

MAKING THE CONNECTION: SOCIAL CAPITAL

By Roya Rabbini

Did you know that having “connections” is good for your health? I learned this when I lost my own connections, and left the place I had lived in most of my life. Before moving, I had family, friends, acquaintances and neighbours. These connections also had their own connections: by ripple effect, I had a network of people that I could rely on. If I was under stress, I called my friends to talk. If I was sick, I relied on family. When jobless, I called my network of connections to find opportunities. Amazing how this informal network of support can satisfy a large number of needs and reduce reliance on the social service system.

Social scientists and researchers call this network “Social Capital” and like any other capital it can be increased or depleted. Just as physical or material capital (or lack thereof) can affect health, so too can lack of social capital. Researchers have long noted the positive health benefits of social connections, even naming this outcome “the Roseto Effect”, after the town which was studied in the 50’s and 60’s. Inhabitants of this closely knit community had lower levels of cardiovascular disease, while having the same rates of fat intake, smoking and exercise as people living in near-by towns.

Building networks of support for those who lack it is not difficult. We need to recognize the need for social capital and have a systemic approach for creating it. Helping people in marginalized communities develop their social capital will not only help them to survive, but to thrive. SHRC can assist by delivering capacity-building workshops for both professionals and community members.

Are simple solutions to human problems possible? Yes! Developing mutual aid groups to rebuild eroded social connections in our communities is one of those simple (but not easy) solutions.

HOW SELF-HELP GROUPS HELP

In all kinds of ways:

- Decreased hospitalization, length of stay and use of professional services
- Decreased isolation & improved social networks
- Increased insight and coping skills
- Decreased mortality

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

- **Self-Help Awareness Week (SHAW)** September 22nd—29th, 2008, focuses on Mental Health and Mutual Aid.
- **Join us at our Annual General Meeting, Thursday September 25th.**
- **Topics for the Fall Workshop Series to include: Self-Help 101 (Sept 24), Icebreakers (Oct 29) and Volunteer Management (Nov 20).**

THANKING OUR MOST LOYAL VOLUNTEERS



Where would we be without our volunteers! And on Wednesday April 30th, during National Volunteer Week, we thanked them formally with a Volunteer Tea Party. Thanks to all volunteers and in particular: Jean Hynes for her 12 years of service and Deena York for 10 years. Want to learn about volunteering? Email volunteer@selfhelp.on.ca

From L to R: Jean Hynes, Nattasha Lue and Deena York





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Volunteer Tea on April 30, 2008

SELF-HELP COMMUNITY NEWS

WHAT MAKES YOUR GROUP TICK?

Are you part of a group that really works, but wondering how other groups do things differently? Feel like sharing what's unique about your group, what works and what doesn't?

The Self-Help Resource Centre is looking for group facilitators to come forward with their stories, strengths, challenges, and advice for other groups. We will put you in touch with our Volunteer Group Profiler, who will interview you over the phone and write up a brief profile of your group. Profiles will be printed in future editions of our newsletters, posted on our website and included in other resource material.

With over 400 groups in our database, we know that there are as many different ways to organize and run a group as there are groups. Share your experience and help us learn from each other.

Please contact Aleksandra Vasic, Resource Coordinator at resource@selfhelp.on.ca for more info.

AROUND THE WATER COOLER

Watching staff resign is such a bittersweet experience: we're sad to lose the company of co-workers but happy for them as they move on to exciting new opportunities. 2008 is just such a bittersweet year. In February, Neil Muscott, Resource Coordinator, left SHRC to accept the position as the Director of the Peterborough Arts Umbrella. In March, we had two departures, first Julie Curitti, who left her role at the Family Councils Program for a position much closer to home. A few weeks later, Gillian Kranias, OSHNET's Co-Coordinator for the past 8 years announced her new role at the Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre as a Health Promoter, leaving Spencer Brennan as the sole OSHNET Coordinator.

In May, Nattasha Lue returned from her maternity leave, Aleksandra Vasic (interim Coordinator of Volunteers) stepped into Neil's Resource Position, and Lorraine Purdon was hired as the new Network Coordinator at FCP. Best wishes to our departing staff and welcome to the new!

THE PEOPLE BEHIND SHRC

Board of Directors: Beth Hoen (President), Alex Tarantino, Althea Joseph, David Michaels, Debbie Thompson, Estelle Eisenberg, Jennifer Poole, Lynn Laccohee, Mandy Myronuk, Matthew Lerner, Rama Fayaz, Roberta Albert, Ruth Lerner, and Sharifa Gomez. Thank you and best wishes to board member Enrique Robert, who is stepping down in June, 2008.

Staff: Roya Rabbani (Executive Director), Rick Henry, Nattasha Lue, Spencer Brennan, Carolyn Burley, Lorraine Purdon, Barbara Leja, Samantha Peck and May Karry.

Newsletter Editor: Aleksandra Vasic, Resource Coordinator, resource@selfhelp.on.ca

Volunteers: Asuah Donkor, Deena York, Elsie Barclay, Emi Skenderi, Jean Hynes, John Robinson, Julia Petrenko, Karin Davis, Mercy Kamau, Monifa Clarke, Monika Goodluck, Pam Bailey, Sandra Guerro, Sunita Karmakar, Yue Yin, and Zelda Harris (Honourary Volunteer).

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