



Off The Curb

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www.offthecurb.ca
www.askwellness.ca

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The editor's intro...

It seems our first issue of **Off The Curb** has been a resounding success! Over 500 copies were distributed in Kamloops and surrounding areas. Thank you for all your supportive comments and I reiterate, if you are interested in contributing, we welcome your contribution.

The recent announcement that the Rendezvous will be reopening under new management, with a new purpose, is very welcome.

Strange January weather, wasn't it? I do personally hope the XXI Olympic Winter Games will be financially successful — after all, the cuts made to many programs are funding the 'show.'

Given the recent tragic events in Haiti, the majority of us are still blissfully ignorant as to just how truly fortunate we are.

If things are difficult and you find yourself in need of help, there are many organizations able to assist, but remember, you will have to ASK, because nobody can read your mind.

We are excited to launch www.offthecurb.ca. Check out the website to stay informed of current events, read past issues and to submit your comments, stories and ideas!

Finally, we want to thank **Cowboy Coffee!** Check out the last page for a 2 for 1 coupon. Thanks **Cowboy Coffee** for supporting our street paper!

Stay safe! Many people are out there and I'm only one of them...

Mayoi No Naka
mayoi@askwellness.ca

Do you need housing help?



- ✓ We print the latest listings every day.
- ✓ We may have a better idea as to where the affordable rentals are.
- ✓ We can help you set up a case plan of action to get housed and move forward.
- ✓ We offer housing help Monday to Friday from 1:00 to 4:30 pm.
- ✓ Outreach service available Saturday and Sunday.

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



Just ASK!
Call 250-376-7558

Bob's Blurb

Bob Hughes, Executive Director

Client Needs

Please help us collect the following items for distribution to those in need! Please call for pick-up or drop-off at our agency

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

The five week stretch...

There is a big difference between survival and living. For many of us we take the simple pleasures of life for granted: quality food, a warm bed, loved ones, and most importantly, hope.

This past month was what is known as 'the five week stretch' in the world of income assistance. This takes place every six months or so when the time between income assistance cheques goes from the usual four weeks to five weeks. The stretch this year went right over the holidays: when Christmas stretches a family's resources, the furnace uses more gas, and walking around town is harder and harder to do. If you would, I ask you to consider how those of us used to a pay cheque every two weeks in an amount exceeding \$1,000 per period, could possibly survive, yet alone live, on a total of \$610 for five weeks. And just think, you have to pay your rent out of this amount. In my mind it is an injustice.

Most of the guests who access ASK Wellness services could be called unemployable at this time in their lives. Everything from raising children, experiencing soft and hard disabilities such as addictions or HIV, a lack of employable skills, or defeatism, play roles on someone depending on income assistance to survive. Some in the community, including those in the helping field, believe that the low rates of income assistance provided to those in need, and the restrictions upon earning a few extra bucks, acts as an incentive to get off the system. I challenge this perspective both from experience, and from an understanding of basic psychology.

I have, during my fifteen years in the field, witnessed the income assistance trap. With few employable skills and a tight job market, the chances of making an income are slim. Often only part time employment is available and the hours are unpredictable, thus making financial planning almost impossible. Furthermore, unless you are one of the lucky ones to be placed on PWD (Persons with Disability), you can't make a penny without it being taken off your next cheque. So, for many, what's the point of even trying to get off income assistance? Is it no wonder that the poor do the petty crimes to survive, knowing they have no money, no credit, and no food?

And now to psychology ... I am no pro, but I do know that people don't think long term when they are in crisis. They only see what is in front of them. How do I get enough food to survive? Will I have enough to pay my rent? How much can I spend on food for my 12 year old boy? With such basic questions being answered on a daily basis, do you really think people are looking at making life changes? They are stuck looking at the tree through the forest.

I don't have all the answers by any stretch of the imagination, but I do know we need to do something with how we help the poor and defeated find the hope they need to chase their dreams. Shame won't cut it, and it never has.

The fact that British Columbia has the highest rate of childhood poverty in the country and the lowest minimum wage, are travesties few can ignore. It is high time we consider some of the progressive, nonpartisan ideas around welfare reform put forth by Seth Klein, and revolutionize our approach to poverty and despair.

Until then, I take my hat off to all of you who are on income assistance who have managed to keep a smile on your faces; who have shown generosity to their fellow man, and who have kept their chins up as they survived 'the five week stretch.'

Bob

Harmony

*Learning to get along well with others enhances our own lives.
We have to deal with people daily in many ways.
If these interactions are harmonious, our lives are easier and happier!
But harmony with others doesn't mean we always have to agree with
them.
Or give in to their demands.
We are not required to 'Keep the Peace' at any cost.
We can be calm yet assertive.
Cooperative yet self-directed.
Respecting each other's individuality while working towards compromise.
In music, harmony isn't everyone singing or playing the exact same notes
at the same time.
The beautiful sounds of a symphony orchestra or a barbershop quartet
are achieved when all the distinctive parts are played together.
With our Higher Power as the Conductor, we can achieve a splendid
harmony with everyone around us.*

Written by Susan Elizabeth

Forever remembered by her family and friends
as a woman who always had a song on her lips
because she carried 'harmony' in her heart.

Do you have a story?

All of our contributors
will remain anonymous.

We would love to hear
from you!

Feel free to drop off
your handwritten story,
or email it to
cheryl@askwellness.ca.

(See page 7)

The Persons in Transition (PIT) Stop

By Ken Salter, RSW, Street Outreach Worker, ASK Wellness Centre



The PIT STOP was first conceived by three Social Work students from the University College of the Cariboo, now the Thompson Rivers University, in 1999. These three students decided there should be free food made available to the homeless and disenfranchised population of Kamloops. A small space was made available to these students in the basement of the United Church at Fourth and St. Paul streets. In order to raise funds for the first few evenings they were open, the students organized a 'Tin Cup' fund raiser. They met at the church one Saturday morning, each with a tin cup, and proceeded to panhandle in the downtown core. They were joined by a number of other students and volunteers, myself included. Enough money was raised to feed around twenty to twenty-five people for a few nights. The United Church was instrumental in securing the funds needed for the first few months of 2000.

Next, a group of students and volunteers met with our local MP Nelson Riis, who directed them to the Social Planning Counsel of the City of Kamloops. We wrote a proposal and secured just under \$4,000 for the year. Around this time, the PIT moved across the street into the notorious Rafter 'G' Hotel. We had a small space with a kitchen, and seating for about fifteen people. Also around this time, the AIDS Society of Kamloops got involved with the PIT and offered a paid position to run the program.

I was paid by the AIDS Society (now ASK Wellness Centre) to open the kitchen three evenings a week. At that time, because of our limited funds, we were feeding forty to fifty people for about \$25 per night, including coffee. I made a lot of soup, a lot of stews, while buns and doughnuts were supplied by the Kamloops Food Bank.

A year or so later we moved the PIT to the Kamloops Food Bank on River Street. We worked very



Ladies Lunch

Join us every Tuesday
at 1:30 pm when
S.H.O.P. presents our
famous home-cooked
Ladies Lunch!

All ladies are
welcome!

closely with the Executive Director of the day who's name was Sharon Hartline (now the ASK Wellness Centre Blood Borne Infections Program Manager). We ran the program out of the Food Bank for about a year or more. At this time we were surviving on community grants from the City of Kamloops that had now reached around \$6,000.

The PIT STOP moved again, back to the United Church, around 2005. At this time the church was more involved and put out a call for volunteers to help cook and serve on Sunday afternoons. The response was amazing in that we immediately had eighty volunteers available to help. The paid position from the AIDS Society of Kamloops was eliminated and the church assumed responsibility for the program. The PIT remains at the United Church today, having come full circle back to where it started. The attendance is now around 120 people every Sunday, and at times up to 180 people! It is very well attended and is feeding families, couples, singles and children. The PIT continues to be supported through the City of Kamloops Social Planning Counsel and the ASK Wellness Centre continues to be involved by providing security each and every Sunday afternoon.

The PIT STOP Program has been a success over the years, and I wonder if those three original students who came up with the idea ever imagined that ten years later, the program would still be feeding the needy people of Kamloops. Thank God for those fresh young minds who saw a need and acted on it. They have made an incredible difference to the people of Kamloops for a decade now, with no end in sight!

To make a donation, please make your cheque payable to the "Kamloops United Church" with a reference on the cheque: "For the Pit Stop." Mail or drop off your donation to: 421 St. Paul Street, Kamloops, BC V2C 1A1. Thank you.

NEXT MONTH – Remember the Rafter G? – Send us your story: cheryl@askwellness.ca or drop it off at ASK Wellness, 433 Tranquille Road.

Office Wish List

Can you help us out
by donating some
basic items?

We always need:

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

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

Words From the Curb



Homeless, rooming house residents at risk for early death: study

By Sheryl Ubelacker, Health Reporter, THE CANADIAN PRESS (October 26, 2009)

TORONTO – Canadians living in homeless shelters and rooming houses have a much shorter life expectancy than the general population—and poverty is not the only factor contributing to their premature deaths, researchers conclude.

In a 10-year study, researchers found the chance of surviving to age 75 among the homeless or inadequately housed is 32% for men and 60% for women, compared to 51% and 72% respectively for the lowest income group in Canada's population.

To put that in perspective, the probability that a 25-year old man living today in marginal housing would make it to age 75 is equal to the life expectancy of the average young male in 1921—long before the advent of antibiotics and other life-saving treatments. For homeless or poorly housed females, their chance of surviving to 75 is the same as women in the general population of Canada in 1956.

"Even compared to the poorest one-fifth of the Canadian population, people living in shelters, rooming houses and hotels had a much lower probability of survival," said lead researcher Dr. Stephen Hwang, an internal medicine specialist at St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto's downtown core. "In fact, the men living in rooming houses are four times more likely to die (prematurely) than people in the general population."

There are many factors that contribute to a lower life expectancy, said Hwang, noting that illnesses linked to alcohol and drug abuse, as well as tobacco-related diseases, are "greatly increased in this population." "For people living in these marginal housing situations, their access to care and the control of their chronic conditions is worse than in the general population," he said, explaining that poorly managed high blood pressure and diabetes can dramatically ratchet up the risk of death from heart attack and stroke.

Those in shelters and rooming houses often suffer from mental illnesses and suicide is more common. Exposure to deadly violence also occurs more often when compared to the general population, he said. "I guess violence and injury travel with poverty, and so the individuals are more than just poor, they're living in ... situations that probably further increase the risk (of death)."



The study, published on-line Monday by the British Medical Journal, looked at 1991 census data on 15,100 people of varying ages across Canada, who reported being homeless or living in rooming houses or hotels. Using death records, the researchers determined 3,280 had died in the next 10 years, allowing them to calculate mortality rates and life expectancy for different age groups. While most people may realize that being homeless and relying on shelters can put one's health and life at risk, Hwang said those residing in rooming houses and low-end hotels are just as disadvantaged. Based on his experience treating patients, he said it's often easier for people in shelters to access medical care because staff will see a person looking ill and send them to a hospital or bring in a doctor or nurse. "Rooming houses and other marginal housing situations are kind of a hidden world. You can be on death's door in a room in your rooming house and no one may know that." Hwang said the study's findings are a de facto call to government to ensure that all citizens have "descent and affordable housing." "If you improve the housing situation of these individuals, would their chance of dying decrease? Our study doesn't directly tell us that it would make a difference, but I believe that it would."

James Frankish, director of the Centre for Population Health Promotion Research at the University of British Columbia, called the study "interesting and important." "It raises very interesting questions about this Pandora's box of chronic disease in low-income, marginalized people," he said from Vancouver. "It's not just being poor, it's something about their social conditions, the actual physical environment in which they live." Improving the health and life expectancy of people on the bottom rungs of society isn't just about providing a roof over their heads, but also about helping them with social reintegration—getting involved in community, working if they can, going back to school and connecting to others, he said.

"This study ... clearly shows that we're putting ... pretty ill people in pretty marginalized housing. And then what?" "They're either going to die an untimely death, which this study shows that they do, or they often end up having very expensive and inappropriate use of the health system, because they don't have physicians, they don't have GPs. They use the emergency ward, which is a really expensive way to get care. Or they don't get any care until they're really sick and then they have to be hospitalized."

"As Canadians, what are we prepared to do about it?"

SHOP Friday Night Dinner & Drop In

Every Friday night
we are open for
dinner to all women
who have been
involved in the
sex trade.

We need you!

Volunteers are
always needed.

If you would like to
give back to your
community,
please email
cheryl@askwellness.ca

Profile – Ron Tronson

This month we interview the team leader of the 'Out of the Cold' program, Ron Tronson. 'Out of the Cold' is a winter shelter service for the homeless in Kamloops. The program started in Kamloops in 2006, and operates through St. Paul's Cathedral, 360 Nicola Street. It runs from November until March, on Sunday and Wednesday nights, as well as any other night when the temperature drops below -10C. They provide the homeless with dinner, a warm place to sleep and breakfast.



Fearless Reporter (FR) – How did the program get started?

Ron – I recall one of the first meetings I had with Toni Pate (former ASK SHOP Program Coordinator) when the idea for the program was proposed. We had extra funds and were trying to stimulate a

conversation on what to do with it. Someone suggested providing shelter for people on the street. Toni began researching a program called 'Inn From the Cold' which started in Toronto ten years earlier. After visiting Toronto, Vancouver and Kelowna where she asked about similar programs, the program finally came to Kamloops. We now have a procedures manual, a mission statement and over 100 volunteers, and do not have to drive around looking for people to come to the program.

FR – What do you love most about what you do?

Ron – Saving people.

FR – What is your happiest moment of the program?

Ron – I remember one guy who came into the shelter telling me that our program was a life-saver.

FR – Do you recall your busiest night?

Ron – Yes, we had thirty-five people, and had people sleeping in the clothes racks.

FR – What are you most proud of about the program?

Ron – It's an opportunity for people who are struggling. People fall off the wagon, go to rehab and repeat the cycle over again. Our program gives them an opportunity to be free, to leave that behind. There is also a religious part to it, we practice what we preach.

If you are interested in volunteering to help with this program, please contact Ron at 250-318-4704 or send an email to ronandwanda@hotmail.com.

Upcoming Events

• Boogie the Bridge!

WE ARE EXCITED to be the **Charity of Choice** for The **Daily News Boogie** on May 2nd, 2010. We will require 150 volunteers to make this event as successful as possible for our Society. We're hoping to find volunteers who can commit some time under one of the following committees:



- ◆ *Water Event Tables*
- ◆ *Chalk Teams*
- ◆ *Set-up / Clean-up*
- ◆ *Start / Finish Line*
- ◆ *Registration*

If you are interested in volunteering, we would love to hear from you. Please contact Cheryl at ASK (cheryl@askwellness.ca or telephone 250-376-7558, Ext. 226). Our next planning meetings will be on Thursday, February 11th and March 4th, 2010 at 6:00 pm (ASK, Northshore).

• A Place to Grow

Every Wednesday from 1:30 to 3:30 pm, ASK Wellness/SHOP (Social and Health Options for Women in the Sex Trade) run an educational workshop. Contact the office to find out about programs coming up on mood disturbances, relationships and how to cope, craft days and other activities.

• Dining Out for Life® - Thursday, March 25, 2010

Dining Out for Life® is an annual fund raising event for local AIDS service providers involving the generous participation of restaurants, corporate sponsors and volunteers. Kamloops will be ready to officially host its **2nd Annual Dining Out for Life®** on March 25th. In exchange for advertising in a city wide media campaign, restaurants are asked to donate 25% of their proceeds to ASK Wellness toward providing services for families affected by HIV and other chronic illnesses in our community. If you have a favourite restaurant you'd like to see participate in **Dining Out for Life® 2010**, please email Monika at monika@askwellness.ca. **You can sign up your restaurant by using the Dining Out for Life® registration sheet on our website at www.askwellness.ca.**



Meal List

Is available at the ASK front desk or by visiting:

www.accesskamloops.org
under "Quick Guides"

Some Tasty Affordable Recipes

✓ Garden Casserole (Serves 4)

Some tasty recipes courtesy Larry McIntosh, President of Peak of the Market. Visit their website to have recipes sent to your email – <http://www.peakmarket.com/recipes.cfm>.



1 cup (250ml) onion chopped	1/4 cup (50ml) water
1 cup (250ml) yellow squash, thinly sliced	1 tbsp (15ml) fresh thyme or sage
1 cup (250ml) zucchini, thinly sliced	1/8 tsp (.5ml) salt
1 cup (250ml) corn kernels	3/4 cup (175ml) cheddar cheese, shredded
1 can cream of mushroom soup (10 oz / 284ml)	1/2 cup (125ml) cornbread stuffing

Heat a slightly greased skillet over medium heat until hot. Add onion and cook for 4 minutes or until onion is translucent, stirring frequently. Add squash, zucchini, corn, half of soup, water and thyme. Stir until well blended. Bring to boil over medium-high heat. Cover and cook for 3 minutes or until squash is tender, stirring after 2 minutes. Remove from heat, stir in salt. Place in casserole dish. Top with remaining soup spreading evenly over vegetable mixture. Sprinkle evenly with cheese and then cornbread stuffing. Bake in preheated 350°F (180°C) oven, uncovered, for 10 minutes or until bubbly around the edges.

✓ Oven Baked Chicken (Serves 4)

4 chicken legs	1/2 tsp (2ml) dried thyme
3 tbsp (45ml) butter	Pinch of nutmeg
Salt and pepper to taste	2 large red onions, chopped
1 lb. (500g) mushrooms, thinly sliced	1/2 cup (125ml) chicken stock
1/2 tsp (2ml) dried marjoram	



In a large skillet, heat 1 tbsp (15ml) butter over medium-high heat. Add chicken and brown lightly. Sprinkle with salt and pepper to taste. Remove and set aside. Add mushrooms to skillet. Stir in marjoram, thyme and nutmeg. Cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally for 10 minutes. Transfer to bowl. Add remaining butter to skillet. Add onions and cook for 5 minutes. Spread half of onions and a quarter of mushrooms in shallow baking dish. Lay chicken on top. Cover with remaining mushrooms and onions. Pour in stock. Bake, uncovered, in preheated 350°F (180°C) oven for 40 to 45 minutes, or until juices run clear when chicken is pierced.

Stories from the Curb

Tami's story...

I was a woman who 'worked' Tranquille Road. The men came freely, with cash, and I provided a sexual service. When I was on the street I always had a home, however, I was too full of shame to go there. I would use as many drugs and as much alcohol as it would take to become the 'girl' who took care of others. I did everything to pay for my dope. I wasn't prepared to have a 'pimp' or the 'peeps' (people who watched to see who picked me up) take my money. I was running in chaos and fear, and my emotions were going to kill me.

I grew up in a dysfunctional home. Both my parents were addicts. There were nightly fist fights. I have witnessed many horrors, and sometimes did things just as horrible.

I sobered up a couple of times. I never really understood that life wasn't all about sex, drugs, hate and power.

As I write, I have been clean for a few days, and when I go down Tranquille Road and see my lady friends, I always offer them an ear and a hug.

In the last few years my life has become a death sentence. I was unreachable. When the ASK Wellness Centre was opened on Tranquille Road, I was able to allow my 'masks' to come off. This has taken a lot off my plate.

The men ('Johns') still see me out there and they assume I am still a 'working girl.' I am a woman who is striving to get her life back

and I am involved in all aspects of my recovery. When I was working I watched women like me being murdered, with no suspects ever found. This realization gave me the courage to keep on going. The groups I belong to are enabling me to learn skills and behaviours conducive to my growing into a socially acceptable person. I am willing to learn these lessons. I feel I am a deserving person. With all I have seen, heard and been involved in, these situations have given me a better understanding of how precious people are.

I have gone through the House of Ruth's program. I had no understanding of unconditional love. The way the staff, volunteers, directors, even the gardener enriched my heart. I was given another reason to stay clean. The diversity of the women alone in the House of Ruth at any given time could have caused arguments, however, this rarely happened. The staff were respected, and so were we. As I keep in contact with these two agencies I am given the tools and opportunity to be the real me.

I cannot say strongly enough that having these 'angels' in my life has impacted my spirit and I am not willing to go back out there except on my conditions.

So here I am in 2010, and I have regained relationships with both my children, my sister and my father, and was able to make amends with my mother before she passed away. I am enrolled in Street School and volunteering with the House of Ruth. I am a dedicated person, so I give back to the ASK Wellness Centre. I am a woman who is doing what it takes to continue my growth in recovery. I am a person now willing to learn the ways to obtain a better life. Thanks for reading this.

T.L.

Resources



ADDICTIONS:

Alcohol & Drug Information & Referral Services	1-800-663-1441
Christian Hostel	250-372-3031
Interior Indian Friendship Society's Alcohol & Drug Counsellor	250-376-1296
House of Ruth (Women Only)	250-376-5621
Mothers for Recovery	250-377-6890
Narcotics Anonymous	1-800-414-0296
Phoenix Centre	250-374-4634
Sage Health Centre	250-374-6551

CLOTHING / FOOD:

Kamloops Food Bank	250-376-2252
St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Store	250-554-0098
Salvation Army	250-554-1611

EMPLOYMENT:

Aboriginal Employment Services	250-554-4556
Employment Insurance	1-800-206-7218
GT Hiring Solutions	250-374-7748
Kamloops Works Search Centre (South)	250-372-3803
Kamloops Works Search Centre (North)	250-376-3111

Labour Ready	250-376-9116
Shuswap Training & Employment	250-554-4556

MISCELLANEOUS:

ASK Wellness Centre	250-376-7558
CMHA	250-374-0440
Interior Community Service	250-554-3134
Interior Indian Friendship Society	250-376-1617
Brain Injury Association	250-372-1799
Immigrant Services	250-372-0855
Native Housing Society	250-376-6332
RCMP Kamloops Association	250-828-3000
Interior Health Centre	250-851-7450
Kids Helpline	1-800-668-6868
Ministry of Children & Family Development	250-371-3600
Ministry of Housing & Social Development	1-866-866-0800
New Life Mission	250-372-9898
Sexual Assault Counselling Centre	250-372-0179
Suicide / Distress Line	1-800-784-2433
United Way of Kamloops	250-372-9933
White Buffalo Aboriginal Health Society & Resource Centre	250-554-1176



COWBOY COFFEE 2-4-1

Kamloops North Shore • 449 Tranquille Road

Happy New Year! To start the year off right, Cowboy Coffee is pleased to offer you two drinks for the price of one.

This coupon has no cash value. The second drink provided will be of equal or lesser value than the purchased drink. This coupon must be redeemed at the 449 Tranquille Road location by March 1st, 2010.

FUELLED BY CAFFEINE