

# Canadian Families and Corrections Network's Families and Corrections Journal

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### Friends of the Family Award presented to Sisters Christina Doyle, Gemma LeBlanc and Edith Léger

The 2007 Friends of the Family Award was presented to Sisters Christina Doyle, Gemma LeBlanc and Edith Léger. The award was presented at the annual general meeting of the Canadian Families and Corrections Network in Memramcook, New Brunswick.

Sister Christina Doyle, Sisters of St. Martha, has been the Executive Director of Spring House for many years. Spring House is operated by the Christian Council for Reconciliation, a non-profit, volunteer organization dedicated to the ministry to prisoners and their families during their incarceration and after release. Spring House opened in 1985 and provides low cost accommodation for families while they are visiting at Springhill, Dorchester or Westmorland Institutions. Spring House consists of four bedrooms for guests, a meeting room (which can serve as a bedroom), an apartment for staff, a kitchen, a dining room, a sitting room, and a utility room.

Sisters Gemma LeBlanc and Edith Léger are members of Religieuses de Notre-Dame-du-Sacre Coeur, based in Moncton, New Brunswick. The Order was approached to operate Mountain Top House and it accepted the challenge. Mountain Top House is a not-for-profit hospitality house located in Dorchester, N. B.. It provides low-cost accommodations for family members who are visiting at Dorchester Penitentiary (a

**"Building stronger and safer  
communities by assisting  
families affected by criminal  
behavior, incarceration and  
community reintegration."**



**"Contribuer à bâtir des milieux de  
vie plus stables et plus sûrs, en  
offrant un soutien aux familles qui  
doivent composer avec le  
comportement criminel, l'incarcé-  
ration et la réinsertion sociale."**

medium security facility) Westmorland Institution (a minimum level institution) and Shepody Healing Centre (a psychiatric treatment centre).

While Sr. Gemma was the Roman Catholic Chaplain at Westmorland Institution, 'Where can we stay' was an ongoing concern for family members who were coming from out-of-town or out-of-province to visit inmates there. She saw the need for some kind of low-cost accommodations and became one of the key organizers and fund-raisers for both the original building and the second house when the first Mountain Top House was struck by lightning and burned in July 2006. She also served on the initial board of directors for a period of four years.

Sister Edith Léger has been the Director of Mountain Top House since its beginning. She has worked with other Sisters to provide "A home away from home" for family members: a safe place, a good meal, a comfortable bed, and compassionate and understanding people. Sister Edith continues to provide confidential emotional support to the many families who visit. Since its opening, over 1600 people have stayed at the House and with 2,587 meals served.

The Canadian Families and Corrections Network is pleased to present the 2007 Friends of the Family Award to these three well-deserving recipients.

### **What does 'good' family support mean to me? By Linda Linn**

*The following was a presentation at the "Families and Restorative Justice: The 'original' circle of support and accountability" conference in New Brunswick, November, 2007.*

Some of you have heard me share at other workshops but this is my story and I'm sticking to it.

Today all I can do is share my experience, strength and hope with you as our lives as we knew it forever changed on May 7<sup>th</sup>, 1997. My third son Leroy had surrendered to the RCMP the night before after 2 women were killed during an armed robbery. The co-accused was still at large. After hearing the news on the local radio station, my oldest son Ron came running into my bedroom almost on his knees early that morning, hardly able to speak. We couldn't believe what we were hearing. It was not possible. Leroy had turned 18 six months earlier.

At some point during the day, after meeting with the members of the team of Case workers who had been involved with our family for approximately 8

months and with friends and discussions with my other boys I made the decision not to abandon Leroy, to support him as much as I could from the outset. Our relationship at the time of the offence was very troubled as we struggled to remain a family unit. I was a single parent with 4 boys ranging in age from 16 to 27. I told my other sons I was spending their inheritance to make sure their brother had proper representation as he was going to need it.

As I had very little knowledge of the Justice System I took steps to educate myself. I made phone calls to local RCMP detachment to obtain information as to where my son was. They told me to call the local radio station as they had no information. I talked to a lawyer that I trusted in my home town to find out what **my** rights were. I became involved with the legal process so that I could understand what was about to happen to Leroy. He lost his voice but I didn't lose mine.

Leroy was assigned a legal aid lawyer to represent him. At the strong urging of the psychiatrist that had worked with Leroy, I hired a lawyer that has since been disbarred from the Law Society shortly after Leroy's trial. As I was learning from the mistakes I had made I hired an Appellate lawyer who worked hard on Leroy's behalf. Leroy's appeal was dropped when we found out more harm would be caused if we continued.

I spoke very little to the media as I soon learned that most people believe everything that is written in the newspaper and most of what is written has little truth in it. I sat directly behind the media during the trial. One newspaperman asked me if I worked for the defence lawyer and I said no and walked away.

I received over 200 phone calls in 2 days. My sons were angry for answering the phone. I told them that if people took the time to call, the least I could do was answer the phone. Some of my friends didn't know what to say. All I could do was thank them for being there for us.

There were only 2 calls that caused me concern. One was from a person who I thought was a friend. He made threatening remarks towards Leroy as he had connections on the "inside". The other was from someone who had relatives in the province where the crime was committed and they wanted to know more information as they were not happy with what they read in the newspaper. They didn't get any more information from me.

*Continued on page 4 "Good support..." ►*

## Restorative justice in cases of family violence

By Graham Reddoch

There was a time when, if a man wanted to beat his wife and children, that was his business. What went on in the home was a private matter, and the victims covered up their shame with cosmetics and stories of falls down stairs.

Then domestic violence became a public matter, and police forces implemented “zero tolerance” policies on family violence: The perpetrator would be removed from the home and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law, regardless of the desires or interests of the victims. In fact, this isn’t necessarily a bad thing, because perpetrators of family violence usually exert both emotional and physical power and control over their victims. So if the consequences of their actions are left to their victims, then the possibility of manipulation and coercion is very high. The state should intervene to ensure the victim’s safety; to denounce the wrongdoing; and to find an end to the violence.

But while the state has made great strides in denouncing family violence, apprehending offenders, and ensuring the initial safety of victims, the questions of long-term safety and future violence prevention remain outstanding. In Manitoba, at least, we see many repeat offenders. If not always with the partner first abused, then with subsequent partners. Incarceration alone fails to end the cycle of violence, and may in fact contribute to it. In psychology professor Philip Zimbardo’s new book *The Lucifer Effect, Understanding How Good People Turn Evil*, he describes how the values and behavior of those around us influence us for good or evil. It’s possible that putting all the domestic violence offenders in the same cellblock, as we do in Manitoba, contributes to a normalization of abusive behavior, rather than diminishing it.

Restorative justice and family violence practitioners should ask the questions:

*“What gave rise to the crime in the first place?” and “What will it take for it not to happen again?”*

*Families should be empowered to find a solution that works for them. The question for families is*

*“What would you consider a successful outcome?”*

While these questions may seem like common sense, you will note that our normal criminal justice process isn’t oriented toward addressing these issues. A polarizing, adversarial process that focuses on blaming, and the infliction of pain on the offender can re-enforce the message that might is right. It asks the questions “Who is at fault?” and “How much should they be punished?”; questions that perpetrators of family violence know quite well: The person being abused is at fault, and I need to punish them so they won’t do it again.



Graham Reddoch presents at the “Families and Restorative Justice” conference.

To help address the restorative questions above, Drs. Gale Burford and Joan Pennell, two professors at Memorial University in Newfoundland, looked to the experience elsewhere with circles and conferencing. They developed a process known as *Family Group Decision Making*, along with a “How to” booklet published by Health Canada,

and two accompanying videos. One is entitled “*Widening the Circle: The Family Group Decision Making Experience*”, and the other “*Saputjinik: Healing Each Other, An Inuit family deals with domestic violence*”.

Googling “Family Group Decision Making” results in the first two hits being extensive information on the Memorial University project.

The third hit, at least when I went there this week, takes you to the “National Center for Family Group Decision Making”, sponsored by the American Humane society. While their focus is on child welfare, the principles articulated by this center are the same.

Over a three year period in Manitoba, I was involved in convening a series of focus groups to review FGDM and consider these materials. The groups included academics, family violence practitioners, and members of Social Service and Justice departments, including members of the Winnipeg Police Service. Focus groups with family violence victims and offenders were also convened.

On one occasion, nine students in a University of Manitoba Sociology class developed profiles of

family members in conflict. The students each assumed the role of a family member: child, mother, father, grandparent, brother, friend, school teacher, etc.) and acted out the FGDM process for family violence practitioners. This was followed by a discussion of benefits and drawbacks to the process.

In *Family Group Decision Making*, those most directly affected by the violence are brought together with professionals to develop sustainable, long-term plans. Victim supports are identified and a safety plan is created. Offender supports are encouraged to assist in developing a realistic plan to prevent relapses. While professionals are available to educate the family about the dynamics of domestic violence and to connect them with appropriate community resources, it is the family who owns the plan. They are in a better position to closely monitor the plan and they can raise concerns when the victim's safety plan appears in jeopardy or when the offender is slipping from his commitments. The FGDM coordinator ensures that members remain accountable for their commitments to each other. More often than not, this early intervention can prevent the kind of escalation that leads to the offender perpetrating another violent act on the family. The added advantage of this model is that the plans deal with the maltreatment of any family member, whether a child, young person, senior, or other adult. Children who witness family violence have been called the "silent" "forgotten," and "unintended" victims of adult-to-adult domestic violence." (1) The issues for children who witness family violence are not addressed within the mainstream court system which in the worst cases can revictimize and jeopardize the safety of both parents and children who have suffered from abuse.

While there was no clear consensus on the FGDM model, we observed a significant level of discouragement, despair, pessimism, and burn-out among those affected by, and dealing with, family violence. Some felt they were fighting the battle alone, and others expressed concerns over territoriality – largely because of cutbacks in funding, or limited resources.

We discovered that, whether or not an FGDM model is implemented in Winnipeg, bringing stakeholders together to grapple with practical ways of reducing family violence is of significant benefit. Ultimately we found a number of individuals and agencies who are prepared to share their knowledge and resources to make a positive difference in

supporting families to design healthy and safe futures for their children.

1. Edleson, J. (1999). **Children's Witnessing of Adult Domestic Violence**..Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 14(8).

*Graham Reddoch is the Executive Director of the St. Leonard's Society of Winnipeg. The article above was based his workshop at the "Families and Restorative Justice: The 'original' circle of support and accountability" conference in New Brunswick, November 2007. He discussed a community consultation that involved a series of focus groups in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The groups considered the use of the Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) model developed by Dr. Gale Burford and Dr. Joan Pennell in Newfoundland. This included its use in cases of family violence, incest survivors and survivors of familial homicide to address concerns with perpetrators.*

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Good support... (Continued from page 2)

Shortly after Leroy was arrested Ron heard a documentary on TV about on the Federal Prison System that CPAC was airing. The documentary gave me an insight into the prison system, one that is not portrayed in the movies which had caused me many sleepless nights. I ordered the series on video tape and I was able to see what life was like on the "inside". The information gave me some small slice of peace, even though I knew it was a documentary made for TV.

Yesterday, when Lloyd Withers talked about the kinds of family support I worried that I was one that fit in the "High Support, Low Accountability" category. Then Bernie made a comment about "tough love". I remembered a letter I had to write to Leroy. Leroy was sent for a Forensic Assessment and made comments to others that he was the biggest drug dealer in his hometown and had \$50,000 stashed away. I visited Leroy while he was in the hospital and saw his behaviour and I wasn't impressed. The Forensic Nurse knew Leroy was lying as he didn't show any signs of heavy drug abuse. He also didn't last long in the group sessions with real addicts. When I got back home I wrote a letter asking Leroy "who did he think he was and who was he kidding". We knew the truth about him but if he really did have \$50,000 stashed away he had better tell me where it was as he was going to need it. I mailed the letter

before I changed anything. When I spoke to Leroy after he received the letter, he asked me “what was that all about”. I told him I wasn’t prepared to put up with the (excuse the language) “bullshit behaviour” any longer. It didn’t continue.

My son is now serving a life sentence with no chance for parole for 22 years. That is a LIFE Sentence with a chance of parole after 22 years. He may never get out. It is a sentence that is being served by **all members** of my family. It is a choice that I am happy that my family has made. In the booklet “Time Together: A survival guide for families and friends visiting in Canadian federal prisons” produced by CFCN it talks about the roller coaster ride of emotions that we go through. This is one roller coaster I wasn’t prepared for and have wanted to get off many times but kids do not come with instructions. One of the biggest lessons I have learned through this is to love unconditionally.

I talk to Leroy about the programs he is supposed to take. When he gets frustrated, I start to worry as I know he would benefit from the programs prescribed for him, but he says the response he gets when he brings it up with his IPO is that there is a waiting list and he has served ½ of his sentence. I try to provide some kind of support, connection with the “outside”, just not the “street”. At the time of sentencing, I asked the Judge to have my son moved to our home province as quickly as possible. It took 3 years for him to “come home”. CCRA 28 states that the Service shall take all reasonable steps to ensure that the penitentiary in which the person is confined is one that provides the least restrictive environment for that person, taking into account accessibility to the person’s **home community and family**.

I have had some pretty horrendous phone bills and I wish I could earn “Air Miles” with my Jeep, but I wouldn’t have it any other way. I know many of us will be happy when the “Smart Card” finally makes it into the inmate’s hands. The telephone card will also give the inmates some form of independence and self-esteem. They will be able to purchase the cards through their canteen account and not feel like they have to depend on others to meet their needs. They will no longer have to “Call Collect”.

I feel it is critical that we maintain the connection Leroy needs to feel being part of the family so that he will survive emotionally and work towards his reintegration when his “time is up”. I send pictures as often as I can (even a picture of a bare lot to show

my son what was being done to his town, one of which he has had many raised eyebrows). I also try to write letters or short notes to let him know what is going on as often as I can. There was a period of time when Leroy didn’t call and I don’t know why. He said he didn’t call as he didn’t have anything to say, as it was the same old stuff every day, nothing changed. I told him it didn’t matter. **I had something to say to him, which is important to me.** As Leroy is now in a Low Medium Security facility we are able to have pictures taken during our visits if requested. This is another way he can stay connected as I am able to make copies of these pictures for my family.

As I am navigationally challenged, I usually need to have my route mapped out pretty good, highlighted where necessary. The signage for the Institutions was very small but has improved in size over the passed few years.

When my son was finally transferred to BC I went to Chilliwack the day before and left early the following morning to find the Institution. I found it and as the visits don’t start until early afternoon I decided to go for a tour around the local area. I landed up some forestry road as I turned right instead of left at a stop sign. I was soaked with sweat when I got to the Institution as I was almost late for the visit. I also visit as often as I possibly can. I want my son to know that we care about him and are waiting for him to be released to come home.

I started a tradition about 15 years ago buying Christmas ornaments so when my kids left home, they would have decorations for their Christmas tree. They may not have any pots and pans or dishes, but they will have decorations for their tree. My son will have his along with the pots and pans and dishes. When my son was first incarcerated he couldn’t call Christmas Day. It was painful for all of us as we missed him very much and wanted him with us.

When he was in Remand I was able to send in Christmas packages. The first year he got two. Now, all we can do is send money so he can buy his own. I know that this is a common practise for many people, but I find it very difficult. I do know that my son does have access to the Sears Christmas Catalogue and can buy something for himself when he can. His cell is also his **“home”**. He has been double-bunked for periods of time or has a single cell. He is allowed to have up to \$1500 of personal affects in his cell, all on \$5 – 6 a day. Just try buying a TV, ghetto blaster, clothes, CDs, and other personal items such as

glasses for \$1500. It doesn't take long before your limit is reached. When he has a single cell, he is allowed a key to secure his belongings.

My son was first placed in High Maximum Security for 1½ years after his assessment and I did not know what to expect when I visited him. As I stated earlier I had little knowledge of the Justice System and even less knowledge of the Prison System. I made phone calls to various organizations and searched the "net". I found out about CFCN from a link on an American website. I wanted information about the "unknown". I became involved with CFCN as I feel there is little help for families of inmates from Manitoba → west. No one was able to give me a piece of paper or information as to what to expect.

There are no Visitor Resource Centres in the Pacific Region. When I went to the trial, Victim Services provided me with a support worker. I found it very difficult when the workers talked about sending anniversary cards to the victim's families every year. I know I have some work to do around "Restorative Justice." As CSC 2006a states – Restorative Justice is a non-adversarial, non-retributive approach to justice that emphasizes healing in victims, meaningful accountability of offenders, and the involvement of citizens in creating healthier, safer communities. Families of offenders are also victims of crime.

I did agree to meet with the families of the victims involved prior to the preliminary hearing. All I could do was cry for the first 5 minutes. I didn't want to meet them in the middle of a court room filled with spectators and newspaper reporters. It was very difficult, but I wanted to show them that my son was not brought up to do the things he was accused of. My father and step-mother also came to the trial, which meant a lot to Leroy.

I was not stigmatized in my home town as I knew I had done everything for my son, up to the point of the crime, when I knew he was very troubled. I have been able to disclose to some people where my son is and what he has done, but it takes me a while before I speak of it. It is all a matter of trust.

For the most part, whenever I encountered a problem or had a question, the officers at the Institution were able to help me. Once, I was involved in a car accident, rear-ending a truck at an intersection a few kilometres from the Institution. I drove to the Institution with the front end crumpled up. There was fluid dripping out from the radiator and I told the

officer at the front counter about it and he had someone put paper underneath the car. I landed up having to have the car towed from the parking lot to a garage at the end of the visit and rent a vehicle to get home, 6 hours away. As I didn't want to disappoint my son, I didn't stop to have a look at the damage. It was only a "little bump" that cost \$6,800 and 6 weeks to fix.

My youngest son Dave and I have participated in the Private Family Visits which are very special for us. The accommodations and some of the rules vary at each Institution but the housing units are very comfortable and clean. Some units even have dishwashers. As my son loves to cook, I get a mini-holiday so I do the cleaning. It is like being at home except we have "counts" where the officers from the Institution call us to come out where they can see us.

My first encounter with a PFV was in Edmonton. I soon found out that I should make sure I arrive before or after a shift change as an hour had passed after I was placed in the housing unit and I was beginning to worry about where my son was. I looked around and found this little "button" underneath what looked like a door bell. When I pushed it officers came running towards the unit with guns drawn. When I opened the door the officer was quite surprised when he found out my son wasn't with me. He quickly shouted "stand down" into his radio. My son finally showed up 5 minutes later, with the officer explaining that he didn't know I had arrived due to the shift change until I pushed the "button".

The only problem I am now having is that I have been diagnosed with diabetes and am on insulin and other medications along with a pretty restricted diet. The last PFV was prior to the diagnosis but when I asked the officer about medications she informed me that I wouldn't be allowed to take insulin into the units. I trust that when I require my medications the officers will be attending to my needs as quickly as possible. At other PFVs my medications had to be altered to accommodate other schedules, which caused some complications later in the week.

I have also had my "bad experiences" with the ion scanner. I moved from our home town about 3 years ago and the scanner had a "hit". When it happened I had stayed over night in a hotel in downtown Vancouver and went shopping and bought some new underwear. I wore them to the visit and the ion scanner had a "hit" on my watch. I had been using my left hand to tuck my clothes in. The second scan

was fine. When I spoke to the Supervisor, who tried to intimidate me, I said it must have been some of the clothes I was wearing. Up to this point I had been visiting for 7 years with no problems.

The second time the drug dog had a “hit”. I was devastated as my visit was cancelled as a closed visit wasn’t possible. I didn’t know what was going on. After walking many miles that day (16,999 steps to be exact) the only thing I could think of I carried my coins in my hand and didn’t know the protocol. I called the Unit Manager and left messages. I faxed a letter to her explaining what had happened, but did not receive a response. Leroy was called to the Visits Review Board and he had an inmate who was a law advocate with him, which I was very grateful as some things were said that upset him.

Lloyd directed me to the pamphlet produced by CFCN where it states that we are to put our money in a plastic bag then wash our hands. It took almost a year before our visits were back to regular open visits with no restrictions. I still can’t relax until I am inside visiting my son. I still worry as one never knows what is going to happen. It is a pretty intimidating situation to say the least. I know my son “stands at the gate” as well, until he is called to the visiting area.

My second oldest Gary lives in the USA. He has not been able to visit as often as the rest of us, but Leroy is able to call and talk to him. Gary and his wife Stacey and son Liam have visited Leroy and found the visiting area comfortable for kids. Most Institutions have play areas and lots of toys to keep kids occupied. My father and step-mother also visit whenever they are down in the lower mainland. Some days though the visits aren’t long enough.

My son also has a **family** on the “inside”. As much as I would love to have a Christmas Dinner and Santa Claus with my son, he doesn’t want me to attend the Christmas Social or any other Social for that matter as he doesn’t want me to see who he lives with. The people I meet and see during Regular Visits is only about 20% of the General Population. That means there are 80% of inmates who have little or no contact with someone from the “outside” other than volunteers and the employees of the Institution.

The families I see during Regular Visits look “normal” sitting around tables’ playing cards, talking, laughing or playing with their kids. The visiting area display art and crafts for sale that have been done by the inmates. The displays are incredible considering

the inmates have to be very creative as some items needed for the craft or hobby is not readily available to them or the cost is too expensive. I saw a “Bluenose” ship waiting to be picked up by a visitor which was beautifully done and the sails had been made from kitchen T-shirts that had been waxed, then ironed.

Leroy made me a beautiful jewellery box from exquisite hardwood. I know it was a labour of love as it shows. I was speechless and almost cried when I opened the parcel. I was allowed to stand on one side of the “bubble” to open it so my son could see my reaction. He made another jewellery box for his niece and it had a huge impact on my daughter-in-law.

My son has worked on his schooling, completing some Grade 11 and 12 courses. He was also able to take some welding courses to obtain his tickets. Over the past couple of years, there has been changes made within the Federal System and some Hobby shops and courses have been cancelled. This causes some concern as the public expects a complete reintegration into society when an inmate is released. The inmates need life skills and working skills in order to be completely ready for their reintegration. Another concern I have is the moratorium on computers. The world as we know it revolves around computers, an inmate released into the community with little or no computer skills is at a great disadvantage.

While my son was incarcerated in the Prairies, he participated in a couple of aboriginal sweat lodges. It was a totally different experience for him, being able to communicate with Elders that were from the local native community.

On December 27<sup>th</sup> last year, my oldest son Ron was diagnosed with a malignant brain tumor and airlifted to southern BC for treatment. He started treatment but had a major setback in late February when an abscess formed on his biopsy and burst during a radiation treatment. We were told he had only a few hours to live so I tried to have Leroy who is incarcerated in the lower mainland, visit.

When I called the Institution where Leroy was incarcerated and told them what was going on, I received a call from Leroy within a very short period of time after talking to the Chaplain. I am surprised that he could even understand what I said as I was crying very hard. We went through the process but the National Parole Board denied the request.

Ron recovered to a point where he could be airlifted back to his home in the north-west region of the province. On the 28<sup>th</sup> of July, Ron passed away and again I requested that Leroy attend the funeral, but that request was denied as well. The Chaplain of the Institution was very compassionate and understood the impact this would have on our family and Leroy, but his support wasn't enough. We are having a Celebration of Life and internment of Ron's ashes next July and we are hoping that Leroy will be able to attend then, as he is a very integral part of our family.

I realize Leroy is just a file number to some and I know that all they have to base their decision on is what is on paper, but he is not the same person he was 10 ½ years ago. This was discussed in a conversation I had with one of Leroy's CX2s over a year and a ½ ago. He stated that when they see Leroy and what is in his file, things don't add up. Everyone has a 30 second, 2 minutes or 10 years of insanity and only by the Grace of God go I.

As the Core Values 1 of CSC Mission states - We respect the dignity of individuals, the rights of members of society and the **potential for human growth and development**. The Guiding Principles state that "we believe that respecting the rights of all concerned individuals to be informed participants in the correctional process contributes to the quality of the process and the decisions made. We recognize the **value of family and community relationships**.

Core Value 2 – We recognize that the offender has the **potential** to live as a law-abiding citizen. The Guiding Principles are – We recognize that the establishment and maintenance of positive community and **family relationships** will normally assist offenders in their reintegration as law-abiding citizens.

As the definition of "family" is awaiting final approval, at the moment "Family" is considered a group of individuals who have established close familial bonds demonstrated by affection, kinship, dependency or trust.

What does "good family support" mean to me? It means that my son has a chance to survive his sentence, work towards reintegration and become the person God meant him to be the day he was born with the support of his family. Without it I don't know where things would go from here. I read the following message from a song we sang in church a

few weeks ago and I feel it is something society needs to remember.

**"Jesus, you wept to see our  
human strife, please,  
teach us compassion  
for each human life."**

Thank you.

### **Families – support and accountability By Lloyd Withers**

There were several presentations at a recent conference in Memramcook New Brunswick on what constitutes 'good' family support. Michelle Sauvé's plenary presentations focused on providing good support. Linda Linn's presentation was moving for all the participants and she has the courage to include her talk in this issue of the Families and Corrections Journal. Other highlights included Michele Sauvé's plenary presentations on family relationships during incarceration and reintegration. It was an excellent conference.

There is such a thing as 'good' family support. Regrettably it is the families who are supportive of anti-social behaviour that grab the headlines. Each week there are news reports of someone who is visiting at a correctional facility that has been arrested while trying to bring in drugs. Sometimes it is a family member who would normally provide good support but the offender has gotten himself or herself into debt. The offender pressures the family to pay the debt by either trying to bring drugs into an institution or by depositing money in a specified bank account in the community. In other circumstances, one family member who is under constant scrutiny because of their activities may pressure or threaten a pro-social family who is not under scrutiny, but who visits at the same institution, to smuggle. Sadly, the pro-social family ends up either getting caught or at other times may ask the offender to enter protective custody so that closed, no-contact visits will end the pressuring or threats. The pressuring may end because there is limited means to pass contraband, but the lack of contact can be demanding on the family relationship.

It is the actions of the few that drive the security responses to all families. It is a continuing challenge to determine who is providing 'good' support from those who are not, and to not penalize those who are providing good support because of the few that don't.

Harry Nigh created the first Circle of Support and Accountability in 1994 to assist in the community reintegration of a high-risk sex offender in Ontario. The CoSA approach is now recognized around the world for its effectiveness in providing support. His innovative work earned him the 2007 Ron Wiebe Restorative Justice Award.

I believe that the family of the offender is the 'original' circle of support and accountability, or with the right support can be. The CFCN is currently wrapping up and evaluating its Family Group Decision-making for Reintegration (FGDMR) project. The FGDMR approach assists the family to provide support with accountability. A restorative justice practice, learnings from correctional research and a community engagement model assists the entire family with family and community reintegration. The toolkit for families that was developed in the project, *Time's Up: A reintegration toolkit for families*, will receive wider distribution at the conclusion of the project. It allows a family to prepare for reintegration without (necessarily) engaging in the entire year-long program.

Andrews and Bonta (2006) in talking about couple relationships and crime prevention state that "the risk factor is poor quality relationships in combination with either neutral expectations with regard to crime or procriminal expectations" as opposed to "high quality relationships (mutual caring, respect and interest) in combination with anticriminal expectations." (From *The Psychology of Criminal Conduct*. Anderson: Cincinnati, p. 68)

This can be said in a different way, that the risk factors are: low support, low accountability and low quality relationships, as opposed to high support, high accountability, and high quality relationships.

Tolan (2004) reinforces this thought of the role of quality relationships in the prevention of delinquent behavior:

*The strongest and most consistent evidence of effectiveness is for programs that focus on family processes, particularly parenting... Specifically, there is robust data that family-oriented intervention to (1) change parenting style and practices (increase predictability and parental monitoring, and lessen negative parenting methods) and (2) improve intrafamily relations (closeness, positive feedback, communication clarity, and emotional cohesion), or both, can affect*

*risk... Notably, all of the successful family interventions have combined behavioural parent-training techniques with other intervention components based in family systems theory. (From Tolan, P. (2004, p.121) Crime prevention: Focus on youth. In Wilson J and Petersilia, J. Crime: Public policy for crime control. ICS Press: Oakland.)*

Bonta (2007) also discusses the role of intervening with the entire family as important in crime prevention. He points out that, with respect to programs that focus only on parenting that the impact on delinquent behaviour is limited, but that "interventions that target both the relationship and parenting skills aspects of family living show the greatest effects." (From Bonta, J (2007). *Reducing delinquency through family intervention. Research Summary Vol 12 No 4. July 2007. Public Safety Canada.*)

There is a Sufi Proverb that states: "We assume that since we understand *one* we must understand *two*, because one and one makes two. But we must also understand *and*."

An offender cannot be viewed in isolation of their community relationships and how the entire family system was affected by criminal behavior and thinking. Families and family contact may sometimes cause difficulties in the correctional setting. Families can be encouraged to provide high support, high accountability and when the family is provided the necessary tools to foster high quality relationships. The family can be a circle of support and accountability.

Fostering or providing learning opportunities for 'good' family support may be critical as a factor in crime prevention. Families and visiting programs at a correctional institution can be an asset, not a problem to be accommodated.

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Sr. Edith Léger graciously accepts the 2007 Friends of the Family Award.



Monty Lewis talks about the Importance of family support.



Michele Sauvé, theme speaker at the conference.



Sr. Gemma LeBlanc, one of the recipients of the 2007 Friends of the Family Award, in deep conversation during the Families and Corrections conference.



CFCN Steering Committee (left to right): Tim Buehner, Linda Linn, Lloyd Withers (National Coordinator), Debra Barriault, Val Corcoran, Graham Reddoch, Chris Carr. Not present: Bruce MacKinnon, Marie-Claude Delorme, Scott MacIsaac.



Graham Reddoch presents Sr. Christina Doyle with the 2007 Friends of the Family Award.



"The role of the faith community with families of offenders" panel presenters.



Frank and Louise Leonardi taking copious notes during the Incarcerated Fathers workshop.

**"Families and Restorative Justice" conference – a photo display  
Memramcook, NB. November 23-24, 2007**