

City of Refuge

Fall 2003

A Voice from the Street

Vol. 2- Issue 2

Just another night on the streets... by Greg Paul

So we did surgery by flashlight the other night, on the pavement outside of the Toronto Reference Library. We found "Max" slumped against one of the concrete pillars, sweating in a t-shirt on a cool, damp September night and staring into the middle distance.

Paul (Street Outreach Worker) had encountered Max on the street earlier in the week, just a few hours after he'd been released from hospital after having some knife wounds sewed up. Max hadn't looked so good. Paul wanted to check in with him, so we went looking. He was right where Paul said he'd be. He was startled and disoriented at first when he realized we were there, but once he recovered himself, he greeted Paul like a favourite nephew.

We called Thea (one of our Staff Nurses) to see if she could come have a look. She left her outreach partner and, with a quick check, confirmed that the wound over Max's heart, one of several evil little wedges of blackened blood set in angry flesh, was infected. Thea opened her bag of tricks, snapped on a pair of latex gloves and set to work. I got to hold the flashlight.

She removed the stitches and cleaned the wound. She applied antibiotic ointment, gauze and tape, chatting casually with Max throughout and laughing at his awkward jokes. But for his occasional grunt of pain, it sounded like they were sharing a relaxed afternoon coffee.

Thea's outreach partner was still at work around the corner of the library. "Alexis", a trans-gendered woman, was curled up on a sheet of cardboard with a flimsy shawl pulled round her shoulders and her head on one forearm. She had been loud and threatening at our drop-in earlier in the evening, but now, one-to-one with Lyf (actor-in-residence), she was quiet and peaceful.

Not far from there, Steve and Sharon (Street Outreach Co-ordinator and Arts Co-ordinator respectively) were doing their usual tour of Allan Gardens when they saw a woman stumble and fall on one of the sidewalks. They could hear the dull thunk of her head hitting concrete, and ran to investigate. "Maggie's" mouth and forehead were bleeding, and she had a nasty lump over one eye. She was drunk.

She told Sharon that she thought she had broken ribs, and admitted that, yes, someone had been hurting her.

Steve called 911. The paramedic who arrived a few minutes later peered carefully at Maggie (now stretched out on a park bench) without touching her, and said, "Oh, Maggie. We pick her up all the time." He gave the bench a kick, walked back to where the ambulance was parked, opened the door and leaned against it with arms folded. Sharon and Steve supported Maggie as she stumbled to the ambulance, and bundled her inside.



Why do we do all of this?

As strange, exotic and upsetting as these encounters might seem to most of our partners, the truly weird thing is that none of it seems out of the ordinary to us. Max, Alexis and Maggie are our friends. And the scope of pain and tragedy in their lives before now is so monstrous that the incidents recounted here barely register.

Street outreach is the sharp edge of what we do here at Sanctuary. "Out there" we get to meet our friends on their own turf, on their own terms. We see them in all their ragged glory, and they see us standing in there, not turning away from the painful sight.

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But street outreach is not enough. A quick street corner conversion will not heal such deep wounds, neither will a government-funded apartment. If there's one thing I've learned in more than twenty-five years of involvement with street outreach of one kind or another, it's that there are no easy answers.

I've also learned that most of my friends don't need anything extraordinary to remediate the damage they've endured. In fact, what they need is precisely the ordinary: a home, a loving family, meaningful work with a reasonable income, friends who respect and encourage, the opportunity to express themselves, to love, to worship, to dream – the very things I often take for granted.

But it takes extraordinary effort to create and sustain a community that can supply these things when people are spiritually and socially bankrupt, drained of opportunity and dignity, squeezed dry of every last drop of hope. That's what we're trying to do.

Our crazy staff

I'm inordinately proud of our staff, not just the five named but all of them – their compassion, courage and commitment is extraordinary. One measure of that level of commitment is that they agree, on top of their already challenging work, to raise their own funds. Sanctuary leadership is bold enough to make this "unreasonable" request for three reasons.

First, it means we keep a lean, financially efficient, highly accountable organization. Second, it means the only people who end up on staff here are the crazies who just can't resist God's calling in their lives. (Frankly, the prospect of raising their own funds is terrifying to most at first.) Thirdly, and most importantly, it means that each of our staff members is upheld by a group of people who are deeply invested in their work and individual lives.

Because of our history of that kind of partnership, we've had the confidence to add five new staff members since January.

We have expanded our health care, started new art, music and drama programs, done a much better and expanded job of recruiting, training and supporting volunteers, and are developing housing and employment training initiatives.

The hard facts

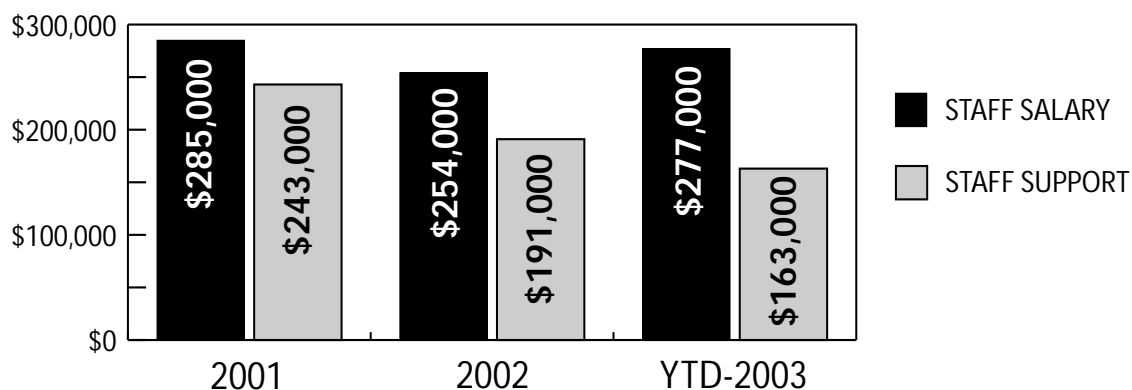
At the same time, we find ourselves, at this point in the year, scrambling financially. We're about 20% behind in our projected revenues for the year, while we have at the same time, served about 50% more people than we budgeted for in drop-ins alone. Again, our staff have been brilliant. In almost every category, they've kept expenditures well below budget.

If you combine a few factors – new staff just starting to raise their own salaries, widespread lower charitable giving, and more people in need than ever before – you'll understand how we've ended up in a deficit position for the year so far. We've been able to carry this because we entered the year with a surplus, and we're not running on borrowed money. We won't either. If we don't have it, we won't spend it. The kicker is that, if we don't spend it, a lot of already hurting people hurt some more.

Our supporters are a remarkably generous and dedicated bunch. We don't think it's realistic to expect that they (you!) can simply pony up a little more cash. So I want to ask you to do two things for us. Pray – ask God to make sure we get enough money and materials to do what's necessary. And tell other people about Sanctuary – pass around this newsletter, bring friends for a visit if you can, show people our website, invite somebody from Sanctuary to speak (or play music, or do a drama presentation) at your church, business, public service club, etc. Ideally, we'd like to connect individuals or groups with individual staff members, so that sense of partnership remains keen.* And thanks for your ongoing partnership with us in this vital work!

***Questions or ideas? Please contact Greg Paul at 416-922-0628, ext. 13 or gregp@sanctuaryministries.on.ca**

STAFF SALARIES PAID / STAFF SUPPORT RAISED



Faces of Our Community



Dr. Ted Kay

Dr. Ted Kay has been a friend of Sanctuary since its earliest days having served on our Board of Directors, in its various legal forms, for the approximately 10 years or so that a governing Board has been in place. Ted's easy-going manner combined with his abundant and

accessible wisdom have made him a vital asset to the Board and to the staff throughout those years.

For the last several years as well, as Ted has been trying to retire from his medical practice, he has offered his expertise on a volunteer basis as our medical clinic's supervising MD. Whether on a consultant basis or in hands-on work with our community, he has been a tremendous help in providing this much-needed service to many within our community.

Anne Turcot

Anne Turcot first started coming to the Wednesday drop-ins a couple of years ago. She heard about Sanctuary through Kathy Church, a past staff member. Anne began by helping out in the kitchen. Now she hangs out in the drop-in encouraging people to create visual art. An artist herself, it's not uncommon to find her sketching someone and there's many a community member who has proudly shown his or her portrait. It's hard to bypass Anne in the drop-in. Her white hair and upright, distinguished person speaks of maturity and refinement, her smile and words testify to her compassion. To those who've taken the time to come close she's offered love and acceptance in a dignified way.



Thank you Anne, for the gift of yourself to our community.

What Does Sanctuary Mean to Me?

I have been coming to Sanctuary for about 2 years now. I almost found myself on the street; actually for about 5 days I was on the street. At that point I began to lose faith in myself, began questioning myself, "why am I here?" I found out about Sanctuary from someone on the street. I began coming here once or twice a week, hanging out, playing cards, etc. Being on a limited income, a small pension, it can be hard to live from month to month. The people at Sanctuary welcomed me with open, loving arms. I know I have more friends here than I thought I ever would have. I feel better about myself, more secure. I also feel a lot healthier thanks to the help of Keren Elumir and the nursing staff. I have been "cigarette free" for almost a year. The staff here have helped me out a great deal. Kathy Church helped me get into a computer class. Paul Baetz and I attend various sporting events. To me Sanctuary means meeting people, making friends, not wasting my time, being able to feel useful, being part of something. **By Doug A.**

Danyal Mathiason



It's not easy living in a world of change. It's even more difficult to be accepted for oneself while undergoing change. For Danyal, the trans-gendered world rarely allows for safe spaces. Thankfully, Sanctuary has lived up to its name for Danyal. A regular drop-in attendee, Danyal is a friend to many. We've cried together, been angry together and laughed together. At the Aids Vigil in Cawthra Square each year, we've mourned the loss of lives, many personal friends of Danyal. As our lives intersect in drop-ins, at community events and on the streets in the gay village, we continue to trade realities: a deep-hearted struggle for love and acceptance and the abiding, unconditional love of the One who has made everyone in His own image. Thankfully, we're journeying together.



Sanctuary has a partnership with a supplier, called "The Bargains Group" which provides us with much needed socks and other basic items for our community, at 80% off. They are an organization that has everything from socks, rain jackets, personal hygiene items, underwear, sleeping bags, bottled water and much more. Recently, they had a project called "Project Water" which donated cases of water to charitable organizations who work with the homeless. Sanctuary received 20 cases (24 bottles in each) of bottled water, which we proceeded to give to our community through our Street Outreach program. If interested, you can purchase items through them and direct it to Sanctuary by just giving them an order over the phone, and they will deliver it to us.

Contact them by phone 416-785-5655 or check them out on their website www.bargainsgroup.com.

INTERESTED IN E-MAIL NEWS FROM SANCTUARY?

Would you prefer to receive this newsletter by e-mail?

Can we add you to our "E-mail Contact List" for special needs within the Sanctuary community?

If you answered "YES" to either question please send your e-mail address to:

info@sanctuaryministries.on.ca

Staff Comings & Goings



"Welcome!" to **Alan Beattie**, who joined the Sanctuary staff as **Managing Director** at the beginning of September. Alan and his wife Colleen have been core members of the Sanctuary community since its beginning 11 years ago. Alan has served as a member of the Board of Directors, and as one of the leaders of the Sanctuary

church. He comes to us from R.G. Mitchell's Family Books, where he had worked for 17 years, most recently as Director of Retail Operations. As if that's not transition enough, Alan and Colleen's children, Aidan, Zachary and Cassidy will be joined by a little brother or sister in November. As with all our staff, Alan will be seeking to develop a group of financial supporters/partners for his ministry here. If you're interested in learning more about what his job entails, why not contact him directly at (416) 922-0628 ext. 11 or alanb@sanctuaryministries.on.ca?

Erinn Oxford has recently informed us that she will not be returning to work at Sanctuary when her maternity leave is over. While we miss her, and would love to have her back, we've also met her little Cate, and understand perfectly why she's made this choice! We pray that God will bless her and Dion as parents, and supply what they need as a family. And we're so thankful to Erinn's supporters, who "gifted" us with her presence and abilities.

Yes, I want to partner with you.

- ☐ My church/workplace should hear about Sanctuary.
- ☐ I would like to participate in a **volunteer orientation**.
- ☐ I commit to **pray** for the Sanctuary community.
- ☐ I would like to support Sanctuary on a **monthly basis**.
- ☐ I want to **financially support** your ministry:
 - ☐ Where most needed
 - ☐ Staff Name _____
 - ☐ Street Outreach
 - ☐ Meal Programs
 - ☐ Health Care ☐ Arts/Music/Drama
 - ☐ Mustard Tree Employment Program

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Province _____ Postal Code _____

Tel.: _____

Email.: _____

Please make donations payable to: **Sanctuary Ministries of Toronto**
Tax receipts will be issued at year end. Charitable #89037 9340 RR 0001

10-03

Ministry Updates

Street Outreach: We currently have Outreach teams hitting the streets of our community on at least 7 different occasions every week. They sometimes offer food, sometimes drink, sometimes health care and always a listening ear.

Drop-Ins: The summer has been unexpectedly busy for us with up to 400 meals being served weekly. We continue to see more and more faces being added to our list of 'regulars', many of whom come to treat Sanctuary as their own and take positive steps towards community.

Health Care: Along with our two staff nurses, we now also have 3 doctors and 1 additional nurse volunteering regularly in our health clinic. We look forward to expanding our services in this area even further throughout 2004.

Arts: We entered the Fall with two full-time staff devoted to the development of arts and drama programs for our community. It is inspiring to see how many of our community come to life when given the opportunity to express themselves through the arts!

Peacemaker: Steve and his wife Crystal continue to be embraced as chaplains to a chapter of the ABATE biker group. In September, their 'parish' joined us down at Allan Gardens for our fourth annual Corn Roast where they served 80 dozen cobs of corn and more, to the hungry crowds.

Mustard Tree: After a long wait, we have finally secured a place to begin our employment training program. Who knew it would be so hard to find space in Toronto? We'll be setting up the shop during November and planning on beginning intake of our first participants in December. Yahoo!

Housing: Keep praying for the establishment of a transitional house for Sanctuary community members. We look forward to the development of a supported 'surrogate family setting' for a few of our members who are ready to take that step.

Ongoing Needs

Having read the above updates, you might well wonder where you can plug in. Here are some suggestions:

Volunteering: If you are interested in joining us in any of the above programs, we would love to talk with you about how you can be involved. Specifically, we would love to meet more doctors, nurses and dental hygienists who could help us address the many and varied health care needs of our community. Also, if you are a skilled wood worker interested in helping out with Mustard Tree, please speak up! Contact **Karen Paul at (416) 922-0628 ext. 17** or karenp@sanctuaryministries.on.ca to discuss the possibilities.

Donations: Along with the general everyday financial needs, there are many practical items that you, your workplace or your church could donate. Mustard Tree is looking for new or gently used woodworking tools. As well, check our website or call us for a list of ongoing health care and food-related needs. This is a great way to partner with us.

SANCTUARY

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