



the HOT SPOT

News for Blythwood Out of the Cold Volunteers

FEBRUARY 2012

Beyond buttering bread

How to engage our guests who struggle with mental illness

An Out of the Cold special event - February 15- Blythwood Road Baptist Church

Pizza and beverages at 7 pm. Discussion begins at 7:30

Many of us want to go beyond buttering bread, and step out of the kitchen to engage our guests. But do we know how? Come on Feb. 15 for a frank discussion of mental illness, and when and how to engage people. Discuss personal boundaries, power disparities, delusions and dilemmas with Sue McKechnie, MSW, RSW, a social worker at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

Since 1995, Sue has worked with people who are living with a major mental illness, and their identified families. This has involved planning, organizing and implementing care services as a member of a multidisciplinary team, providing specialized inpatient and outpatient services to individuals with severe and persistent mental illness.

Sue is coming as a volunteer (thanks to her father, our own Bill McKechnie) and will be our resource during a Q&A session to explore the challenges, the limits and the possibilities of relating to our neediest guests in healthy ways.

Get warmer *inside*

The Wire and Out of the Cold? This and other **insights from our volunteers.** [Page 2](#)

Dennis Bruce on finding common ground with our guests. [Page 3](#)

Walk the Walk – on the Coldest Night of the Year. [Page 3](#)

New to Out of the Cold? Here are 10-start-up tips you'll want to know! [Page 4](#)

Talent glows at OOTC

Our guests possess a wide array of talents from coppersmithing to the arts. You likely have seen the work of some of our more prolific artists.

This month Malcolm, who specializes in art and jewelry with Aboriginal motifs, has an exhibit at Show Art Gallery at 978 Queen St. W. (west of Trinity-Bellwoods Park).

The exhibit runs from **Thurs. Feb. 9 through Thurs. Mar. 1.** Malcolm will be there weekdays from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Come out, show your support, meet Malcolm and learn about his art.



WARM HEARTS

One night in January we asked four regular volunteers who share the evening shift to share some thoughts about OOTC.

Calvin

In the three years that I have been with the Out of the Cold program, one thing that I have learned is that many people continue to be generous with their time and possessions.

Despite the “Me First” mentality encouraged by modern society and the current recession, there are still people donating their possessions and volunteering their time on a potentially cold Saturday night.

Every time I am there, there are many donations to give out and many volunteers willingly serving the less fortunate. It really warms the heart to see this.

Diane

After two seasons and meeting many of the volunteers, I have had the pleasure of spending my Saturday nights with people from all different walks of life.

One person that stands out to me has been doing this program for many years. Her husband was involved and her son is now. She is in her 70s, works out regularly, is an amazing worker, and doesn't look a day over 60. She still works Saturday nights and is deeply committed. I can only hope that when I am 70, that I can be young, vibrant and all



From the left: Calvin, Julie (a visitor for that shift), Diane, James & Tamer

around fun just like her. And of course, still be around for OOTC.

James

I've been volunteering for 3 years now and I have no intention of stopping anytime soon. I started because I felt comfortable in my life and wanted an outlet to reach the community and give back. I wanted to do something that I would not benefit from. After three years, I can honestly say that I can't think of anything that would have been a better use of time.

Tamer (see next page)

Tamer doesn't just watch TV – he *studies* our culture. So we asked him what he sees on screen that resonates with his volunteer experience.

Not Just Having No Home

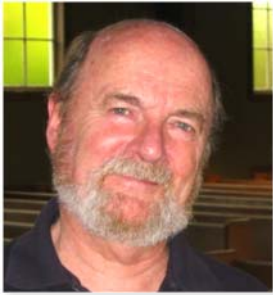
“While it is true that all societies through history tend to have some people who are homeless - without a home - we have not always had the set of social problems we associate with the word *homelessness*.

Starting in the 1980s it was clear that *homelessness* referred to a poverty that includes being unhoused. It is a poverty that means being without required social supports. And it is poverty so deep that even poor-quality housing is not affordable.

Canada has always had many people living in poverty. In the 1980s more and more people were not only poor, but also found themselves unhoused.
-- J. David Hulchanski, *Homelessness in Canada: Past, Present, Future* (2009 conference address)

COMMON GROUND

Dennis Bruce



"How are you doing Dennis? Haven't seen you this season. Are you okay?"

I

hesitated. Should I tell our Out of the Cold guest that I'd been in hospital fighting cancer during the summer and was in recovery mode? Or should I just brush off his inquiry with the usual response - fine-thanks-I've-been-busy.

I chose to level with him. He looked up from his dinner and his eyes softened. "I am so sorry," he said with feeling. "I will pray for you."

Suddenly there was a connection

between us that I'd never felt before. We were on an equal plane - both of us drawn into kinship by suffering. No longer was I the authoritative figure - "sir" as many guests called me - I was a brother.

The fact is, our lives have been radically different; mine has been blessed with privilege while his has been filled with pain and rejection. But, at that moment, what we shared in common, as human beings, was far greater than what separated us.

On Saturday nights, volunteers and guests are brought together to share space, meals and conversation in the presence of a heavenly father who, without favour, loves us all.

It's a fresh reminder that, rich or poor, we need each other. For we are all, to some degree, broken and in need of care, compassion, respect and grace.

Tamer recommends *The Wire* for insights into homelessness (Viewer discretion advised!)

The cataclysmic events of the fall of 2008 left aftershocks of increasing human suffering and trauma, not least amongst the most vulnerable.

A few filmmakers have attempted to document these events and their subsequent economic dislocations, in documentaries such as "Homeless: The motel kids of Orange County" and "Fault lines: The top 1%".

Sometimes, however, fiction also adds great insight into a pressing social problem. One example for those of us interested in understanding poverty and homelessness is HBO's "The Wire".



Over the span of five seasons, the show told compelling stories while dissecting the problems facing the rapidly growing demographic of urban poor, the ways they've been betrayed and left behind by larger outside forces that are not in their control, and society's seeming indifference to their suffering.

And despite the bleakness of the material, there are rare moments of optimism, coming not from any established institutions, but from acts of individual courage or kindness.



**Want to walk the walk to support people who are homeless?
Are you free on Saturday evening February 25?
Come and join us for The Coldest Night of the Year!**

The second annual Coldest Night of the Year Walk is upon us - on February 25. Larry and Beverly Matthews will be walking for Yonge Street Mission (under the team name "The Night Lights") and they hope to raise \$5,000. (If weather patterns hold, it won't be that cold - but we're prepared in any case.)

If you're able bodied, and you have the evening free, why not come and walk with them? You can make the light a little brighter! You can register at:
<http://coldestnightoftheyear.org/home>

Or if you want to sponsor them financially, click on the link below. It will connect you to Larry's personal fundraising page for the CNOTY. Click the "sponsor me" button and you can make a secure donation. Any size gift is welcome.

<http://my.e2rm.com/personalPage.aspx?SID=3235544&langPref=en-CA>

1. Handle food safely, for protection of our guests. Kitchen coordinators can coach you on you the specifics.
2. Wear household rubber gloves when cleaning and sanitizing;
3. Always wear disposable gloves when cleaning body fluid spills;
4. Always wash hands after cleaning. And regularly regardless.
5. Don't leave valuables (keys, wallet, phone etc.) in your coat. And use the clothing room for all personal items (NOT ever the hallway near the kitchen).
6. Food is one of our best tools for welcoming guests. We stress generosity with fairness. If in doubt about a request from a guess, ask the coordinator for the evening. If someone asks you for some specific help with food (such as heating their own), we will try to assist, within reason. Just coordinate with volunteers in the kitchen.
7. Some guests may make provocative statements: avoid arguing with guests; rather, simply listen respectfully and keep the conversation neutral, with non-committal responses.
8. Avoid bringing items to OOTC for specific guests; all other guests are watching.
9. If you promise to see a guest again on a subsequent evening at OOTC, make sure you follow through – even if our guest may not appear.
10. Do not ever give out personal phone or address information (home or office) to guests. This is especially important for female volunteers.
11. Please avoid giving money while you are at the program. (If you see someone on the street away from Blythwood, then help as you wish).
12. Stay home if you are sick. We appreciate your dedication, but the last thing our guests need is to get sick. If you feel an illness coming on, please let Carmela know and she'll find a replacement for you (of course, the more time she has to do so, the better).

TOP 12 START-UP TIPS FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS

Get these right and you're 90 % there!

OOTC CONTACTS

Host : Blythwood Road Baptist Church

Minister Rev. Dr. Bill Norman 416- 487-4571

Associate Pastor: David Thomas 416- 487-4571

www.blythwood.org

Lawrence Park Community Church

Contact: Cecilia Akeyempon 905-737-4849

Eglinton-St. George's United Church

Contact: Marjorie Hiley 416-483-2167

Saturday Evening Meals

Marjorie Hiley 416-483-2167

Volunteer Scheduling & Coordination

Carmela Natalizio 416-895-1832

Committee/Program Coordinators

Larry Matthews 416-461-0667

Bill McKechnie 416-489-5570

Donald McKinnon 416-285-1970

Leonard Swartz 416-845-5994

Dixon Hall (Safety and Support)

ootc@dixonhall.org

Phone:416-699-OOTC

www.ootc.ca

