

Coast to Coast

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Bulletin de la Société St-Léonard du Canada
Newsletter of the St. Leonard's Society of Canada



UNSUNG HEROES: Participants in St. Leonard's House - Windsor's Good Neighbours Service clean up an alley in the core area. Windsor's *The Times Magazine* sang the praises of SLH Windsor in an article reprinted on page 7.

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Community-based Corrections Matters

by Elizabeth White

Bringing Community into Corrections and Corrections into Community

The following article is an excerpt from a presentation made by Elizabeth White on Tuesday October 26, 2004 at the International Corrections and Prisons Association Conference. The full text is available on our web-site.

When I consider the whys and hows of non-governmental organizations in Community Corrections, and indeed of community corrections as a whole, I begin at the end (and I will end at the beginning).

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News and Views

Just Like You

Susan Haines interviews Guy Ritchie

On March 25th of this year I attended the Community Forum Parolees Returning to the Community hosted by St. Leonard's own House of Hope, John Howard Ottawa's Kirkpatrick House, Elizabeth Fry Ottawa's J.F. Norwood House, Correctional Service Canada (CSC), the Citizens Advisory Committee of the Ottawa District Parole Office and Ryan/Smith Design Associates. The event provided a valuable opportunity for concerned community members, voluntary sector organizations, government employees and former prisoners to interact, share, learn and discuss the issues and realities as they relate to community corrections and post-release.

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**YOU CAN MAKE A
DIFFERENCE —
S E E P . 3**

To begin at the end: the end is that people return to the community after their sentence expires—or somewhat sooner if they receive a conditional release. The dilemma for all societies (to say nothing about the individuals themselves who are returning) is how successful that return will be.

The challenge then is: given that people return to the community, what approach to that return is in the community's best interest?

Is it the ostrich who hopes it will go away if it pretends it is not there? That there is no problem, at least not for me. . . Or is the parrot who talk a great deal but, as has been said "I have a perfect horror of words that are not backed up by deeds." (Theodore Roosevelt) Or is the duck who models those who are able, assisting those with less skill to learn to survive and thrive (crime free)? The clear winner is the duck in my view.

I suggest that having socially engaged communities, in the broadest sense of the word, is not only a best practise, it is the only practise that can hope to succeed. Definitions vary about social engagement—sometimes referred to as civil society—and I am not here to talk about sociological definitions. But I am here to talk about what works, and strengthening civil society and building healthy communities, are practises that work. Both awareness and engagement are signs of healthy communities. "Each of us derives some sense of belonging from among the various communities to which we might, in principle, belong." (from Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone*) From the intimate (family), to work, church, and on to the "other 'weak ties' that constitute our personal stock of social capital..." weak ties can be quite important collectively.

Collective social capital responds to, and those engaged citizens acknowledge connection to, the issues of their communities. This remains true whether the issue is education, littering, pollution, politics or criminal justice. Isolation does not build healthy communities.

Places "with more social capital have proportionately fewer murders. This inverse relationship is astonishingly strong. Social capital is about as important as poverty, urbanism, and racial composition as a determinant of homicide prevalence," (Putnam) and more so than education, single parenthood and so forth.

Leaving aside the issue of how to develop social capital where it is not strong for another discussion, let's turn to what happens when there is a stock of social capital, how to maximize its impact, and examples where that happens successfully.

Citizens who want to get involved in social justice policy and service have choices. They can:

1. find employment within government,
2. advocate to the public and provide stand-alone programs, and
3. advocate to government and offer programs linked to government mandate.

Combinations of the latter two options are common.

The sector that I am highlighting is that segment that, rather than choosing to do their work through a public sector (government) connection, choose to do so through organizations that they found and base in their communities. Rather than having government staff and structure to support certain tasks, they form charitable or not-

for-profit agencies and through that means, hire staff to carry out the policies of the volunteer governors, often formed as Boards of Directors.

We refer to these as non-governmental organizations or voluntary sector agencies.

I am going to approach this discussion about these non-governmental organizations in four parts:

- **Context** of Community Corrections
- **Scope** of Community-Based Corrections
- **Community - Based / Government Relationships**
- **Benefits** provided by Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Examples of **Better Practises**


[For the purposes of the present article, only the first part, "Context", is included.]

Context:

Criminal law is a function of the state and that includes the corrections component. But the state, the government or the public sector, need not control all aspects of corrections—particularly when the corrections functions are moving into the community setting. This is when the role of the community members becomes key.

Governments tend to be slightly cumbersome in decision making processes, and to lack flexibility to respond at the micro level. Community-based organizations have that flexibility that comes from being grounded in a private sector management setting. This is important because community corrections is first and foremost about individual humans and how they perform, not about categories of citizens or classes of people. The growth of restorative justice interventions is evidence of this.

Frank Porporino in his Erickson speech in Miami at ICPA 2003 noted that what works must be driven by effective service delivery not by a mission to "fix" people. The challenge is to design and deliver the most effective interventions. To do this requires a delicate balancing act by government and community-based organizations. If government leads too much, controls too much, then the element of community engagement can be lost.

A final note worth remembering: corrections is the end game of criminal law; but done well, it can be a key factor in the pre-game of crime prevention. 

Elizabeth White is Executive Director of SLSC

BOOK REVIEW

By Donald G. Evans

PRISONGATE: THE SHOCKING STATE OF BRITAIN'S PRISONS AND THE NEED FOR VISIONARY CHANGE

Sir David Ramsbotham. Free Press: London. 2003

After a distinguished career in the British Army, David Ramsbotham was appointed Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons in December 1995 and held this post until his retirement in July 2001. This book covers the five and a half years of his experiences as head of the Prison Inspectorate for England and Wales. During this period he and his team of inspectors visited or inspected every prison in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. This book is his personal response to what he saw and heard during his tenure as Chief Inspector. As the title suggests, Ramsbotham was not impressed with the state of British prisons. The narrative in this book gives his indictment of the prison system and concludes with suggestions for improvement and change in the management of British prisons, and presents a strongly worded indictment of all that is wrong and problematic with imprisonment.

Ramsbotham based his conclusions about prison conditions on the 237 inspections carried out during his time with HM Inspectorate. The book is organized in thematic chapters that focus on the different classes of prisons in the United Kingdom: local, close supervision, resettlement prisons as well as specialized settings for women offenders and sexual offenders. It is the author's premise that prisons should be about reducing re-offending; he argues that the continued failure of the UK prison system to reduce re-offending is evidenced by the fact that 58% of adults re-offend within 2 years of release and over 78% of youth re-offend in the same time period.

Prisongate opens with an account of Ramsbotham's first experience of an inspection at the Holloway Prison for women.

Exasperated by the filthy and rat infested conditions, he and his team walked out, suspending the inspection.

This chapter sets the tone for the rest of the book, basically listing problems in the management of the British Prison Service. The task of the Chief Inspector is to inspect and report on the treatment of prisoners and prison conditions. The Prison Inspectorate is an independent body that reports their findings to the Secretary of State and also presents an annual report of the Inspectorate's activities to the British Parliament. The author barely disguises his anger as he notes that even after numerous reports calling for significant change in the management and administration of the British prison service, little or nothing was done!

In fact, it appears that he was unsuccessful in getting anyone to change what he saw as blatant problems in a system that he believed could be corrected. He draws attention to what he perceives as a lack of political will in that various Home Secretaries have all started their terms of office promising significant changes to the prison system but in most cases nothing has occurred.

To underscore his feelings about the lack of ministerial direction, he writes: "Ultimately the blame for failure in any organization lies at the door of management. In the case of prisons, that was not the middle management of the Service...it was the ministerial and Prison Service senior management." He was also at a loss to explain why the "consistently high re-offending rate did not appear to be viewed with any embarrassment" by those in authority. Ramsbotham argues that the "Prison Service was failing the public by its bad management of prisons, but it was being failed by ministers, who were giving it neither the direction nor the resources needed to protect the public from further crimes by those it released from its custody." His general conclusion is that prison is not working as well as it could

Continued on p. 4

Donors: Help Us Be Kind to Our Forests!

*St. Leonard's Society of Canada appreciates its generous supporters, many of whom donate year after year to support our work promoting safer communities through effective community corrections. We are inviting your support directly through this newsletter rather than sending a separate mailing. **You will not receive any other request for donations this year.** It is our hope that through this approach we can reduce the amount of paper and postage we use, and to concentrate our staff time on the activities of making communities safer. Please use the coupon below for your annual contribution, or to become a new supporter of the St. Leonard's Society of Canada mission.*

YES! I want to support St. Leonard's Society of Canada's work in community corrections. I am enclosing a tax-creditable donation of:

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Please complete this form, detach it and return it along with your cheque or money order, made out to St. Leonard's Society of Canada, and mail it to the address on the reverse of this donation coupon.

Contributions are also welcomed for our Libby Bursary Fund for ex-clients. For details, please contact SLSC staff.

and should do. In fact, it is not working well on its own or as part of the criminal justice system.

Given the bleakness of the author's description of the prison system, what does he suggest be done? He notes that the Inspectorate team has seen what needs to be done for prisoners working in some prisons in the United Kingdom. "The tragedy," he writes, "is that it is not working everywhere all the time."

While in his role as Chief Inspector he and his team developed the concept of a healthy prison which included the following four characteristics:

- Everyone is, and feels, safe—staff, prisoners, and those who work in or visit the prison.
- Everyone is treated with respect as a fellow human being
- Everyone is encouraged to improve themselves and given the opportunity to do so through access to purposeful activity.
- Everyone is enabled to maintain contact with their family and is prepared for release.

For the author, rehabilitation protects the public while re-offending does not. If the Prison Service intends to use the rate of re-offending as a measure of success or failure, then the Service should focus on release preparation for the prisoner. Ramsbotham is an advocate for the rehabilitation and resettlement of prisoners. If resettlement is to have any chance of success, the process of change must begin while the offender is in prison. As he succinctly notes, "all work done with and for prisoners amounts to preparation for their release." Again, however, he found that "resettlement was inconsistent, uncontrolled, and without operational supervision. No one ensured that plans were made for every prisoner. No one was responsible for ensuring that sufficient and suitable activities to facilitate preparation for release were present in every prison." In concluding his book, he noted his bottom line: "Society has a right to expect prison to work."

What lessons can we learn from this rather depressing descriptive account of the British Prison Service? I would suggest the following:

- The issue of accountability seems to be elusive. If an independent body created by Parliament can have the majority of its

recommendations ignored then we have not found the ideal mechanism to hold government agencies accountable for doing what their statement of purpose or mandate promises.

· If the government is committed to the concept of "what works" for correctional policy and reduction of re-offending, then it must make the tough decisions to deal with public ignorance and punitive ideals which places prison as the central option and everything else as alternatives.

Political will is an essential ingredient of all attempts to reform the prison system. Without ministerial backing (including adequate and appropriate resources) major change is not likely, and continued tinkering with the system will be the order of the day.

Committed leaders and managers are critical to maintaining a positive change agenda that works towards ensuring public safety, resettled offenders and justice for victims.

The improvement of industrial relations is also an important and essential requirement if the prison is to be a well-performing well managed system.

I would recommend this book for anyone interested in understanding the challenges facing "watchdog" agencies and the pressures that seem to be arrayed against those who would hold agencies of government accountable for what they say and do.

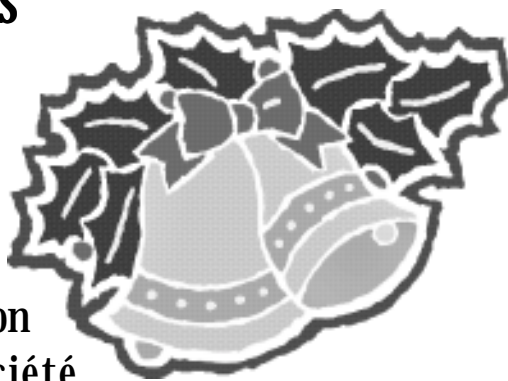
Donald G. Evans is President of the Canadian Training Institute, Toronto, Ontario.

SEASON'S GREETINGS

St. Leonard's Board and Staff thank you for your support.

JOYEUSES FÊTES

Le conseil d'administration et l'équipe de la Société St-Léonard vous remercient de votre soutien.



Please send your donation to:

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The Bronson Centre
208 - 211 Bronson Ave.
Ottawa, ON
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The plenary panel was comprised of CSC's passionate Rev. Pierre Allard, a National Parole Board member, a police officer and victim services advocate. My interest, however, centred on the first-hand knowledge and experience of the Lifer at the table. Guy Ritchie, now an Employment Specialist who trains and supports individuals on Social Assistance through Ontario Works, provided guests with his insights of prison, the real struggles facing prisoners on their return to our communities, and of his experiences within Canada's federal correctional system.

Guy was sentenced to life imprisonment in 1981 and has served over 17 years behind bars. Following that, he spent 18 months in a community residential facility (CRF) and is currently serving the remainder of his sentence in the community. Guy has been successful in resettling and developing his life, family and career; his experiences cannot be under-estimated as they reflect the reality as experienced by those who live in prison and the criminal justice system.

Guy's discussion actuated my desire for further discourse. Following is some of the dialogue that he and I exchanged following the very illuminating Parolees Returning to the Community event.

SH: You mentioned changing *in spite of* prison. Can you explain?

GR: In detailing the 1980 uprising at the New Mexico State Prison, G. Hirliman titled his book *The Hate Factory*. I have found that title to be most descriptive of the prison system itself. However, with that being said it must be remembered that prisons are more than concrete and steel. There is the human element, both prisoner and staff. Although fertile ground for the basest of human behaviour, prisons are the work place and housing units for thousands of individuals. From these individuals also comes the promotion of the greatest human virtues such as tolerance, compassion, understanding and the need to do what is right. The role of family and friends outside the prison must also be given every consideration. Unconditional love is a powerful force in which great strength can be drawn upon. Although locked within an evil setting, with a sprinkling of determination, a good measure of luck, the nurturing support of my fellow humanity and the strength garnished from family and friends I was afforded the opportunity of personal betterment and positive change.

SH: You admitted that at the time, you did need to be incapacitated and held in an institution, but that you *did* change. Can you help the public understand how and why you changed? Were there any particular events, people or programs that were significant?

GR: I never actually felt the need to be incarcerated. However, I did understand the perceived societal

need for my removal from free society and didn't have much disagreement with that. I feel change is a never-ending process that no one or no thing is immune from. At times the agent of my change came as subtly as grass growing. Other times it was as direct as being hit with a five pound sledge hammer. Sometimes there would be an obvious trigger such as the death of a good friend. Personal change also came about from an off-hand comment made by a total stranger. For anyone to understand the means of my personal change has to look no further than their own experience. I believe we have all experienced those moments in our lives, both sudden and subtle that indelibly leaves a mark forever. Being a process, time has everything to do with change. Ask any 40 year old if they are the same person they were when they were 20? Personally, the fact is those things that used to drive me crazy when I was 20 are barely an annoyance today.


SH: What do you think is the most common or biggest misconception about prisoners, lifers and/or prisons?

GR: I feel the biggest misconception regarding prisoners and prisons are those that are for the most part perpetrated for entertainment value. We have all seen the movies and television shows that portray prisoners as a collection of psychopaths either attempting to kill or have brutal sex with each other. The fact is that prisoners are nothing more than a cross section of free society. True, some economic and ethnic groups are vastly over represented within our prisons. However, prisoners are people, fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers, sons and daughters. I have always maintained that I could take a random group of people currently serving sentences, switch them with a random group of free citizens and after a very short transition period no one would be able to discern the difference.

SH: If you could send any message to the general public, what would it be?

GR: Before you engage in thoughts such as "They should all be shot...we should lock them up and throw away the key...we must get tougher on crime", stop and think to yourself for one minute:

- 36,000 people are currently in prison in Canada
- Over 3,000,000 Canadians have a criminal record (approximately one in ten)
- Over 40% of Long Term Offenders (Serving 10 years or more) are serving out their sentences in the community
- Conservative estimates show parole success in the 90% range

Don't take my word for it, look up the facts yourself. The vast majority of us are working hard, raising our families and just trying to get by... Just like you! 

Susan Haines is Researcher and Policy Analyst for SLSC

Society News


National

What Works in Halfway Houses?

by Elizabeth White

SLSC is pleased to announce that on February 28 and March 1, 2005, Researchers, Policy Makers and Practitioners will gather in Toronto to develop an international action learning event set to explore the effectiveness of halfway houses.

Participants from the United Kingdom, United States of America and Canada will launch an exchange of materials and a workplan to advance our collective understanding in five key areas: Staff Skills and Knowledge, Community Reintegration, Contestability, Public Protection and Women.

For further information; please contact Len Cheston: Len.Cheston@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk or Elizabeth White: eawhite@on.aibn.com 

Elizabeth White is Executive Director of SLSC

House of Hope (Ottawa)

Family Drop-in Support Centre

By Carole Mallows

House of Hope in Ottawa is opening a new drop-in centre in the Bronson Centre for families affected by incarceration. This exciting new initiative is being funded by the National Crime Prevention Centre. The aim of the centre is ambitious: to supply holistic services to families with a loved one in conflict with the law and to learn more in a structured way about the unique needs of the families. At this time there is little research being done in Canada concerning the families of offenders. Most research studied by staff at the House of Hope comes from the USA or Great Britain. Research from the USA has found that children of offenders are about six times more likely to serve an adult sentence in prison than their counterparts. The reasons behind this intergenerational cycle of crime remain undiscovered.


House of Hope is endeavoring to learn more about what happens within families during the process of arrest, incarceration and reintegration back into the community. Staff is focusing on stress patterns and family stability as well as basic demographics. How are these families composed? What is the pattern of relationships within the families? Are there shifts within these relationships when one member goes to prison?

What are the stressors that these families face? How do they deal with stress?

The House of Hope Family Support Drop-in Centre is also in existence to help the families work through the multitude of issues which arise through being connected with the criminal justice system. Individual counseling and family support is available as well as weekly support groups for men, women, children and youth and older parents of adult offenders. Case management is carried out by staff members in conjunction with a multi-disciplinary team of professional volunteers. Volunteers include a parole officer, correctional staff, social workers, M.A. therapists, qualified play therapists, a human rights lawyer and students of Criminology and Social Work.

It is hoped that the House of Hope Families of Offenders Drop-in Centre will provide a space in the community that the families of offenders can call their own. There have been few services for this particular population. Clients have indicated to staff at the House of Hope in previous years that they need a place where they can talk openly about their issues in a warm, non-judgmental atmosphere; somewhere where they can connect with others going through similar experiences. One client reported that she did not have the money, time or energy to go around several different agencies in the community. She really appreciated that House of Hope could support her in a multi-faceted way to improve life for herself and her family.

An Open House celebrated the opening of the Drop-in Centre on October 26th from 2-6pm. Pierre Allard, Correctional Service of Canada Ambassador for Families of Offenders, kindly agreed to officiate the opening of the centre on this day. It was a time of celebration for the families of offenders and the whole community.

House of Hope is deeply grateful to the National Crime Prevention Centre for giving them the opportunity to learn more about their client base and to be a support for the families who have been called "the hidden victims of crime." 

Carole Mallows is Program Coordinator of House of Hope's Family Support Program

Contact Information: The House of Hope Families of Offenders Drop-in Support Centre, The Bronson Centre, 216 - 211 Bronson Ave., Ottawa, ON, K1R 6H5.

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St. Leonard's Home – Windsor

Unsung Heroes

Reprinted with permission from Windsor's The Times, July #45, p. 21

Nothing is known for certain of St. Leonard's history, as his earliest "Life", written in the eleventh century, has no historical value whatever. So let's go with the legend that says a sixth century French monk named Leonard saved both the lives of the Queen and her newborn daughter, Bertoara.

A grateful King Clovis granted Leonard a huge tract of land where he built a monastery christened Noblac. The King permitted Leonard to take prisoners under his care at Noblac and then release them when they had proved themselves ready. St. Leonard became the patron saint of prisoners; his icon is generally represented holding broken chains in his hands.

In 1962, the first St. Leonard's Halfway Home in Canada opened its doors right here in Windsor to welcome men who had spent time behind bars and needed a secure haven to make a clean start. A practical and determined Anglican priest named Thomas Neil Libby and his supporters developed a vision of helping offenders to rehabilitate in a social climate where ex-offenders were regarded as unfit and undeserving of any support.

Neil Libby pioneered the halfway house movement in Canada; today there are twenty (20) Society homes and affiliates across the country. Yet when the first St. Leonard's House was proposed in Windsor, it was greeted with extraordinary resistance. Neighbourhoods and local politicians rallied against the idea of housing "ex-cons." They waved fists in town meetings, screamed telephone threats to Board members and wrote angry letters to newspaper editors describing the dangers and risks to their wives and children, property values and business

income. This only strengthened the resolve of the founding members and convinced them of the importance of their mission.

Over 40 years later, St. Leonard's has firmly earned this community's support. Situated in a non-descript split-level building on Victoria Avenue in downtown Windsor, St. Leonard's Society has intentionally kept a low profile to prevent residents from being singled out as they quietly re-build their lives.

And yet, St. Leonard's is much more than the bricks and mortar of a building. A United Way supported agency since 1968, the society's services are designed to give back to the community that supports its work with ex-offenders.


Its JOBS Program (Jobs for Offenders Build Success) has worked with over 390 men and women from the community. Its Chaplaincy Service reaches out to the families of ex-offenders. Third-year social work students from the University of Windsor receive supervised placement at the house.

The society employs a community worker that provides housing assistance to the homeless just released prisoners from Windsor Jail—a far cry from the days when parolees were given five bucks and dropped off at the bus depot.

The society's latest community endeavour may also be the most exciting to date. The "Good Neighbours Service" is an employment program funded by the city's social services department, designed to provide job skills and clean up neighbourhood parks that have fallen victim to budgetary constraints.

The Good Neighbour service is an offspring of St. Leonard's innovative "Adopt A Park" program championed by Councillor Carolyne Postma and the Neighbours First Program (which is sponsored by a United Way community building grant). This service has expanded to 10 parks and the creation of The Rivertown Gardens.

The results have been noticeable. Basketball courts, once littered with broken glass and litter, are now being played in again. Residents are also starting to take better care of once sadly neglected spaces – pride of place has reinvigorated the blocks where the "Good Neighbours" are providing maintenance.

The Good Neighbours Program and other endeavours by the St. Leonard's Society deserve continued support by all community residents for its contribution to a safer and healthier society. 

St. Leonard's Society of Canada is deeply appreciative of the generous support from The Ontario Trillium Foundation for our Strategic Planning Process.



BOLTON DAY 2005
JUNE 3, 2005:

The "Life" In



St. Leonard's Society of Canada is pleased to announce that our next Bolton Day will take place at the Holiday Inn in Kingston, Ontario on Friday, June 3, 2005. The theme of the day will be *The "Life" in LifeLine*. It will feature a workshop for direct-service providers on the challenges of working with high needs clients, and a panel discussion of the LifeLine™ initiative which provides "in-reach" services by and for long-term offenders. The day will be rounded off with a visit to a Kingston-area penitentiary and finally SLSC's annual Awards Banquet at the General Wolfe Hotel.

Bolton Day 2005 will be the highlight of a full weekend of St. Leonard's activities including our Annual General Meeting as well as Board and committee meetings. St. Leonard's Society members will be sent additional information and registration forms in a separate mailing. Watch for more detailed information about Bolton Day 2005 in our next newsletter.

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WE'VE MOVED!

If you haven't yet had occasion to take note of our new address, please do so now. Only the address of the Head Office in Ottawa has changed. All other addresses, and all telephone numbers and email addresses, remain as they were.

ABOUT US . . .

St. Leonard's Society of Canada is a national voluntary organization whose mission is to prevent crime and promote responsible community living and safer communities. The opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily shared by the editors or the Society. Submissions, inquiries and comments are welcomed. Please contact us at:

Comings and Goings

After two successful placements, first through a University of Ottawa student co-op placement and then through a Summer Career Placement grant from HRSDC, we were sad to have to say goodbye to Jessica DiZazzo, our Research and Policy Assistant. We wish her the best in her continuing studies at the London School of Economics.

At the same time, we are very pleased to have benefitted from another talented and hard-working U of O student co-op placement, Erin Crawley. Erin is now in the final weeks of her term with us, which has been an eye-opener for her and a very valuable contribution for us. Thank you, Erin!

SLSC has also recently gained two new volunteers. June Massicotte is volunteering with bookkeeping through Causeway Work Centre, and Denes Rothschild is a University of Ottawa law student who has just started reviewing liability issues for us through a Pro Bono Students Canada placement. We are very happy to have both of them with us!