

A newsletter for and about
Community Services staff

Summer 2007



Building strong, healthy
communities together

the Outlook

Inside the Outlook



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Record Haul: Central Registry Opens!

The long-time-planned Central Registry for the Department of Community Services is now a reality!

The Central Registry initiative was approved late in 2005 and the team in Records Services immediately started planning for its implementation.

A year and a half may seem a long time... however, we discovered that implementing a Central Registry meant that many issues related to records management had to be addressed, and multiple activities were to be coordinated to bring this initiative to fruition. From recruiting staff to doing inventories, manipulating and cleaning data, and changing the way we do business, we have all worked very hard.

The Central Registry is equipped with a combination of mobile and stationary shelving to house approximately 60 thousand linear inches of active records currently dispersed throughout Head Office in file rooms, cabinets, shelves, or drawers.

The Central Registry is also equipped with six spacious workstations, two service windows, one storage room and spacious halls. It is bright and comfortable and we hope to maintain it this way.



Left: Former DCS Deputy Minister Marian Tyson, FOIPOP Manager Maria Lasheras and DCS Deputy Minister Judith Ferguson officially open Central Registry.

Below: Lisa Marie MacDonald chats with Bernice Campbell at the grand opening of Central Registry.



ESIA + Old O = a lot of vowels, and a lot of fun!

For the first time in over a decade, ESIA staff from across the province got together to share ideas and experiences (plus a few laughs!).

The ESIA conference at the end of March in Wolfville was an opportunity to put faces to names and meet those who'd often spoke to each other over the phone but hadn't met in person. Program staff, intake and caseworkers, supervisors, specialists, district managers, and regional administrators took part in the two-day conference. Discussions included ICM and the implementation of the ESIA Policy manual, while Bob Fowler, Deputy Minister to the Premier and Treasury and Policy Board, reminisced about the good old days at DCS! The Old Orchard Inn even blossomed into a dance party with a bombastic display of African drumming!

Thanks to the Employment Support and Income Assistance planning team for putting together a great conference!

Throughout the year of construction we met many challenges but mostly we saw the opportunity to clean up our records, obtain accurate inventories, and educate our staff on record keeping practices... in particular its importance and its impact in helping access to information. We conducted training sessions along the way, communicated updates regularly, and set the stage to prepare our staff for the implementation of Hummingbird RM to manage our paper records.

We invite you to drop by, and when you do come to visit, you will see why we are so proud of the results.

Western has a Ball!

Serving the needs of our clients proved to be good practice for service of another kind... on the volleyball court.

In April, all Western Region Department of Community Services offices were invited to participate in a volleyball tournament held at the Michelin Club gymnasium in Bridgewater.

The three participating teams were Kentville, Liverpool and Bridgewater. There were no skill level expectations and the tournament was geared toward interacting with friends and having fun. The day was a huge success and enjoyed by players and fans alike.

Liverpool played hard and proved to be a formidable opponent, but it was Bridgewater emerging as the overall winner, succeeding in ousting the heavily favoured Kentville squad in the finals.

Special thanks to the Michelin Club in Bridgewater for providing the venue and to Al Sullivan, Mike Anthony and Donnie Berringer for organizing the event. Also, thanks are extended to Rob Tupper who wore the stripes as referee, and to all players and their friends and family who showed up to cheer the teams on.



Kentville District Office team members head to court.



Northern Recognizes Great Staff and Good Living

From 1560 weeks of service to five weeks, Northern Region is appreciative of all its staff and are sharing some of their good news (and some of their good treats) in this edition....

Congratulations to Blair S. Pellerin, ESIA Caseworker, Guysborough DCS, for his 30 years of dedicated and excellent service to the residents of Guysborough County.

Dr. Anita Foley recently received an honorary degree from St. F. X. University. Dr. Foley is renowned as an old-time rural doctor in Guysborough County (who still makes house calls) and was honored for her resilience, compassion and commitment to both her profession and her patients. She has spent over 30 years practicing in the Town of Guysborough and is Chief of Staff at Guysborough Memorial Hospital.

Monica Chisholm was employed, through a federal grant, to oversee the much needed and appreciated Christmas Spirit Program, serving residents within the Municipality of the District of Guysborough, and the Towns of Canso and Mulgrave.

Linda Gammon was appointed in the fall to the CPI/Prepare Booking Team. She has been extremely busy booking space for training sessions, getting employees signed up for training, corresponding with supervisors and fellow employees in the Northern Region, attending meetings and keeping things running smoothly!

Crystal Gosbee, a student from the Office Information Technology Program, NSCC - Strait Area Campus, was at our office for her five-week work experience in the Administrative field. The staff recognized her contribution and excellent work with a card, flowers and dessert at the end of May. Good Luck Crystal!

And to keep our clients up-to-date, our DCS office and Housing have exchanged bulletin boards to provide residents with more information on services available through both ESIA and Housing.

Caseworkers in the Truro District office recently had the opportunity to read through the "Create a Healthy Workplace" brochure. They noted, quite correctly, that very quietly the Truro office had, in the last few years, gone quite healthy and "green".

There are at least three walking groups that stroll a brisk two kilometres a day, during their breaks. In addition, the office is almost 100% smoke-free. Health and lifestyle practices have made for a more vibrant work force, with improved personal health and morale.

This year the Community Service's staff at the District Office in Antigonish gave the proceeds of Casual Day to the local food bank.

Staff member Heidi Hendsbee said, "The money raised by this event every Friday will help serve the residents of our community who use and benefit from the help of others." The entire staff of DCS in Antigonish is proud to have donated to such a worthy cause.

Snack Ideas From up North!

Many of us in Nova Scotia enjoy a nice cup of tea to keep going through the day... and we in Northern have a healthy snack go to along with it.

Is snacking a healthy habit? Yes, depending on the type of snacks you eat.

Snacking can keep you energized, and it helps control your appetite so you don't overeat at mealtimes.

Healthy munching will provide essential nutrients and provide long-lasting energy. Some ideas:

- apple butter or hummus on whole-wheat toast
- peanut or almond butter on apple slices
- bean dip or salsa with bell peppers, carrots or celery
- a small serving of nuts, a smoothie with fresh or frozen fruit and soy milk, orange or tomato juice
- homemade oatmeal cookies



Staff member Heidi Hendsbee presents a cheque in the amount of \$936.00 to Food Bank representative Ted Cogan (left) and Angus MacDonald (right).

Colleague Chronicles: Giving the Gift of Time

Volunteers make things tick. They are the reasons lights are on in gyms across the province on nights and weekends and money gets raised for groups and teams that couldn't exist without it. Recently, Minister Judy Stetch said of our volunteers, "These folks dedicate more than time... they give themselves for the betterment of their community." And where else but Community Services would you find more than your fair share of volunteers? We share a few of their stories. . . .

Badge of Honour

Harold M. Roberts has "been prepared" for over a quarter of a century, and on May 12 he was rewarded. Scouter Roberts (from the 5th Canso Scout Troop) was awarded the Commemorative Centennial Medal of Scouting. This medal was presented to him for his contribution to the scouting movement for over 25 years. As a scoutmaster, Harold has traveled with the Scouts throughout Canada and the world taking youth from the area to Provincial, National and World Jamborees. Scouter Roberts received his award from Adam Baden-Clay, great-grandson of Lord Baden Powell, founder of the World Scouting Movement. Harold has also been Area Commissioner for the past five years. Congratulations Harold!

From Scouts to Snouts

Valerie Griffiths, a member of the Family and Children's Service team in Halifax, was awarded the 2007 "Volunteer of the Year" by the Bide Awhile animal shelter. She was presented with a lovely plaque, and as a lifelong supporter of abused and neglected animals, Valerie is a great choice for their first annual award.

Dialed in to the Rotary

Wendy Keen has been a Rotarian for almost 15 years, and was recently recognized for her commitment to the organization and to making this world a better place. Wendy received a Paul Harris Fellow from Rotary in February. The coveted award was for outstanding contribution in promoting the Rotary Foundation and its goal of understanding world peace. Paul Harris was the founding member of Rotary International over 100 years ago.

Search and Rescue - We Serve as One, That Others May Live

by Julianne Lafleur, ESIA and Housing, Head Office

Serge Cournoyer is a Parent Counsellor Social Worker with the Department of Community Services (former Children's Aid Society of Halifax). He has been with the Agency for 30 years. His dedication to helping others extends far beyond the office and into the deepest parts of the province. Serge has been a volunteer member of Halifax Regional Search and Rescue (HRSAR) for almost seven years. An avid outdoorsman, Search and Rescue (SAR) was a natural transition for Serge.

Serge's interest in SAR goes back to the winter of 1969 when he went to volunteer on a search for two lost children - a brother and sister - in the Spryfield area. In 1969, a Search and Rescue First Response Team did not exist in the local community... only local volunteers with a desire to find the lost children. Despite the searchers being unorganized and ill-equipped, the two children were found by searchers. Unfortunately, despite the best efforts of all involved, the little girl died of exposure to the harsh winter conditions. The tragedy was exacerbated with the death of a volunteer searcher, also from the weather.

Then in the summer of 1986, nine-year-old Andrew Warburton got lost in the woods outside Halifax. Despite the largest ground search in Canadian history, his discovery was too late. Serge was one of 5,000 volunteers involved in another good-intentioned, but poorly-organized search. That was the eye-opener the Team needed.

Tragedy often precipitates change. Through the search effort for Andy Warburton, the Team came to understand some of its shortcomings, particularly when it came to conducting a large, multi-team, technically-difficult search. This was the impetus for Team members to seek out training which would forever change how search and rescue operations would be undertaken in the Halifax area and beyond.

After volunteering as a community member on searches for many years, Serge officially joined the Team in the year 2000. He is very familiar with the organization's slogan - We Serve as One, That Others May Live. The motto truly reflects the importance of the team approach as every volunteer member, from the Search Director to the Logistics persons providing hot meals to those weary searchers, contributes to finding the lost.

Another motto of the Team is "The more we train, the luckier we get". This is apparent in the amount of time dedicated to training. In addition to meeting every Monday night, there are several weekend training courses and some full week, or longer, courses. Most of the trainers and helpers are SAR members who volunteer their time for the betterment of the Team.

Many might think that Search and Rescue sounds glamorous, but SAR is for the serious, not the well-intentioned. Most often, during training and searches, Team members spend up to 12 hours at a time, sometimes longer, in the wilderness

during all seasons and during all weather conditions. It is almost a certainty that members will come out of the woods cold, wet, hungry, muddy and exhausted. If necessary, they are back at it the next day.

In addition to the time he has taken for his own improvement, Serge has dedicated many hours of his time to be a part of the training process for new members. As a volunteer member of HRSAR myself, Serge was a familiar face during my training. Not only did he provide his time, but his energy, sense of humour and advice were exceptional and made my training experience more interesting, fun and memorable. Serge's dedication and commitment to the Team is tremendous.

During the past seven years, the Team has found many lost persons safe and sound, including a gentlemen a couple of years ago who was found directly by the three-person team that Serge was leading. Every searcher wants to be on the team that finds the lost person safe and sound. Serge was fortunate on one occasion. To be lost in the woods in Nova Scotia can be fatal, even in the summer.

It takes a very special person to give so much of their time and commitment to an organization such as Halifax Regional Search and Rescue, and Serge is truly one of those special people. Keep up the good work Serge!

Healthy Competition

When you have a healthy workplace, everyone's a winner....

Having said that, one of you is a bigger winner than others!

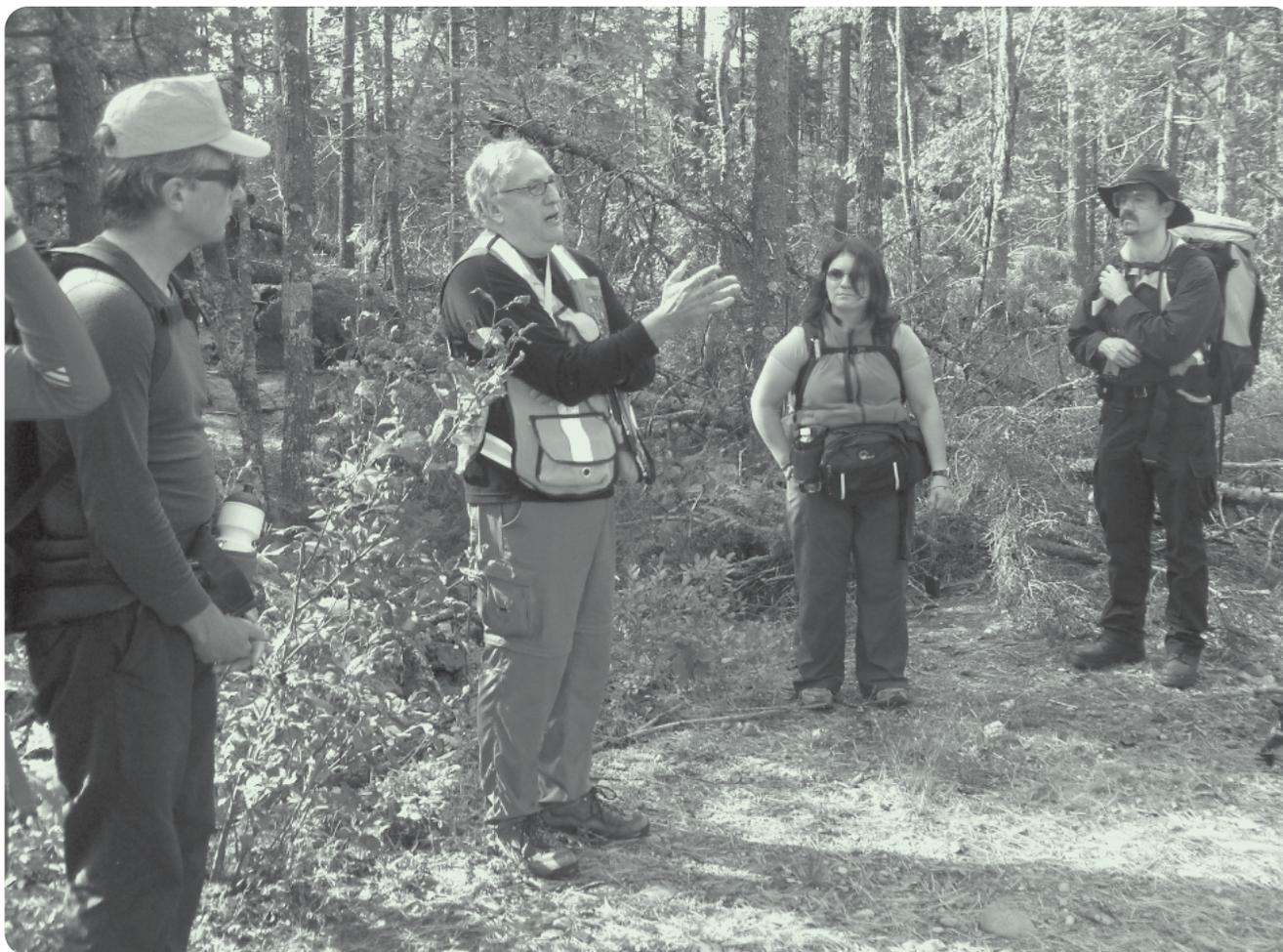
Thanks to everyone who answered our trivia question in the last issue. The responses were tremendous.

The winner of our Nova Scotia Government Fleece, picked randomly is: Faye Edwards, from the Hants District Office.

Congratulations! Your fleece is in the mail!

Don't forget to check out our Healthy Workplace Tips, the first two weeks of every month, on tabletops across the province!

Your Healthy Workplace Advisory



Serge Cournoyer talks Search and Rescue to his Team, including Julianne Lafleur, just to his left.



Deanne Kelley

A Breath of Fresh Air

by Cheryl Cooper

Volunteers often work so tirelessly it's hard to catch a breath. For Deanne Kelley, that could not be more true.

Deanne works in the Lunenburg District Office. An enthusiastic community volunteer who's committed to healthy lifestyle practices, Deanne is also an asthmatic who lives daily with a chronic disease.

When she was 32, Deanne and her daughter, Hannah, then 7, were both diagnosed with asthma within a few months of each other. In an effort to educate themselves on their condition, mother and daughter began volunteering with the Lung Association of Nova Scotia in 2004. Deanne then saw a need to educate others in the importance of lung health, the use of daily medications and promotion of a healthy lifestyle.

So, Deanne enrolled Hannah in the Bridgewater Barracudas Swim Club to improve her fitness level and have an activity valuable in improving lung function. At that time, Deanne became aware of Laps For Lungs, a six hour swim relay that raised money for the swim club and the Lung Association. Deanne enthusiastically organized the Bridgewater Barracuda Laps for Lungs events in 2004 and 2005, and was successful in raising \$9,640.

In addition, Deanne's love of youth recreational sport motivated her to take the lead in organizing the 2006 Nova Scotia Summer Swimming Provincials, hosted by the Bridgewater Barracudas. The event raised over \$16,500 for the Swim Club.

Together, Deanne and Hannah have participated in education through the local newspaper and have appeared on Breakfast Television and Live At Five to bring asthma awareness to the community. Hannah became the poster child for the Lung Association in 2005, as well as a junior ambassador for the charity. Hannah has also been featured in the "Faces of Asthma" national campaign this past May.

(Read her profile! http://www.lung.ca/diseases-maladies/asthma-asthme/faces-visages/hannah_e.php)

In January, Deanne represented Nova Scotia at the Asthma Society's National Conference on Respiratory Health. She worked collaboratively to draft the Society's first asthma patients' Bill of Rights and became a member of the National Asthma Patient Alliance.

The latest challenge Deanne has undertaken is a running program. Deanne registered and ran in her first race, the Lung Run 5k at Pier 21. She and Hannah raised 170 dollars for the Lung Association, as well as lots of awareness about asthma.

The Wait's Almost Over!

The Client Service Advisory Committee has established a protocol for all DCS waiting areas, and the rollout begins this fall.

– 39% of ESIA clients have indicated they use office visits as their first point of contact

– 17% of ESIA clients have indicated they prefer office visits for on-going contact

Your CSAC rep will be sharing more information soon!



Next of Kin

By Cheryl Cooper

"Serving the Community's Greatest Need," is the motto of Kin Canada, the association of Kinsmen, Kinette and Kin Clubs of Canada. Susann Collins, an Income Assistance Caseworker in the Lunenburg District Office, has taken on that motto as her own. Susann is an active volunteer with the Kinettes and has been for over 10 years in Bridgewater. Before that, she was a founding member of a Kinette Club in Newfoundland.

She has been involved with an assortment of fund-raising events in the last year, from a variety show to gift basket draws. Funds raised are returned to the community in forms of bursaries, support for the food bank and supporting costs of providing Meals on Wheels to individuals who are unable to afford paying for the service themselves.

Last Christmas there was a concentration to assist single people who might not have the support of family or friends. Susann made contact with the local mental health association and requested they provide a "wish list" from four individuals. The "wish list" items were purchased, gift wrapped and provided to Mental Health Services.

Susann is currently coordinating a penny auction, which is turning out to be a major fund-raising event. It is projected that enough funds will be raised to continue the Meals on Wheels program for summer 2007 and pay for high school bursaries. She is also currently involved in helping to provide a free luncheon for all volunteers involved with Multiple Sclerosis in Lunenburg County.

Susann's other main volunteer work over many years is with the Anglican Church of Canada. She is currently serving as Vice President of the Anglican Church Women group in Bridgewater. She assists in organizing receptions and events and indicated that she has lost track of the amount of sandwiches, sweets and time donated to fund-raising by the group. Susann also serves as a member of the Altar Guild, which sets up for communion and provides clean-up duties.

This past year Susann has been chairing the Holy Trinity (150th Anniversary) Logo and Slogan Committee. In addition, she is helping to plan the Trinity Games for September.

Why does Susann volunteer? "Why not?" she says. "I've developed lots of skills in organizing events, networking, working with diverse group dynamics ... just to name a few." Susann says these things have also carried over and helped her in her work environment.

Most of all, her volunteer work reminds her how lucky she is to have her health and family when so many she helps do not.



Hey, I Recognize You!

We all can participate in Employee Recognition!

Do you have a great idea for Staff Appreciation Week? If so, pass your comments along to your Committee. Have you noticed a co-worker making an improvement which is above and beyond or speaks to quality client service or innovation? Then nominate the individual for a CARE (Care and Recognition for Employees) Award.

Your support will ensure the success of our staff-centered initiatives.

The DCS Provincial Steering Committee of the Employee Recognition Program has met several times over the past few months to support and plan activities for this fall.

This year, the Minister's Award for Excellence will be presented on Monday October 15, 2007. Staff Appreciation Week will take place the following week from Monday to Friday, October 22 - 26, 2007.

Already the four regional and head office committees are making plans. I'm told that a few regions and head office plan to be very competitive when it comes to the Minister's Award for Excellence. Committee members are working hard to encourage all staff to nominate individuals and/or groups for the Award.

The nomination forms are posted on the DCS intranet site - so do your part, and nominate the excellence that you have observed.

Favourite events like the Cup of Excellence and Years of Service Awards also continue!

Stay tuned!

“I had heard from a friend of a friend about the various programs the Department of Community Services offered, so I decided to see how they could help,” says Julia.



THE OUTLOOK ADVISORY COMMITTEE

We welcome your comments, input and story ideas! Please contact your Advisory Committee representative or the editor and help keep us all better informed!

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Building on Her Dreams: A Client's Story

Ten years ago, Julia McPherson graduated high school and began her Bachelor of Commerce at Saint Mary's. But after only one year of making the daily trip to the university on Tower Road, Julia was about to take a major detour.

Julia became a new mom, and had to put her BComm. on the back burner. She started working to support herself and her baby daughter.

Several years and a few jobs later, Julia found herself almost out of options.

“I had heard from a friend of a friend about the various programs the Department of Community Services offered, so I decided to see how they could help,” says Julia.

So, she went to DCS, and because of the situation she was in, qualified for Income Assistance. Julia, along with her caseworker Debbie Dorey, began to see the possibilities. They worked together to establish an action plan to get Julia back in school.

These were the building blocks Julia needed to realize her goal... to work in the construction industry. Her father had once worked as a contractor, and she thought it might be a career for her as well, but she wasn't exactly sure how to get there. She says, “I knew what I wanted to be before I even knew the program existed!”

That program is in Construction Administration Technology at the Nova Scotia Community College.

Community Services' Educate to Work Program provided the assistance to pay tuition, buy books, and help with child care costs to look after her daughter... all expenses she wouldn't have been able to cover on her own. “Because of the opportunity, you can be whatever you want to be.”

Julia's first job out of school has been as half of the 2 person team in charge of building the Marriott Courtyard Hotel in downtown Halifax.

She does the accounting, schedules meetings with foremen, designers and architects, and helped in the hiring and scheduling of the 30 million dollar project.

“I'm very proud of my building,” Julia says.

And after Julia takes part in the ribbon cutting this summer?

“I'll never have to worry about work again.”

And that's in part because of the opportunity the Educate to Work Program. Before Debbie Dorey and Community Services offered their help, Julia was having trouble make ends meet. The sacrifices were many. Now, things are different.

“I can now go into the grocery store and buy what I want to eat.”

Julia is ecstatic in her new life, in large part because she sees herself as a good role model for her daughter. She also wants to be a positive influence to other women to help achieve their goals. She wants to promote awareness of the Educate to Work Program, and is adamant more women should take advantage of it to help “break the cycle” that she herself was in.

And if Julia isn't busy enough during the day, she's returned to school at night.

She's back on the road to completing the Bachelor of Commerce degree she started 10 years ago.