased. All season canvas ones are approx. \$56.00 with the fleece ones being less. Prices and particulars will be researched if there is sufficient interest. Contact Vicky.

5/ Pager broadcast policy:

1/ First Page – call in only if you are available

2/ Second Page – this means there was no response to first page (or only one person responded). In this case, if you are able to help out at all (maybe just a few hours, etc.), please call in.

3/ If still no response, the people on the schedule will be called.

Procedure if unable to get through (line busy) –

1/Continue to try for five minutes

2/After 5 minutes call answering service (800#) and leave your number for a return call

3/ or page Vicky or Annie

6/ Newsletter. Linda Meisner has volunteered to take on the task. Doris Martyn will continue to provide information from the Haliburton/Minden area.

7/ Monthly **meetings** will continue to be the 3rd Wednesday of each month at 6:30pm at the Police Detachment in Coboconk. Carpooling was suggested and the Northern group have decided to meet at the Tim Horton's in Minden, one half hour before the meeting time with each person taking a turn.

We talked about cancellations of a meeting, Vicky will try and notify us before noon on that day. On bad weather days, check you e-mail more often or call in to the office for an update. Doris Martyn (457-2598) has volunteered to do the "northern calls" so those people can check with her during the day.

Suggestions on training/guest speakers for our meetings:

- Personality Dimensions
- Toastmasters
- Basic signing (blind)
- Emergency First Aid Training

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November Meeting con't.

- Have a guest speaker every second month - Court room training
- Visit (morgue/chapel/Palliative Care Unit/Mental Health Unit) at the Ross Memorial (Sara is going to try and set that up for us) Thank you Sara.

We talked about our Strategic Planning Day with a variety of service providers in attendance.

8/ Issues/Concerns: Asthmatics – if unable to attend or continue with a call (smoke, pets, etc.) call a team leader to get a replacement volunteer.

9/ Calls – 5 cases were discussed (2 suicides, a car accident, a court assistance and a spousal abuse).

Pinestone Weekend

The weekend was another great success and full of activities. Saturday began with registration and a continental breakfast; Our Volunteer Co-ordinator, Vicky Wallis, gave a warm welcome to everyone in attendance.

Our guest speaker for Saturday was Deborah Sinclair, a Social Worker, Consultant, Trainer and Community Organizer in private practice in Toronto, Ontario. She has a clinical practice specializing in work with trauma survivors, their families and their allies. Her topic for the day was Understanding Vicarious Trauma, The Impact on Workers and Strategies for Self-Care. Some of the things discussed throughout the day: Why should we be concerned about VT, Strategies for dealing with VT, Definitions of terms, Examples of Trauma, What Trauma Workers face, Burnout, Differences between burnout and VT, Stages of VT, Guiding principles of Self-Care, Identifying obstacles and Personal Strategies for Self-Care. A lot of valuable information for all of us to consider as volunteers dealing with crisis situations. Deborah gave us a good supply of handouts related to the day's topic as well. During the day, we also had volunteers assisting with icebreakers and warm ups. A lot of fun as well as very informative. Great day!!!

A social evening took place at the hospitality suite in the evening. Lots of fun and sharing.

Sunday morning began with breakfast and then it was back to business. There was a Swearing in Ceremony for our new 5 volunteers. After the break, another guest speaker, Randy Smoke talked to us about his native culture. He is of Anishinaabe descent, and is a member of Alderville First Nation in Central Ontario. Lifelong traditional influences, combined with ongoing life experiences have inspired his decision to pursue traditional native culture through his art work. He is an amazing painter with a story to tell. I believe that Randy caught everyone's attention in that room by his great stories and that soft spoken voice of his. Very informative!!! After the wrap up, our week end together had come to a close. The week end was a great success once again and a lot of laughs and sharing took place. Good for all of us to be together again. Thanks to everyone that helped make the weekend a success.

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Christmas Dinner at Eganridge

On December 8/2005, our Christmas Dinner was held at Eganridge Golf and Country Club north of Bobcaygeon. Social went from 6PM to 7PM and dinner was served at 7PM. What a wonderful event to get everyone in the Christmas spirit. We had our welcoming committee and elves giving out Christmas ornaments, Volunteers, Board Members, Member of Parliament and our Mayor Barb Kelly. Steve Oliver took on the task of Master of Ceremonies (great job Steve). The food was absolutely delicious and we all had our fair share. Hats off to everyone that helped in any way to make that evening possible. Great job!

Birthdays for January/Feb./March:

Marg Higgins	January 7
Vicky Wallis	January 12
Donna Austin	January 13
Dorothy Owens	February 5
Judy Potter	February 24

Best Wishes to.....

Vicky Fisher	March 9
Robin Beatty	March 23
Debbie Arthur	March 27
Anne Downey	March 29

Executive Director's Message

Hello to all;

I just wanted to include my thanks to all. This program only works because of the support of people like you. It has been a year with many changes, Executive Directors, Volunteer Coordinators, meeting location, new volunteers and new board members.

We continue to supply our volunteers with the tools they need to make this program work. Ongoing monthly training, guest speakers sharing their expertise with our volunteers and social gatherings to encourage networking with each other.

The board of directors have taken a very active role in this program and have planned to revisit our Strategic Plan. We ask that you support this by coming out and sharing your views and suggestions.

We look forward to a very busy year. We have plans in the near future for a tour of the Ross Memorial Hospital's morgue and chapel, a tour of the Court room and proceedings in Lindsay, some joint training with the VWAP program for court support and the Death Notification Training in Coboconk. We will be advertising for new volunteers within the next couple of weeks and hopefully the training will be completed in April/May. If you know of anyone interested in becoming a volunteer, please encourage them to fill out an application. We plan on doing some public awareness booths and a number of speaking engagements with community agencies, police, fire, hospital and ems as well as community organizations.

I wish to thank all of you for your hard work and dedication to the VCARS program.

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Annie gives us some insight into her experience with National Organization of Victim Assistance (NOVA) – An amazing adventure for such a great cause -----

I always wanted to visit New Orleans and the Gulf Coast but I never wanted to see them this way. Seven adults formed the Canadian Response Team, five women and two men. Our team consisted of 3 Victim Service Executive Directors, a Social worker with the CAS, and 3 individuals from the faith community.

We left Windsor at 3:30 p.m. on October 14th and drove through the night taking turns driving, we ate breakfast in Mississippi 19 hours later. We only found out when we arrived in Windsor that our destination had been changed from Baton Rouge, Louisiana to Ocean Springs, Mississippi. Upon arrival in Mississippi, we went directly to the YMCA in Ocean Springs which would be our home for the next 6 days. We met up with the other Response Teams from Florida and Ohio and they encouraged us to tour the area and see first hand what we would be dealing with. As we drove through the once flourishing neighbourhoods, the true meaning of devastation was felt by all of us. Once beautiful little communities, they now were piles of rubble.

We slept in sleeping bags on the floor of the YMCA, rose every morning at 4:30 a.m. (that is when the daycare opens there) but this was sheer heaven compared to other living conditions of some of the victims. We were driven to one of 7 Disaster Recovery Centres where we spent our day. Our main task was crisis intervention and companionship.

Upon arrival at the Waveland Disaster Recovery Centre, we spoke with many people, the first day brought over a 1000 victims through the centre. Waveland was once a beautiful, upscale and affluent area, an ocean community with gift shops, churches, schools, sprawling homes, marinas, restaurants and ocean piers. Now there is nothing left but mangled debris. The people that we met there were very genial and proud and they seemed quite determined to rebuild their lives and community.

Vent tents had been erected to give the people somewhere to go to vent their frustrations, anger and sadness. This was someplace for them to go to release their emotions without inhibition. The sign in front simply said, "we listen to you"

We drove into New Orleans and witnessed the miles and miles of rubble. The first sight we all noticed was all the homes had holes cut in their roofs. We walked through the streets of the French Quarter. There was absolutely no one on the streets except the Militia, but the stench was very noticeable, so much so that we felt ill.

Donated clothes were dumped in parking lots and people rummaging through them at all times of day and night. I spent some time with a family rummaging to find enough clothes for their family of 5.

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They were living in their car in the parking lot and eating from the Red Cross truck twice a day. I managed to get them into the Disaster Centre and visit the storage area and find blankets, non perishables, toys and toiletries.

Each morning when we arrived at the Disaster Recovery Centres at 6:00 a.m., we sat with the security guards until it actually opened at 7:30 a.m. There was no public transportation so we had to go when the ride was leaving. We had our own area in the centre and had a real crash course on resources in the states. A Disaster Relief Centre is a planned coordinated response effort that includes multiple organizations, ours consisted of representatives from Rural Agriculture (homes available in rural areas), Mental Health, Job Find, Seniors Assistance, IRS, Blue Tops (plastic for roofs), Travel Trailers, SBA (small business association) translators, FEMA (federal emergency management agency) MEMA (Mississippi emergency management agency) Red Cross, Legal Services, Hazard Mitigation and Medicaid. Rows of chairs were set up and people would move from chair to chair up the line. Sometimes we would notice someone having a difficult time, it could be 4 hours before they got to the front. We would go and sit with them as they moved along, offering them friendship, some referrals and some refreshments. Most of the people I dealt with were black, wonderful and gracious people and after listening to an elderly lady for sometime, she said, "you know I am black" and I said, I was born "color blind". I was referred to as "Miss Annie",

In the 10 days that I was there, there were many, many stories, we provided one on one crisis counseling to many victims who were very frustrated with the "system".

We ate from the Red Cross trucks, food and restaurants were very limited and we had to be careful with food that was offered. We were warned against eating fish and were pretty well restricted to chicken, sweet potato and cabbage salad each night. Most places had "Now Hiring" signs but so many people had left the area that they could not keep the restaurants open. We met each night and debriefed and hit the beds by 10:00 p.m.

We met many wonderful people and all were intrigued with the "White Caps" from Canada who would drive all that way to help them and volunteer their time. While we were there, we received a call from the Attorney Generals office in Washington, expressing their gratitude for the Canadian Involvement.

It was difficult saying goodbye to the staff in the centre, some if not most of them were victims as well. There will be plenty of opportunity for us to serve again through out the coming months. It was an experience of a life time. I was sad I could not do more but pleased that I touched a few lives. I will always remember this "life experience" and would return in a heartbeat.