

COMMUNITY TIMES

Fall 2010 – Issue 2



For People For Change
FAMILY SERVICE TORONTO

Welcome to the second issue of Options' Community Times Newsletter. With the turning of the leaves and the crisp winds of Fall we are given an opportunity to think about the place of change in our lives and communities. Celebrations such as Eid, Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashanah, Halloween, Diwali, Samhain, Thanksgiving, All Saints Day, and Days of the Dead make this a season of significance with many traditions. Whether people gather to share the year's harvest, reflect on the previous year and clear the way for a fresh start, give thanks, remember loved ones and make offerings for those we have lost, dress up, cast off fears, or take back and light up the night it is a season to look at the balance we seek in our lives and to prepare for the winter season ahead.

Have you heard the expression: 'the only thing that stays the same is change'? Throughout our lives we all have experience of things changing. Some change is unavoidable, like the changing weather and growing older. Change can also be something you want to do because of what's important to you. As community networkers, we view change as a creative force that motivates people to want to make things better in our lives and communities. When people open their hearts with mutual respect and appreciation, even the simplest acts can have a big impact. We invite you to stay open to change, and to look at your life and the lives of those you care about and consider what role you might play and what change you would like to see. What do you like and want to keep? What do you want to change?

We all want to have a good life. Though our needs may be different, we all need other people and we all have something to give. This is interdependence. We quoted Marshall McLuhan in the last newsletter: "There are no passengers on Spaceship Earth, we are all crew." It is important to remember that we are all connected. You likely have your own experiences with someone who needs your help in some ways, who also helps you in other ways. What if more people recognized the value of these relationships? When people share what they have to give with each other, and acknowledge what we learn from people with disabilities in our lives, that *does* nurture community. Reflecting on the 'big picture', change is required on many levels. There are lots of reasons to work towards change: everybody wants to feel appreciated, safe to express our individual selves, to be understood, respected and valued. The idea of change can seem overwhelming, but it starts with believing it is important, you are important, and the people you care about are important too.

What is commonly recognized as 'normal' can be very limiting. We encourage you to define it for your own unique self, and let others do the same. Learning to live better together means being aware of what we have in common as well as valuing our differences, and the opportunities they present us with to learn and challenge ourselves. We look for and support others who understand that they may need to change so that more of us feel welcome. When you want to belong, there can be a lot of pressure to fit in, especially if you often feel excluded and are not sure what others expect of you. It's good to talk about this. There are people and places who could very well be waiting to meet you, who need what you have to give. Stay open, and look for possibilities. Are they willing to learn from you and let you be yourself? Do they encourage you to be your best? Do you feel respected? A true sense of belonging can be real motivation for personal growth and improvement. There will always be room to grow and more to share. This also creates possibilities that can only arise from bringing more of our differences together. It can spark energizing and hopeful conversations, and lead to change for the better that benefits more than just one person.

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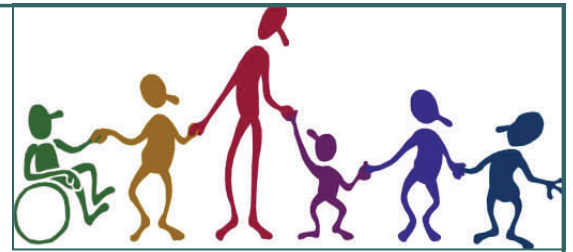


Inside this issue:

| | |
|----------------------|-----|
| Introduction | 1-2 |
| Word Puzzle | 2 |
| Making Change | 3 |
| Community Resources | 4 |
| Self Advocacy | 5 |
| You Tube-Watch This! | 5 |
| I AM | 6 |
| Get Involved | 6 |
| Contact Us | 6 |



Often, rather than learning from each other, our human differences are exaggerated and divided by stereotypes that keep people separate. Stereotypes are unfair and often negative assumptions or ideas that create a false picture of a group of people, and can lead to unjust treatment, and pre-judging of a person's ability, skills and personality. In other words, prejudice. Stereotypes shape how people are viewed and how they feel about themselves. How do we go about challenging these stereotypes? This is the kind of change that also needs to happen.



However, it is in relationships with other people that we become more real than the stereotypes, and the fear of difference which may have been there at the beginning can start to melt away. As we have said before, we believe that relationships are at the heart of community. It is our hope that as we increase positive experiences, build community connections and support relationships we encourage change for the better. We are trying to build the world that we want to live in, to learn from past mistakes and make way for change that respects and meets the needs of all people.

WORD PUZZLE

T M M H E A L T H I I B C Z J P R R Q H
 V U H T M Q A Z S F U L F L E S R U O Y
 O W S A U T U M N R E I P D J Q R C T L
 T Z E L I M S E Y V U Z M C Q N E H O T
 Y S T N O I T A N R E B I H Y H S A Z Y
 G E K R E T T E B S T E P A O N P N S T
 S V O H D I F F E R E N C E W G E G X I
 U A T I M E S P X N S J H I Z N C E N L
 R E X X F E F T M H G S J C Y I T K I A
 V L D E C I S I O N S W Y U W N K J O U
 I L F P K M I T O E R Y F Y A R Q R G T
 V G H A I W C F Y Y M D Q P T A T H F I
 O B B P R R T R P R R N O M Y E J P F R
 R S O Q E Z N G X B B L Z Y J L O V E I
 S Y I A U E H M B I O Y E R W O C V G P
 M I G R A T I O N G F F M C C E N N B S
 A S K I N G Q U I U D X Z Q O G Y N Y U
 V C B Z F R I E N D S S U P P O R T M K
 C O L D D D S U G N N X F O M Q K C V X
 D B Q F O J A N W I N T E R O B E C X H

THINKING ABOUT
CHANGE

By: Self-Advocate
Group

- WINTER
- MIGRATION
- TIMES
- SURVIVORS
- FUN
- ASKING
- SPIRITUALITY
- TRY
- RESPECT
- COLD
- HIBERNATION
- CHANGE
- DECISIONS
- STEP
- LOVE
- SMILE
- APOLOGIES
- YOURSELF
- AUTUMN
- LEAVES
- HEALTH
- LEARNING
- SUPPORT
- FRIENDS
- BETTER
- DIFFERENCE

Making Change: From ideas to action



Thinking about connecting to community, it is easy to feel confused about where to start. Sometimes that confusion can be mixed with a feeling that our opinions and participation don't matter. When this happens in our lives, we may feel silenced and can become stuck. When this happens in our communities, this can lead to a small number of people making decisions for the rest of us. There are a number of ways that people can and do get together to make change. This works best by staying open to the contributions of as many people as are willing and interested to join.

If there is something that you believe is important, there is a good chance that other people feel the same way. The challenge can be finding these people, and learning how to work together. We can help you get started, or support you to connect with people or groups who may already be working on similar issues. We believe your dreams and ideas are important. At Options, we use a person directed approach to support people to make change in their own lives or in their community. As community networkers, we are here to listen to your ideas, and support you to connect with others and move together towards action.

When people have support to identify what they feel needs changing, and they are a major part of making that change, good things can happen!

Here are some helpful steps that you might want to try, and we would be happy to do this with you.

1. **Start with an idea.** Something needs changing and you know you cannot do it alone.
2. **Develop a vision.** A vision is the hope and dream of where you want to go. You could write out a story of your vision or dream, or draw it or paint it. It could be a song. The point is that you need to have an idea of where you want to go, so you will know when you get there, or when you don't.
3. **Tell your personal story.** This can be just for yourself or you can share it with others. What are your reasons for doing this? Why is it that this issue or this dream is important to you? Connect on a deeper level with yourself. What is it about your history, family background or experience that moves you to do this?
4. **Find good listeners.** Who do you need to listen in order to develop your idea? This step requires a lot of patience and a lot of time. This step has been called the "long march through kitchens and coffee shops." Be sure to meet with and communicate with everyone you can think of who would be helpful in developing the idea.
5. **Put your idea in writing.** The idea will become more powerful if it's in writing. It can be passed around and it is easier to share with lots of people. If you want to start an organization, this could be a time to come up with a name.
6. **Bring a group of people together.** Now is the time to gather a group of people who are willing and interested in working together. You might come up with a group mission statement and a plan action. Now your idea has the support of other people and you have succeeded in creating a community of people around this idea. The challenge now is to sustain the group and get started on making that idea and vision a reality!

***Learn from mistakes * Expect challenges * Think about what you need when things are difficult * Don't give up! ***

Michael Jacoby Brown, *Building Powerful Community Organizations: A Personal Guide to Creating Groups that Can Solve Problems and Change the World*. Long Haul Press, 2006. pp 24-25.





Community Resources



ArtStarts

Is a not for profit organization committed to arts-based community development in the city of Toronto. Their mandate is to build healthier communities using the arts. They understand that the arts are a medium for engaging neighbourhood residents, creating a shared sense of identity, identifying challenges and collectively working to overcome them. They use the arts as a vehicle to encourage social change in at-risk neighbourhoods. They offer high quality, responsive and relevant creative opportunities to those who do not have access - namely people living in underserved and stressed communities. They bring together professional artists with people from various neighbourhoods and create projects and programs in all artistic media, with all ages, with artists and participants from various ethnic backgrounds. They reflect the cultures of the neighbourhood and build bridges among them.

www.artstarts.net Yorkdale Mall 416-656-9994 info@artstarts.net

Dance Our Way Home

The practice of DOWH is centred around community and envisions one where ALL women are included and ALL women are given the space to dance their way home. DOWH is “a unique combination of free-style dance woven together with life-affirming ideas and teachings, relaxation exercises and guided imagery. It is a complete experience that touches body, heart, mind and soul, where every woman is free to move at her own pace, in her own way. I believe that women don't need to be pushed or challenged – only given love, appreciation, encouragement, acceptance and the chance to express themselves. And, whoever you are, know this – you are magnificent, important and worthy of respect, care and safe-keeping.” DOWH is also actively doing community outreach, so contact the them to get involved, share ideas, and help them to become even more inclusive.

<http://www.danceourwayhome.com> 416-538-8408 erica@danceourwayhome.com

Festival of Lights: December 21, 6pm in Kensington Market

In many cultures, the changing of seasons has provided a reason to celebrate and for communities to gather together. For the past 21 years, Kensington Market has been home to a street festival called the Festival of Lights. The Festival is a celebration of light on the darkest day of the year, and pays tribute to a variety of winter solstice traditions and stories from places and communities around the world. Starting at 6pm you can take part in a community parade, where you can make noise or carry a lantern or dance. If you are interested in the weeks leading up to the festival, there are opportunities to make your own lantern.

<http://redpepperspectacle.wordpress.com/festival-of-lights> 416-598-3729 redpepper.spectacle@sympatico.ca

Free Computers from Free Geek Toronto

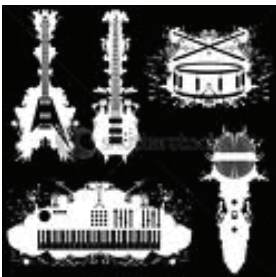
A new organization in west Toronto (near Keele and Dundas St West) that trades your volunteer time for a computer! If you are willing to volunteer for 24 hours, you can get a free computer as well as a free class on how to use it and one year of free technical support. At Free Geek you can also learn how to build computers, make decisions by consensus, learn about open source software, participate in a workgroup and work in their Thrift Store.

www.freegeektoronto.org 416-572-3737 operations@freegeektoronto.org

Keys to the Studio

This is a phenomenal community based organization in Toronto that gives emerging musicians the opportunity to collaborate with professional musicians one-to-one, and join group rehearsals, workshops, recordings, public jam sessions and concert performances. Their work supports and promotes original music from people with developmental and intellectual disabilities, promoting greater inclusion and making an impact in the world of the arts.

<http://www.keystothestudio.com/> 416-532-8480 info@keystothestudio.com



A big congratulations to all the Keys' travelling musicians upon their return from Mexico City where they performed for a huge audience at the Teatro Metropolitano in La Inclusión Son Muchas Voces (Inclusion is Many Voices).

News Article: <http://www.thestar.com/article/877859--keys-to-the-studio-to-sing-at-concert-in-mexico-city>



“We can begin by doing small things at the local level, like planting community gardens or looking out for our neighbors. That is how change takes place in living systems, not from above but from within, many local actions occurring simultaneously. You cannot change any society unless you take responsibility for it, unless you see yourself as belonging to it and responsible for changing it.” (Grace Lee Boggs)

Social Change and Self-Advocacy



ACT, Advocating for Change Together: Run by and for people with developmental and other disabilities this is strong self-advocacy in action. Through personal empowerment, disability awareness, and systems change they work on many great projects, build leadership and organize to challenge oppression, improve people's lives and impact community. There is an extensive catalogue of resources they have developed and descriptions of the variety of workshops they offer to generate social change. <http://www.selfadvocacy.org/index.htm>

Offense Taken: This film documents a community's organized response to the public use of the "R" word. <http://www.selfadvocacy.org/offensetaken/>

Label Free Zone: Developed by Canadian self-advocates and the National Film Board. Very accessible site to share opinions, stories and upload your own thoughts and videos. Add yourself to the map, suggest a topic you are interested in or add your two cents to the current discussions about relationships and institutions. <http://lfz.nfb.ca/>

The Freedom Tour: A documentary created by People First of Canada and People First groups in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta about their community efforts to close institutions. http://www.peoplefirstofcanada.ca/images/Guide_Freedom_Tour_eng.pdf

Leadership and Self-Advocacy Oral History Project: Explores the life stories of 13 leaders in the self-advocacy movement and their perspectives on key issues and leadership challenges. http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/ROHO/collections/subjectarea/ics_movements/self_advocacy.html#about

The Autistic Self Advocacy Network: "Seeks to advance the principles of the disability rights movement in the world of autism... to empower Autistic people across the world to take control of their own lives and the future of our common community. Nothing About Us, Without Us!" They organize to build self-advocacy, address public perceptions of autism, promote neurodiversity and speak up about policy and social change issues. They have a speakers bureau, a wealth of online community resources and writing by people on the autistic spectrum, a mailing list and an online social support group for autistic parents. So much great stuff on their website! <http://www.autisticadvocacy.org/>

"Through the Same Door" Parts 1, 2, 3: In many ways, 21 yr old Micah Fialka-Feldman enjoys a typical life: making friends, going to college, and volunteering in the community and in politics. Less typically, he travels the country speaking. But for all of his life, there have been people telling him that he could not have a regular life. These pieces document the new movement of fully inclusive education by exploring Micah's desire for a life without boundaries. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fWnCVd2cBpA>

Moving in after the 2 yr struggle to live on campus at University. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K9NGQ1VWPh4>
His website. <http://www.throughthesamedoor.com/>

You Tube...Watch This!



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sFWZd4IsPgw&feature=related>

"Celebrating Differences" features children from The Shri Ram School-an Inclusive School in Delhi. The song urges people to celebrate differences, be it in terms of ideas, abilities, appearances, perspectives, cultures etc.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2LUT8CT7Bf4&feature=related>

"Lets rethink a new vision for our world which is based on every human person is important and that means that we all have to change." Jean Vanier

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M8NUktSNe8s&feature=related>

Awesome short animation! created by Year 10 pupils at Fleming Fulton School in Scotland

People were inspired by L'Arche Cape Breton Drama Group's original video on youtube:

I AM

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rYA6OjG_E4k

And so during a meeting at the library, Self-Advocacy Group members came up with a list of their own...

I am....

Happy
Good at making DVD's
A big dreamer
Courageous
Friendly
A hard worker
Myself
Loving
Dedicated
Perfect
A jolly person
Beautiful
Going to change the way
disability affects my life
Learning how to knit
Funny
A terrific woman
I don't know

I love...

Myself
Having my own keys
Going on trips
Pepsi and Tic Tacs
Kids
Making DVD's for people
Celtic music
Working with people with
disabilities
Peace for the world
Stargazing at the trailer
Being with people and
talking to each other
Dancing
Family time
Having internet in my own
apartment
Tarantulas
My friends and the people
around me

I hate...

When there's wars
Being teased
When people don't
respect my privacy
Dust bunnies
People telling me what
to do
My family judging me for
being on ODSP
Being bossed around
When people don't
respect my opinions
Having a stuffy nose
Being ridiculed or judged
Taking my medication
People budding in when I
am talking
Negativity
People fighting
Roller coasters

I dream...

That I'm on the beach with
fresh air
About celebrities
Of an end to poverty and
segregation
To go back to school
Of peace
Of being on stage
To graduate in early
childhood teacher assistant
program
About being a staff
Being in love
To get my license
Of Summer all year round

Singing:

"I'll be your dream. I'll be
your wish. I'll be your fantasy.
I'll be your hope. I'll be your
love. Be everything that you
need. I'll love you more with
every breath. Truly, madly,
deeply do. I will be strong.
I will be faithful 'cause I'm
counting on a new beginning a
reason for living a deeper
meaning." Savage Garden

"This is a reminder that disability shouldn't be something judged upon or bad or something to feel you are guilty for. We aren't just out there to show we have a disability but to be what we can be. Let me show you what special gifts that I came with that would surprise you. We can make a big contribution, and we are not gonna let disability wreck our dreams. We are here to fight for our right and I will show them that I can do what I can do. Just give me a chance to be free as a bird like everybody else, I want to spread my wings and fly, and I have a right to soar."

-Laurie Woloshyn



We want to continue these conversations, so please feel free to send us your feedback and ideas. We are also building the editorial collective and looking for people to contribute to the Spring 2011 issue of Community Times.

Calling all writers, artists, poets, photographers, and anyone interested in the topic of community building!

You can participate by submitting something, sending us your feedback and ideas, or getting involved in the planning and editing of the newsletter.

**We would love to hear from you! You can contact the Community Network Team at Options:
Joel Regehr and Leah Dolmage (416) 971-6326 ext. 235 or ext. 222.**