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www.offthecurb.ca
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Have questions or comments
about this newsletter? Want to
submit a story? Please send an
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from the editor

Mayoi No Naka
Editor

Happy New Year! Here it is, the second year of **Off the Curb!**

It seems to me it was only a few months ago that I met with Bob Hughes to promote the idea of a street newspaper. It wasn't much of a hard sell as Bob agreed about two minutes into my spiel and the rest ... as they say ... is history! Hard to believe it's been a year since I wrote that first editorial and *Off the Curb* hit the counters and streets of Kamloops and email in-baskets around the world. Since that day late in December 2009, *Off the Curb* has introduced a separate Merritt edition and we have had more than two dozen contributors of stories, articles, poetry and time. Thank you to everyone who enables me to be here each month, it's a great job and I have the best crew to publish *Off the Curb*. It doesn't get much better than this. We can hope to change something about ourselves, be it dealing with addiction, weight loss or almost anything, but if we don't have the desire to beat whatever it is; if we want but don't put any effort into dealing with it, guess what? It ain't gonna happen! We have to risk a part of ourselves to overcome a challenge. Real life isn't like a movie. Bad stuff happens in our lives, happens to us, people we love die, things happen over which we have no control. Sure we can give up, but sometimes we have to show a vulnerable side, throw our hearts and souls out there and take responsibility for what we need.

I'm going to throw out a challenge this month. If you try to appreciate what you do have instead of concentrating on what you lack, you may find this appreciation increases your 'luck.' [Remember Bob Hughes' analogy of the half-full or half-empty glass in 'Bob's Blurb' in December's *Off the Curb*. Publisher.] If this works for you, please let me know. The chances are you will find the minimal risk and effort are worth it. It's the small miracles in our lives that are sometimes the best.

Good thoughts go out to everyone attempting, attaining and maintaining sobriety and a clean life. At the beginning of a new year, special thoughts go out to 'Princess,' 'Red,' 'M,' 'L,' 'S,' 'D and J,' 'Mr. B,' and others not mentioned. Keep up the good work, you do a great job! December was so much milder than usual, but winter is far from over; we still have a few months of cold weather to deal with and if you or someone you know is in need of housing, please ASK. Be nice to each other and be careful out there; remember, I care...

Mayoi

mayoi@askwellness.ca



Simmons, Black & Emsland reward ASK with sponsorship!

After completing a successful 12 issues in 2010, Simmons, Black & Emsland - www.simmonsblackemsland.com - has come on board as a sponsor for 2011 to help cover the costs of our street paper! Please check their ad on the back page! If it was not for the following people, *Off the Curb* 2010 would not have been so successful: George Moore (Cascade Creek Publishing), Greg Hanycz, Lynne Jones, Cheryl Doolan, all our businesses and agencies who put our paper on their counters, all those who let us publish their stories, Fratelli Foods and Cowboy Coffee for their coupons, Cobs Bread for their endless support, Oops Cafe, Caffeine and Sound Bodeez for advertising in our paper! And finally to all our readers who seek out our street paper and respond to the appeals for help and tell everyone about our successes! **THANK YOU!**



Do you need housing help?

ASK Wellness prints the latest listings every day and housing help is available each day from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm at ASK Wellness, 433 Tranquille Road, Kamloops.



We need *your* help!

A number of our programs provide breakfast for those who are struggling and hungry. Can you help contribute one item per week? We are in desperate need of the following basic items: fresh fruit, veggies, eggs, ham, milk, yogurt, cheese, juice and cereal. Please remember us the next time you are grocery shopping and drop all donations off at ASK Wellness Centre, 433 Tranquille Road, or call Cheryl at 250-376-7558, Ext. 226, for pick-up. Thank you!

bob's blurb

Bob Hughes
Executive Director

A sincere thank you!

It has been an astonishing month of generosity and kindness towards ASK and the clients we serve. Countless people and organizations and faith groups have literally bombarded us with donations of clothing, furniture and household items. It is an honour to be considered an organization worthy of the kindness of the community.

These contributions have been particularly important to the organization as we continue to grow and develop our continuum of services. One of our more recent developments has been the introduction of twelve new Community Mental Health Supportive Housing settings. This is an extension of an innovative program we have been developing in partnership with the Interior Health Authority.

The program, which really was considered way out there, has proven remarkably effective. The rationale for the program was to create a 'pseudo-residential' treatment model for those with substance abuse issues that provided housing concurrently with treatment. After years of working in the addictions field it always struck me that one of the major flaws with traditional residential treatment programs was the fact that eight out of ten people who attended treatment had no home or housing when they entered treatment and then once the discharge date approached, everyone would scratch their heads and wonder where the guy or gal would live.

While the treatment content and milieu would be top notch, the failure to recognize the skills learned in treatment might not be applicable living on the street or the shelter system, or back within the family system. So the concept was to rent individual apartments in the name of ASK and 'sublet' them to clients in the program for the duration of their day treatment program and, if possible, transfer the tenancy to them when they're ready.

Unlike most treatment approaches, the client doesn't leave, the program leaves the client. While the approach is an administrative nightmare and also has some risks to client and community safety, we have witnessed some remarkable successes.

Interestingly, the client profile that has seen the greatest satisfaction with the program has been pregnant mothers, and moms working to repatriate with their children. And as you can imagine, it is incredibly rewarding to see a family come together and start their lives together in the community.

With the addition of two employment programs to the agency that help both youth and those identifying as having a disability return to the workforce, and the recent work with CLBC, we have attempted to create a continuum of services that sees people who are disconnected and in crises access services that allow them to return to the workforce. And what is such a synergy is the work that the employment crews do for the community and other agencies.

We realized several years ago that many of the private landlords we work with were reluctant to take our clients. They were hard on suites and would often leave on short notice, or in some cases there would be significant damage done. Both employment programs focus on providing support to both the private and non-profit landlord community by doing repairs, painting suites and often cleaning the entire apartment.

Increasingly, the service has provided a vital link to support clients, sometimes those on a Canadian Pension Plan who are not eligible for provincial funding, with moving from place to place.

It is this connection between the programs for clients and the needs of the com-

munity that the employment programs really shine. The result has been a huge increase in the number of landlords and property managers who want to work with us. No longer are we simply connecting those who need housing with those who have the units, we can also give back to the landlord community and support the needs of those experiencing challenges.

Our next project that is just kicking off is further developing the health navigation approach for those with chronic illnesses. The idea came out of the work that Sharon Hartline did with the Rural Counselling program in helping those who had limited access and understanding of HIV to first connect with a primary health care physician or a specialist, and begin taking antiretroviral medications. The transformation in the health of people who embarked on this program has been incredible. The effort includes supporting people to adhere to the treatment plan and also importantly, begin taking responsibility for their health through an understanding of what they are facing.

With the support of Interior Health, we have begun doing this beyond simply HIV and shifted to chronic illnesses such as diabetes, CPOD and hepatitis. On top of the navigation through the health care system for those disconnected from health resources, we are developing a Landlord/Property Manager Health Care Training program that will help landlords understand chronic illnesses and ways to support their clients in accessing appropriate health care. We have begun this process, first in our own housing sites, and more recently with Deb Powell of North Star Properties.

And this is where we come back to giving thanks to the community. With all these apartments and suites we are now managing and the extensive network of landlords and property managers we have, as well as with the ability to pick up furniture and other items and move them directly into these suites, we have been able to literally furnish a suite within a day and be able to see someone experience not only a roof over their heads, but also to feel like they are home.

We are very excited this coming year to continue to expand our relevance to both our client group and the community at large.

Happy New Year to all...

Bob

bob@askwellness.ca

thoughts from the curb

Larry Loranger
ASK Health Coordinator

How present am I in my own life? Have I noticed that when I breathe calmly and deeply that I am calm and aware? Have I noticed that when I mouth-breathe I activate my body's flight response and become anxious? Do I know that developing breath awareness while focusing my attention on a single fixed point will calm my mind and in turn, my body?

During the recent past I have begun to find answers to these questions in order to deal with some major losses in my life. It is common knowledge in some circles that all healing — physical, mental emotional and spiritual — takes place in deep relaxation. Deep relaxation naturally progresses toward some form of meditation.

By engaging in daily yoga practice, my experience and that of other practitioners, has been a great improvement in health, concentration and a sense of connectedness to a universal power ... an increase in self-realization or a profound spiritual



Client Needs

Please help us collect the following items for distribution to those in need! Please call for pick-up, or drop-off at ASK Wellness 433 Tranquille Road, Kamloops, or call Cheryl 250-376-7558, Ext. 226

- ◆ Gently used clothing
- ◆ Grocery vouchers
- ◆ Take-out containers for leftovers
- ◆ Plastic bags
- ◆ Baby Wipes / Wet Wipes
- ◆ Band-aids
- ◆ Blankets
- ◆ Bus Passes / Tickets
- ◆ Combs / Brushes
- ◆ Deodorant
- ◆ Personal hygiene products
- ◆ Feminine hygiene products
- ◆ Adult diapers
- ◆ Wrapped candies
- ◆ Garbage bags
- ◆ Gloves, mitts, scarves and hats
- ◆ Ziploc bags (any size)
- ◆ Razors, mens and ladies
- ◆ Shaving cream or foam
- ◆ Chap-Stick
- ◆ Thick socks, underwear
- ◆ Toilet paper
- ◆ Toothbrushes & toothpaste
- ◆ Travel size soaps and shampoos
- ◆ Telephones

Do you need STD,
HEP-C, HIV testing
or information?

**Just
ASK!**

Call 250-376-7558, Ext. 232



S.H.O.P.
Friday Night
Dinner and
Drop In

Every Friday night ASK is open
for dinner to all persons with
past or present experience
working in the sex trade.

awakening where there is an awakening from an illusory self-identity image (ego), to the true, divine, perfect condition that the individual is.

Finally, after years of searching, I have begun to develop the skills necessary to become present in my own life. A quote from Alberto Villodo's book, **Yoga, Power and Spirit**, reflects wisdom in the Yoga Sutra of Patanjali and guides my practice: "Once you know you are a spiritual being in a body, a visitor in this world, you will never again need a spiritual experience."

Please submit your thoughts and poetry to...

Larry

larry@askwellness.ca

...on awareness

When we practice awareness, we also cultivate courage, for awareness actually contains courage in it. To wake up and confront what is actually happening, rather than just going along with old stories and reaction patterns, *is* an act of bravery. In our example, courage appears when I am willing to "sit on the edge of my pain" and look at it face to face. We can learn to do the same with fear, anger, grief or any other state of mind. We can move out to the edge of the fear, take our seat there, and inquire into it instead of being controlled by our fear stories (e.g., "if I tell the truth, she'll leave," "if she tells the truth, she'll leave." "if she leaves, I can't go on living,") and the further panic they generate.

When we connect with our experience, we also cultivate our being — our ability *to be* in the present moment. This allows us to feel our "heart." The word *courage* derives from *couer*, the French word for "heart." Thus the essence of courage is being willing to feel our heart even in situations that are difficult or painful.

Journey of the Heart: Intimate Relationships and the Path of Love, by John Welwood, Ph.D., 1990, ISBN 0-06-09122-6.

kindness from the curb

THANK YOU! December was an incredibly generous month! We should all be proud of the Kamloops community and those listed below for their thoughtfulness! December set a record for the most individual donations to ever come through our doors!

- ✿ **COBS BREAD** <http://www.cobsbread.com> 250-372-1625 for their generous weekly donations to several ASK Wellness Programs!
- ✿ **JIM BRADSHAW and EECOL ELECTRIC** – for donating a light fixture for our rear parking lot!
- ✿ **MIKE FUNK of FUNK ELECTRIC** – for his time and advocacy on behalf of ASK Wellness! You are a leader in the community!
- ✿ **JOHN SEYMOUR – for DONUT KING** gift cards for our clients!
- ✿ **CAFÉ MOTIVO (North Shore)** – for donating coffee cards to our SHOP Program!
- ✿ **MINO'S** – for donating gift cards to our S.H.O.P. program!
- ✿ **VALERIE ANDREW** – for numerous bags of clothing!
- ✿ **JEFF MORASH and JEN SCHRAM** – for clothing and houseware items!
- ✿ **SHILO** – for donating clothes!
- ✿ **RODNEY KRAKOY** – for clothing!
- ✿ **MAGGIE ELDER** – for two large boxes of kitchenware!
- ✿ **ANONYMOUS DONORS** – for winter coats, blankets and clothing!
- ✿ **KAMLOOPS UNITED CHURCH** – for bags of winter clothing, bedding and comforters!
- ✿ **COOKIE REIMER** – for donating heavy socks!
- ✿ **JANICE BAUER** – for a large bag of women's clothing!
- ✿ **MEL LYTLE and his WIFE** – for their generous donation to a client of a Christmas tree and gifts!
- ✿ **EVELYN BEATTIE** – for a kitchen table and chairs!
- ✿ **PETIKA PELSMA** – for her kitchen table and chairs, living room furniture & bed!
- ✿ **DON GORDON** – for warm clothes!
- ✿ **BETTY GRAHAM** – for feminine hygiene products, lotions and socks!
- ✿ **ANITA** – for a love seat!
- ✿ **JERRY BEACH** – for donating winter gloves and mitts!
- ✿ **JACQUE DRIVER and GEORGE LOEWEN** – for the dresser and men's clothing!
- ✿ **MARCIA PETERS** – for three sleeping bags, several pairs of gloves / mitts!
- ✿ **JIM and CAROL MOORHEAD** – for a cash donation plus two chairs!
- ✿ **SLEEP COUNTRY** – for providing us with beds when they are donated back into the community!
- ✿ **DON BORDEN** – for numerous items of men's clothing, gloves and toques!
- ✿ **ST. PAUL'S UNITED CHURCH** – for five bags of winter clothing!
- ✿ **BLUE CHIP JANITORIAL** – for gloves and toques!
- ✿ **'GOOD SAMARITANS'** – who dropped off numerous gloves, toques & scarves!
- ✿ **THERESA SEIBEL** – for coats, gloves and scarves!
- ✿ **RODNEY** – for a bag full of toques!
- ✿ **GAVIN** – for a big bag of gloves!
- ✿ **UNITED CHURCH** – for a large bag of warm blankets!
- ✿ **LISA** – for numerous household items!
- ✿ **WENDY GRITT** – for various toiletries!
- ✿ **ANONYMOUS** – for toiletries, teddies, mugs and hot chocolate!
- ✿ **GEORGE & GLORIA MOORE** – for hot chocolate for our clients!

Office Wish List

Can you help ASK out by donating some basic items?

For example
we always need

- Wrapped candies for SHOP kits
- Paper (8-1/2 x 11 in.)
- Boxes of pens, markers and pencils
- Tape
- Staples gift certificates
- Postage stamps
- Envelopes
- Coffee, tea and hot chocolate
- File folders
- Sticky notes
- Kleenex tissues
- Hand sanitizers

If you can help please call Cheryl at 250-376-7558, Ext. 226 or send her an email at cheryl@askwellness.ca

SHOP programming

* **SWAT (SEX WORKERS ADDRESSING TREATMENT)** begins on Friday, January 14th and runs every week for sixteen weeks. Please register with Nicole.

* **WOMEN ONLY NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS** runs every Thursday at noon, downstairs. Please ring the doorbell for entry.

* **A PLACE TO GO - FOR ALL WOMEN** – Every Tuesday at 1:30 pm. Come join us for great company, community resource connections, good friends and a delicious home-cooked meal by the wonderful 'Martha's'. Street Nurses are available every Tuesday.

* **WEDNESDAY'S COFFEE SHOP** – Come join Nicole and Carmen on Wednesday afternoons for coffee. Be a part of this client-based program, enjoy baking, cookies and listening to guest speakers.

* **A PLACE TO CHILL - FOR S.H.O.P. WOMEN** – Come and join us at our 'Drop In' every Friday from 2:00 pm to 8:00 pm. Drop in for good conversation, a nap, laughs, activities, wellness and a home cooked meal. Pick-up can be arranged if needed ... just ASK!

In the coming months be sure to look for flower arranging with Monique, beauty day, group meal making, cooking and sharing.

REMEMBER – S.H.O.P. is the place to come to find condoms, hygiene products, shampoo, toothbrush, pregnancy kits, etc. We can help you with a variety of needs ... just ASK! If you have any questions please contact Carmen at 250-574-2437.



The Travelling Safer Sex Lady

I have unpacked my bags and have shaken the fine Australian sand out of my clothes and shoes! It was an amazing trip but there is no place like home. In just under one month I visited over twelve towns and cities in Australia, drove 3,700 km in a huge motor home, performed at ten venues and gave two radio interviews; and I even had my songs played on Aus radio! It went by so fast it hardly feels real!

The highlight of my trip however, was when I was in Sydney and visited an agency called ACON. This organization provides outreach services to folks living positive. I



Kira in Australia.

interviewed Adrian, ACON's Executive Director, about who uses their services, what kinds of programs they offer and how they go about fund raising. They have many of the same programs that ASK Wellness does. So after speaking with Adrian, I went out to visit some of their programs. I went to the Positive Living Centre which is a support club house for men living with HIV / AIDS. This was a beautiful venue with a huge community kitchen, garden, acupuncture and massage therapy services, yoga instruction and health navigators. There was only one paid staff and the rest were all volunteers! It was impressive how much of a community they have built around supporting folks who are positive.

I met several brave and courageous individuals who wanted to speak freely on camera about their experiences and I was so honoured by their candour. The last stop for the day was at The Luncheon where over sixty-five folks who are living positive gather for a lunch that is all donated and prepared by volunteers. I visited and interviewed the dynamic staff who coordinate the program and many of the folks who attend. They were very curious about why I was there and what I hoped to achieve by meeting them. I explained that the experience gave me a new perspective of HIV and the struggles folks face in another part of the world. Above all, this adventure was about networking globally, collecting educational tools and connecting as human beings who are invested in supporting those who have been touched by HIV / AIDS.

After the interviews, I pulled out my guitar and performed a small set while they ate their lunch. It was one of the most rewarding performances I have given to date. I realize that our hearts are the same no matter where you are in the world. I am so happy to be home and back to work with my colleagues and clients at ASK Wellness. I am very proud of who we are and what we do in our community. **Happy New Year everyone!**

Kira

kira@askwellness.ca

ASK GOES GLOBAL



Save the date! April 28th, 2011 will be an exciting day for Kamloops!

HOW IT WORKS – Restaurants throughout the community, from family-style casual to elegant dining establishments, participate by donating a portion of their revenue earned during this important event. Community members enjoy a meal knowing they are contributing to a great cause; local restaurants benefit from increased business and the global community benefits through providing HIV/AIDS education and stability. Watch upcoming issues of *Off the Curb* for updates and participating restaurant lists.

PURPOSE – To raise funds to support **ASK goes GLOBAL – Swaziland, Africa, August 2011.**

HISTORY – *Dining Out For Life* was created in 1991 and has become an annual event throughout North America. The event raises over \$3.5 million nationwide for HIV/AIDS services! With the funds raised through *Dining Out For Life* in 2011, a team of ASK Wellness individuals will travel to Swaziland with Developing World Connections – www.developingworldconnections.org – to complete a community sustainability project and become part of a grassroots movement of active global citizens!



ASK NEEDS YOUR HELP – To participate as a restaurant, to volunteer your time as a Restaurant Ambassador on the night of the event or for more information, please contact Cheryl Doolan at ASK Wellness, 250-376-7558, ext. 226, or at cheryl@askwellness.ca.



**PLEASE
HELP SUPPORT
ASK GOES GLOBAL**



**White Buffalo Aboriginal
Health Society & Resource Centre**
**Gift Givers
Family Empowerment Programs**

The Gift Givers Family Empowerment Program remains focused on strengthening individuals and families to reduce the number of Aboriginal children in care. The program includes women's, men's and couples groups and the groups are run on an eight week rotating schedule on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 1:30 to 4:00 pm.

Our Educational and Life Skills Group Workshops will provide:

- Understanding of Family Issues and Child Protection Matters.
- Identifying strengths and risk factors for individuals and family units.
- Information on Rights and Responsibilities of parents and children.
- Education on understanding Family Law & the MCFD process.
- Respect, Responsibility & Self Discipline.
- The Medicine Wheel –Finding Balance & Self Care.
- Understanding Family Violence & Managing Feelings of Anger.
- Interpersonal Communication Skills
- Understanding Trauma & How to Start the Healing Journey.
- Nourishing the Mind, Body & Soul.
- Dealing with Change.

Who is Eligible? The program is open to all individuals / families that are ready to make positive changes. Application is by Self-Referral, referrals from Ministry of Children & Family Development or by Community Agencies. All participants will be required to complete an intake assessment process to define eligibility and suitability.

**FOR ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION CALL**

Pearl or John at 250-554-1176

ASK APPEARS IN SANTA CLAUS PARADE!



*ASK's Social
Enterprise
Group took part
in this year's
Kamloops Santa
Claus Parade!*

news from the curb

The Emerald Dream *By Dale Bass, Kamloops This Week*

DECEMBER 21, 2010 – For Dorothy in The Wizard of Oz, the way to go home was through Emerald City. For homeless people in Kamloops, it could be Emerald Centre, a shelter soon to be built on the framework of the former Rendezvous Hotel. For Charlene Eden, who will manage the facility when it's complete, it's yet another step to reaching the goal of no longer having people "living on the streets for years."

For now, the building at the west end of Victoria Street in downtown Kamloops sits empty and cold as applications for rezoning make their way through the municipal hierarchy. Some work has been done. The local branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), which will run the shelter, has worked with the AIDS Society of Kamloops (ASK) on preliminary steps before a contractor is hired to tackle a job that, at this point, is estimated to cost at least \$2.5 million, up from the original estimate of \$1.3 million. CMHA Executive Director Doug Sage hopes that figure doesn't continue to grow. It's one of the reasons he has partnered with ASK to benefit from the lessons learned when it began renovations of the former Whistler Inn to create housing.

Once inside the structure at 506 St. Paul Street (now known as Henry Leland House) ASK discovered the quality of construction was less than originally expected and the cost—paid for by BC Housing, which is also funding the Emerald Centre project—increased dramatically. Work ASK has done to date has been through its

social-enterprise programs and Sage said, has saved the CMHA thousands of dollars. But there have been surprises. For example, the section of the Rendezvous building to the west—untouched by a fire that ravaged part of the structure in 2001—has no foundation. Lift up the floor boards and it's just dirt and stones and other debris underneath. Sage said the plan is to bring the entire building up to code, even though—because it is just a renovation—that requirement doesn't apply. When complete, Emerald Centre will have about four-dozen beds. Most will be on the main floor, 2,300 sq. ft. that will have divided areas for men and women. The setup has yet to be finalized but, Sage said, it won't be barracks style, but rather a design that provides people with some privacy and sense of safety. "Security is emotional safety as well as physical," Sage said. "And, your sense of security can be affected by so many things: sounds, smells, things we have to deal with."

This area will be for short-term stays which could be for up to several weeks. Upstairs, existing rooms will be turned into bedrooms for longer stays. Women with children will be housed, as will pets. The CMHA is working with the local SPCA to create outdoor shelters for the animals that often are the only close friends the homeless have. "We only get this shelter to meet the needs," Sage said, "so we want to meet as many needs as we can. We don't want to be the shelter where, when you come in we tell you, 'Here's our program. Fit into it.' We want to ask, 'What do we need to do? What can we do here to help you?'" Sage said. "The success of the clients is never our success. It's theirs, but they have to do it. We can just help them do it."

Structurally, the plan is to have separate entrances for men and women and showers near the entrances so clients can get physically clean right away—and to reduce the possibility of bedbugs entering the facility. Women will receive flannel pyjamas. "Because for women in particular, putting on a pair of warm pyjamas can start them on their way to feeling like a woman again," Eden said. The second floor will have a communal kitchen where everyone can gather to cook and share meals. "Because that makes people feel like home is a good thing—and that home is possible," Sage said. There will be new windows added to the ones already on the second floor to bring in the light, while storage areas will be available.

"We're going to change the look of the place a lot," Sage said, noting statistics show that, if given a chance and the supports needed to leave the street, two-thirds of women drop the lifestyle in a few months. "So what we do is ask them, 'What's your plan?' because, if they relapse, they won't come back if we give them too much praise before. They'll feel like they've failed. So, we let them decide and we just help them."

Following the development of Emerald Centre has been an eye-opener for Eden, who was working at the CMHA's

other women's shelter, Emerald House. "I thought I had a good understanding of homelessness," she said. "But I had no idea. The changes that can happen are phenomenal."

As for the lofty goal of ending homelessness in the city in five years, something some groups have promoted, Sage agrees with the sentiment, but doesn't see it ever really happening. "You can't stop people from becoming homeless," he said. "But you can get them out of it faster."

An update from 'H.M.'

EDITOR'S NOTE – Those who have read 'Off the Curb' since its inception last January will remember our first "Story from the Curb" featured an article by our friend 'H.M.' who has been kind enough to bring us up to date on what has happened in her life this past year. We wish her all the best in her recovery.

Hey everyone ... this is H.M. As you may remember, when I told my story last January I had just been diagnosed with breast cancer and was starting my chemo treatments. Well, everything is 'A-OK' cancer free! My HIV ... still no meds and my HEP-C is doing okay too.

Well, whoever said life was easy lied! I mean, it could always be worse! The bestest cat in the world, Tinkerbelle, started writing about her experiences with us before the cancer thing started and now I can't find the book of Tinker's story, but she is going to share a small bit with us.

Living with my mom and my dad 'B.J.' has been very interesting, from the first moment I met them there has never been a dull moment. My dad has been sober some fifteen odd years; my mom has been sober for three years and clean from drugs longer. I've been on alley drunks with them, rescued from trees, baby-sat a human who nursed a beer. I really don't know why people drink 'cause they get so sick afterwards.

But everything is normal, whatever normal is. My dad is off work for the winter and it's going to drive my mom crazy (or crazier). Love to all you guys, talk to you later ... Tinker.

Well, as I said, everything is pretty good — my hair is growing, my nails are long and stronger, now I'm just waiting for my new boob ... yeah! I promise to keep you all updated on things and hope to find that book Tinker has been writing.

Take care and love always, H.M., BJ, Tinkerbelle and Kipper.

PS: I forgot to tell you, we have a new member of the family, Kipper the cat, so Tinker has a sister. They are slowly getting acquainted, only a little bit of scrapping here and there, and just like Tinker says, "There's never a dull moment."

Thanks for this update H.M., we love you and look forward to reading Tinker's book.

It could happen to you (part 3)

EDITOR'S NOTE – The following is the conclusion of a three part, true story of a youth who became involved in the sex trade at the age of sixteen. All names and places have been changed to respect the anonymity of the author.

You know, honestly, I don't even know how to begin where I left off. Yes, I had come back for my man but truly it didn't last long. I was broken. I couldn't believe I had chosen this for my life. I felt hopeless and just didn't know where to make a change. Yes, I could have stayed home, but I was reminded by one of my greatest supporters while writing this that when I came home, it wasn't by choice, it was law-enforced. I had been caught selling drugs and was charged with possession for the purpose and was sentenced to house arrest.

The moment I was allowed to leave where I was, I was gone. I don't know how to explain why but I'll try. See, it wasn't that my family didn't support me and love me, it was that I was so focused on what they couldn't do for me that I couldn't see what they could. I only saw what they had done to hurt me and when they were trying to help me I looked at it like they were dictating to me. The number one thing though, is that in their eyes all I saw was my failures, they weren't trying to make me feel that way, it was the opposite, but this is still something I struggle with today. I know what I had expected for my life and so did they; they knew my hopes and dreams but mostly they knew me and through them I could see who I would never be again. I can see my own disappointment through them and struggle daily to remind myself they love me and support me regardless.

So getting back to the story, I went back to my man, then another and another and the list goes on. I started to rebel and drink a lot. I can't even think of a time I wasn't drinking. Soon enough I was what they called a renegade, meaning I stood on the block without a man. I started to see what men were truly worthy and all that bulls--t of having my back was just that, a load of crap, because unless he was parked right there and following me in every car, truth was if someone was gonna hurt me, all I had was me, so the point of giving my money away was what? Nobody could do for me what I couldn't do for myself.

All of my money went to the bar; I loved to showboat. I don't even remember a time then when I wasn't trying to impress someone, and every night I went home with nothing. I would play men and pretend I was gonna be with them but never was. I could barely take care of myself let alone anyone else. I completely lost all self-respect. I just didn't care any more and soon enough, liquor turned into

drugs, and each time those drugs got harder. What went from a couple of lines became 30 tabs of ecstasy in two days, to eventually end up to at least an eight ball of crack a day. I couch-surfed wherever I could. Mind you most people were happy to let me stay with them as with the amount of money I made, I always had dope, so they didn't have to hustle as hard with me around.

Every day I got worse and worse, and little by little began to do stuff I had always said I would never do; undercut prices, cuff from a dealer and never pay them back, beat girls for even just looking at me wrong. I became so destructive it was like I was trying to die but didn't have the balls to just do it myself. I robbed tricks, I just truly didn't give a s--t. I had become everything I had said I would never be.

I can go on and on about my addiction days, but they aren't that different from any addict. I lied, manipulated and stole to get what I wanted. I can remember one night calling home and asking if I should do my last hit of ecstasy because my brain felt like it was shaking after doing about 50 pills mixed with crack in two days. I mean who the hell does that, calling home after being stabbed in the head or beaten by my boyfriend; "oh ya mom, did I tell you what happened to me last night?" "And, ahh can you please wire me some money as I'm hungry." I could never even imagine the worry I put them through, not knowing whether I would live another night, if I had a place to live, or was I hungry. I can be honest here and say I now know the pain and worry they felt, after having someone else put me through that same pain and worry; it's like they're already dead, you're just waiting for the funeral and there is absolutely nothing you can do but wait to get that final phone call. But by the grace of God, my family never did and never will receive that phone call.

See, I was blessed and given another chance through the birth of my daughter four years ago. I can be honest here and say no, I wasn't clean during my whole pregnancy, I would find reasons to use when I could, like her dad and I fought or whatever I felt bad about at that moment. Now if I were to talk about her father, that would make this story ten times longer so I will say this: he did the best he could for what he was taught, but what I accepted as an addict I could no longer accept as a mother. Don't think for a moment that I got that one right away, because I, to this every moment, need to remind myself that the expectations I have for my daughter I need to have for myself. I will also admit to relapsing after my daughter was born as well, and losing custody of her. I think that was the moment that everything changed though.

When I had my daughter taken away I can remember it so clearly, having money in my pocket and the option of either going to rehab or just walking away. I could have walked away but I was tired. I just couldn't do it any more. For once in my life I wanted to live; I wanted to be for her what I felt no one was for me. So I went to rehab

and did what I had to do to get her back. I can pretend everything was perfect after that but it wasn't. I did lose her again for starting to make some of my past choices. No I wasn't using drugs and am very proud to say I am three and a half years clean from hard drugs, but I did start drinking again and was raising my daughter in a very unsafe situation which ultimately led to her being taken from me again.

Yes, I do have her back now, but not without admitting my faults and working hard to get what I wanted, but most of all realizing that if I never expect her to settle for less than she deserves, I need to learn the same for myself. I'm not there yet and will always have a lot of work, but for today I am allowing the process of recovery, not from drugs or alcohol, but recovery from my pain. I have no problem when it comes to admitting my pain ... my problem is admitting I have a problem and doing something about it. It's hard to let go when you have so much to hold onto, but most of all it is hard to ask yourself for forgiveness. I can tell my family I am sorry for all that I've done and they can choose to accept that or not, but right now I'm not ready to ask myself for that same thing. Only I know absolutely every wrong choice I have made and I cannot help but see my failures through the people who loved me and supported me the most because I wanted to be so much more than what I had chosen to be. I do know that I will eventually get there.

So it seems I am out of time now. I could go on and on, but the point of this story was to bring awareness and I think I have done just that, but there is one thing left to add. Being a young woman isn't easy and without the right foundation you are being put at risk. So do me a favour, whether you are a parent, teacher, social worker, part of the support system or just the next door neighbour, please, no matter how hard it may be and the young woman or women in your life are making the wrong choices, tell them you care. Mothers, kiss your daughters every day, hold them tight and tell them just how special they are; be an example of all the things you wish for them to be, but most of all be there when they mess up and show them that you love them even more through their mistakes. The only way we are going to help stop sexual exploitation or domestic exploitation is by always showing young women what they're worth.

And finally, to all the young women out there reading this — the way you find out what life is about is by simply living to be strong. Stay strong; young girls let nobody crush your body as it is your temple. Don't let him touch you. He'll respect anything you say if he really loves you. Don't settle for second place, let him put no one above you.

Last, but not least, if you're a young woman currently in the sex trade, I want you to know there is help and someone cares. No one deserves the pain you are feeling, and as helpless and hopeless as it all seems, you are someone and someone special at that. Just because you are

where you are now doesn't mean you will never be who you wanted to be in the beginning. Sexual exploitation is abuse and not your fault. People can say that we all make choices but when you are brainwashed into those choices and made to feel like you have no other option, that is abuse. It is okay to be scared because new beginnings are scary, but never be afraid to ask for help because if you want it ... help is always there.

Stay safe ladies and always remember you are special. If you can't think of someone who cares, I can tell you from the bottom of my heart that I do, and I pray that when you are ready to leave, you are given the life you deserve.

ASK grants a scholarship

ASK Wellness was blessed by some local Kamloops residents who fund-raised to provide us with over \$4,000 to award to those individuals who have overcome significant barriers in their lives. We welcomed new or returning students this fall to submit their story for consideration. This is just one of the many stories we received ... the names have been changed to respect their privacy.

ANDREA'S SCHOLARSHIP – Going back to school has been a life changing opportunity for me, but I had some barriers to overcome to get on the path I walk today. As a teenager I got involved with some dangerous people and soon developed a serious drug addiction that quickly swallowed me whole. As the disease of my addiction continued to destroy my life, I found myself living on the streets of north Kamloops, an outcast of society, a victim of abuse. I saw little or no hope for a decent future. The turning point for me came in my twenties when I found out I was pregnant. I moved away from Kamloops with the father of my baby hoping to make a new life. I managed to get myself clean but was still suffering in an abusive relationship. My depression worsened throughout my pregnancy as my partner who was still active in his addiction, continued with the abuse.

The birth of my beautiful son was the happiest day of my life. Knowing that it wasn't all about me any more, I had to keep him safe by leaving my hostile relationship behind. I packed up the baby and a duffle bag and snuck out in the middle of the night to a women's shelter until I could get a bus ticket back here where my family lives. Realizing that I had nothing, I decided I would need to get a job. I had no experience or post-secondary education and knew that going to school was the only way I was going to [be able to] pursue a better life and have a career.

Letting go of my ego and reaching out for help was a very humbling experience for me. I was unsure as to whether I would be able to afford this decision, but I just went for it anyway and signed myself up for some [academic] upgrading courses.

Upon enrolling I was very nervous knowing that I had been out of school for almost eight years. I never did very

Do you have a story?

All of our contributors remain anonymous. We would love to hear from you, so please feel free to drop off your handwritten story at ASK Wellness, 433 Tranquille Road or email it to cheryl@askwellness.ca

well in high school and doubted my academic abilities, but put in my sincere effort. Well ... was I surprised when I got my first math test back and saw the A+ at the top! That A+ was the fuel I used to continue to do well throughout my university preparation courses. I continued to upgrade for two years maintaining a grade point average of 4.3.

I am now registered in the Nursing program at Thompson Rivers University. I really enjoy the courses and the people I've met. My experience as a mature student has brought a lot of joy and substance to my life. It has been the biggest source of achievement and has been critical for my integration into society ... but it hasn't been all that easy.

The financial hardships that I have faced during my studies have at times, been discouraging. I work part-time, but find that anymore work in combination with full-time school is not a possibility for me. In the first place the success of my schooling would be greatly compromised, and secondly, I would not have time for any type of relationship with my son who is already feeling the hardships of having a single mother who is a full-time student.

Should I be selected for this scholarship it will be a great investment for this community in which I will practice my nursing skills with integrity and diligence.

Thank you for considering me.

Andrea

We are very excited to report that Andrea was among four others who overcame barriers in their lives and were awarded the ASK 2010 Scholarship of \$1,000. Ed.

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ASK's guiding principles



HARM REDUCTION – The Society believes that harm reduction promotes and supports the health and wellbeing of both individuals and communities. We believe that all humans have the right to comprehensive, non-judgemental services based on individual need. Through education and prevention efforts, we work to reduce the risk of harm for individuals engaged in, or affected by, risky behaviours.

CLIENT CENTRED – The Society recognizes the value and dignity of each individual. We encourage and support our clients to make healthy choices and we respect the choices they make. We advocate with, and on behalf of, our clients to improve their quality of life.

SOCIAL JUSTICE – The Society believes that all individuals deserve equity in accessibility. We collaborate with community partners and actively participate in community efforts to ensure that basic human rights are protected. We promote shared, private and public responsibility in the delivery of education and awareness activities in the community.

recipes from the curb



Turkey Joes (Serves 4)

- 3/4 lb. (350g) ground turkey breast
- 1 can diced tomatoes with onion and pepper, drained (14 oz / 398ml)
- 2 tsp. (10ml) worcestershire sauce
- 2 tbsp. (30ml) ketchup
- 1 cup (250ml) green peppers, chopped
- 1 tsp. (5ml) beef bouillon granules
- 4 hamburger buns, lightly toasted



Heat large, lightly greased skillet over medium-high heat until hot. Add turkey and cook until no longer pink, stirring constantly. Add tomatoes, worcestershire sauce, ketchup, green peppers and beef bouillon granules. Turn heat to low and simmer for 15 minutes. Spoon onto toasted buns.



Beef n Bean Stew (Serves 10)

- 1 lb (500g) lean beef stew, cubed
- 2 cans kidney beans, rinsed & drained (14 oz. / 398ml)
- 1 can diced tomatoes, undrained (14 oz. / 398ml)
- 1-1/2 cup (375ml) frozen corn
- 1 cup (250ml) hot water
- 1 cup (250ml) onion, chopped
- 2 celery ribs, chopped
- 1 can green chillies (4 oz. / 115g)
- 1 can ripe olives, sliced & drained (2 oz. / 56g)
- 2 tbsp. (30ml) uncooked long grain rice
- 1 tbsp. (15ml) chili powder
- 2 tsp. (10ml) beef bouillon granules
- Salt to taste
- 1 can tomato sauce (8 oz. / 225g)
- Cheddar cheese, shredded for topping



In a slow cooker: combine beef cubes, kidney beans, tomatoes, corn, water, onion, celery, green chillies, olives, rice, chili powder, bouillon granules and salt. Cover and cook on low for 8 to 9 hours or until beef is tender. Stir in tomato sauce, cover and cook for 30 minutes or until heated through. Garnish with cheese.

recipe for the brain

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client resources



Aboriginal Employment Services	250-554-4556	Mothers for Recovery	250-377-6890
ASK Wellness Centre	250-376-7558	Ministry of Children & Family Development	250-371-3600
Alcohol & Drug Information & Referral Services	1-800-663-1441	Narcotics Anonymous	1-800-414-0296
Brain Injury Association	250-372-1799	Native Housing Society	250-376-6332
Christian Hostel	250-372-3031	New Life Mission	250-372-9898
Canadian Mental Health Association	1-888-674-0440	Ministry of Housing & Social Development	1-866-866-0800
Emerald on Third	250-374-1090	Min. of Public Safety & Solicitor Gen, Community Corrections	
Employment Insurance	1-800-206-7218	Kamloops:	250-828-4008
GT Hiring Solutions	250-374-7748	Merritt:	250-378-9355
House of Ruth (Women Only)	250-376-5621	Phoenix Centre	250-374-4634
Kamloops & District Elizabeth Fry Society	250-374-2119	RCMP Kamloops	250-828-3000
Kamloops Immigrant Services	250-372-0855	St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Store	250-554-0098
Interior Community Service	250-554-3134	Salvation Army	250-554-1611
Interior Health Centre	250-851-7450	Sage Health Centre	250-374-6551
Interior Indian Friendship Society	250-376-1617	Sexual Assault Counselling Centre	250-372-0179
Interior Indian Friendship Society's Alcohol & Drug Counsellor	250-376-1296	Shuswap Training & Employment	250-554-4556
Interior Metis Child & Family Services	250-554-9486	Street Outreach Nurses	Gaudenza Lisa
Kamloops Food Bank	250-376-2252		250-319-6783
Kamloops Work Search Centre (South)	250-372-3803	Suicide / Distress Line	1-800-784-2433
Kamloops Work Search Centre (North)	250-376-3111	United Way of Kamloops	250-372-9933
Kids Helpline	1-800-668-6868	Volunteer Kamloops	250-372-8313
Labour Ready	250-376-9116	White Buffalo Aboriginal Health Society & Resource Centre	250-554-1176

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- Frou Frou Monkey, 263 Victoria Street
- Kamloops Fit Families, 783 Notre Dame Street
- Kamloops Immigrant Services, 109 Victoria Street
- Kamloops Downtown Library, 465 Victoria Street
- Northshore Library, 693 Tranquille Road
- Oops Café, 274 - 3rd Avenue
- Passek's Classic Café & Catering, 120 - 3rd Ave.
- The Art We Are, 246 Victoria Street
- The Grind, 5th and Victoria Street

