



Positive solutions to conflict and crime in our community

FAMILIES INDIVIDUALS SCHOOLS WORKPLACE FAITH GROUPS COURTS PRISONS NEIGHBOURHOODS

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING ISSUE • JUNE 2009 • COMMUNITY JUSTICE INITIATIVES OF WATERLOO REGION

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Please join us June 24th,
4:30pm at CJI Headquarters
49 Queen Street North, Kitchener
www.cjiwr.com 519-744-6549

Giving Back TO MOVE FORWARD

Women in prison and a Kitchener boutique craft a unique partnership

They may be serving time behind the walls of a federal prison, but through a unique CJI partnership with a local craft boutique dozens of female inmates at Grand Valley are being offered a headstart for their lives beyond those walls.

For the past 11 years, CJI's groundbreaking Stride program has worked with women incarcerated at the Grand Valley Institution for Women (GVI), providing the support of caring volunteers to help them successfully re-enter society. An integral component of the program is the weekly recreational evenings in which volunteers build positive relationships with the women through crafts, games and various workshops. And while the volunteers already offer the women a strong community connection, a recently forged partnership with RareFunk, a downtown Kitchener boutique featuring an array of out-of-the-ordinary garments, jewellery and other items, has taken it a significant step further.

"This is a great way for us to build a better relationship with the community"—a commonly held sentiment among the women

Some 50 to 80 women attend the weekly Stride Nights and many of the crafts they produce there are now being sold at RareFunk via the newly-dubbed Fresh Start Creations. Under the arrangement, all proceeds from the crafts these women produce and sell, from custom jewelry to cork boards, will be donated to a local charity chosen by the women. The initial recipient of the proceeds from this novel enterprise is the area's Child Witness Centre.

below: Proprietor Tamara Minns amongst her funky finds at RareFunk, 8 Duke St. E. right: The name and logo designed by the women at Grand Valley adorns the hang-tag.



"All proceeds will go directly to . . . providing specialized support and court preparation for child victims and witnesses of crime," says Linda Mark, the recipient agency's Resource Development Coordinator. "We're honoured to be the first charity to receive proceeds from the women of Grand Valley."

"Meanwhile, the benefits for the women involved in the enterprise are immeasurable," says Taralea DeMeuleneare, CJI's Stride Circles Service Coordinator.

"What I pose to the women is that they are learning the basics of marketing a business from the ground up," she explains. "Most of these women aren't likely to start a business of their own right

out of prison, but they will still be able to learn the skills they need to market their creations to, say, consignment shops."

But these women will tell you there are other reasons why they enthusiastically embrace this newly formed partnership with a community-based enterprise.

"This is a great way for us to build a better relationship with the community," says a participant, echoing a commonly held sentiment among the women. "I'm really pumped about this project because it creates the space for us to explore our creativity. But it's also a genuine partnering arrangement based on one common thread—giving back to the community in order to move forward."

QUESTION:

What were a high school principal, two guidance counsellors, a political science professor and three students from the Ukraine doing in Kitchener?

Answer: CJI recently received yet more validation as to its international renown when it recently hosted a group of Ukrainian visitors hoping to grow newly established restorative justice programs of their own. The group included three students, each volunteers in the fledgling peer mediation program at their high school, their principal, two guidance counsellors and a political science professor. During the three-hour meeting with CJI staff, which included Ukrainian song and dance performances by two of the students, the visitors came armed with a long list of questions in order to benefit from the agency's 35-year experience with restorative justice.

CJI staff member Marie-Jose van der Zande was the tour guide for the MCC sponsored group, which also visited area high schools and sights. The visit was part of an MCC exchange program. Dennis Gingrich, head of guidance at Resurrection Secondary School and a longtime CJI volunteer, went to the Ukraine last year with a group of students. After leaving Waterloo Region, the group travelled to Langley, B.C., before returning the Ukraine. Van der Zande says the group found its visit to CJI particularly enlightening and inspirational and believed their experience would help them significantly as they forged ahead with their own mediation programs.

Did you know that? For the past 11 years Stride has mobilized 229 community volunteers who have donated 31,000 hours supporting women's reintegration from prison!

# Mark

*leaves his Mark*

**After 35 years, a widely acknowledged leader of the worldwide restorative justice movement leaves CJI, confident it is in a good place**



**“We have been surprisingly successful inspiring people to support these causes.”**

**M**ark Yantzi admits to some sheepishness amid the many accolades he’s received lately.

“It’s not like we started out with this grand plan or anything,” CJI’s co-founder and executive director says with typical modesty. Indeed, he recalls the almost serendipitous beginnings of the agency that launched a worldwide restorative justice movement.

“We were young and naïve enough, I guess, to have the audacity to believe we could somehow change the justice system,” he says. “We didn’t (consciously) start out to do this because we really didn’t know what we were doing.”

Modest or not, Yantzi’s vision as a young probation officer faced with the now internationally famous case of two teenagers who had embarked on a drink-induced vandalism spree in Elmira, spearheaded decades of undeniable accomplishment. In CJI’s flagship Victim Offender Reconciliation Program alone, “a better way” has been found via hundreds of successfully mediated resolutions between victims of crime and those who committed the offences. What’s more, the agency he and former colleague, Dave Worth, began in 1974 now boasts 17 programs, its core restorative justice philosophy practised in more than 50 countries.

“It feels like a dream sometimes,” Yantzi says. “It does feel a bit surreal.”

Yantzi will officially step down from his role as CJI’s executive director in June. A “barn-raiser” fundraising event will be held June 6 at Bingeman’s in Kitchener to mark the occasion. (follow green arrow, right)

While Yantzi may be retiring from his administrative role with CJI, he insists he is not about to retire from his efforts to support the restorative justice philosophy that continues to be his passion. And he vows to encourage acceptance of this philosophy in more applications. His CJI experience has certainly taught him that restorative justice can be effectively used in previously unimagined areas.

“There was a time when I wouldn’t have thought about working with offenders in prison as restorative justice, for example,” he says. “But through our Stride Program we have seen just how effective, how empowering that can be.”

Indeed, as he reflects upon his 35 years as the widely acknowledged figurehead of the restorative justice movement, Yantzi says the ever-growing diversity in which the philosophy has been applied, whether at CJI or around the world, is his greatest source of pride. He says the grassroots “let’s try-something-different” approach that characterized CJI’s humble beginnings has always guided the agency to address what he calls the “unmentionable” or unpopular causes of society. In addition to the Stride program he cites the example of CJI’s work in the area of sexual trauma and, despite an ongoing struggle for funding, its willingness to work with both male survivors of sexual abuse and men who have offended sexually.

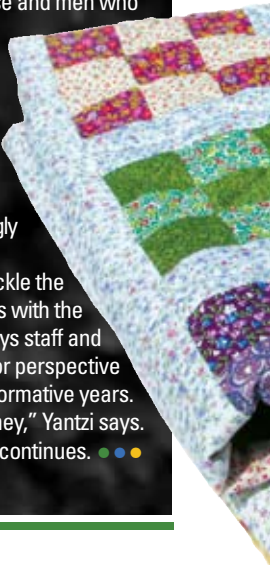
What lies ahead for CJI in the wake of Yantzi’s departure?

“I think CJI is in a good place,” he says. “I have a lot of trust in the staff and volunteers. Money is always a big challenge. The ideal would be to convince government and other institutions to recognize the value of the non-mainstream, often unpopular causes (CJI takes on). Ours has always been a tough challenge and yet we have been surprisingly successful inspiring people to support these causes.”

As CJI prepares to move on without him, as it continues to tackle the causes society prefers to sweep under the rug and grapples with the inevitable challenges and obstacles along the way, Yantzi says staff and volunteers need always be reminded of Dave Worth’s search for perspective when the agency faced some monumental struggles in its formative years.

“He always used to say that CJI was on a 150-year journey,” Yantzi says.

The journey continues. ●●●



# Local Family Donation Provides Mentorship for Youth

*Modelled after the highly successful Stride program for federally incarcerated women, a pilot Circles program offers support for at-risk youth*

CJI is about to lay the groundwork for an exciting new initiative it hopes will become a permanent addition to its ever-expanding arsenal of programs.

The agency recently received \$30,000 from the Astley Family Foundation to design and pilot a Community Circles of Support for Youth initiative. The program, which will be loosely modelled after the Stride Program's highly successful Circles program for federally incarcerated women, will target "at-risk" youth from 12 to 17 years of age who are currently residing in area group homes. Work on the innovative project, which has also been bolstered by a \$5000 donation from Waterloo Regional Police Services, began June 1 and will end March 31, 2010.

The pilot project is expected to involve up to 10 at-risk young people and as many as 30 specially trained community volunteers. With a weekly or bi-weekly recreation program as the catalyst, youths will be matched with circles of three volunteers who will offer these young people a strong mentorship and support component.

Each year, CJI serves dozens of young clients who live in high-conflict situations; but, without the kind of support the new circles program hopes to provide, they lack the constructive conflict-solving and coping skills that can prevent much more serious issues. In most cases, these young people use aggression and/or violence to cope with their problems. Indeed, CJI staff has found that many young people in care commit crimes in group home settings due to unresolved conflict with staff and other youth.

**"Research has shown that resilient young people are those who have had adult mentors in their lives."**

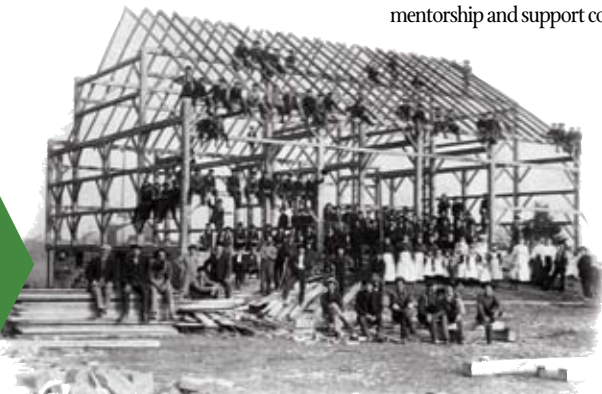
"We're thrilled," says Kathleen Cleland Moyer, Manager, Program Development and New Initiatives. "This builds on our strengths and years of work our Stride program has done in building relationships with (federally incarcerated) women. In essence, we went to our own backyard to find a program that will address the everyday issues these youths face."

While group home staff, probation workers, social workers and other professionals play a valuable role in trying to address the many needs of these young people, CJI has always believed that the community can and should play an integral role, the premise being that volunteers will send a strong signal to these young people that there are those without the motive of a weekly pay cheque who genuinely care and want to help them succeed in life.

"Research has shown that resilient young people are those who have had adult mentors in their lives. With this program, we are able to bring in caring volunteers to help fulfill that role and our volunteers have always responded," Cleland Moyer says.

At the completion of the initial phase of this initiative, CJI will seek ongoing funding to offer the service on a permanent basis. ●●●

**Did you know?  
Last year—2008/09  
CJI served more  
than 2,500 clients!**



## FIRST ANNUAL BARN-RAISER CELEBRATING MARK YANTZI

CJI's goal is to raise \$35,000, \$1000. for each of Yantzi's 35 years with CJI. The event will include dinner ● square dancing ● live music a quilt auction ● various speakers and a special tribute from Dave Worth. Tickets are \$30. through CJI's website or by contacting Carolyn at carolynm@cjiwr.com or 519-744-6549 ext. 105

**left:** A traditional hand-sewn Mennonite baby quilt, or wall hanging in the Nine-Patch Quilt-Block Pattern by Nancy W. Martin, donated from the collection of E. Palmer and Nancy-Lou Patterson for the auction.



## FLAGSHIP PROGRAM FLYING AT HALF-MAST

**Provincial cutbacks jeopardize CJI's renowned Victim Offender Reconciliation Program**

**T**he Victim Offender Reconciliation Program (VORP) has served as CJI's flagship program ever since the "Elmira Story" and is recognized as the impetus behind a worldwide restorative justice movement.

But despite its prominence and world-wide influence, the province informed CJI in mid-March that it will not continue to fund the program, placing it in serious jeopardy. The program, which has often existed on shoestring funding, operated most recently under the name of Adult Justice Committee, and was part of a Ministry of the Attorney-General pilot project that included seven other jurisdictions. Unlike CJI, whose stellar track record in mediating cases between individuals charged with some crimes and their victims is well-documented, the approach was brand new in most of the other jurisdictions.

While the other jurisdictions averaged a victim participation rate of 25 per cent, CJI, thanks to its infrastructure and quality volunteers, boasted a rate approaching 70 per cent. After less than two years, and based largely on low participation rates in those other jurisdictions, the province decided it wasn't getting enough "bang for its buck."

"Without adequate funding to replace the major financial hit resulting from the province's decision, CJI will be hard-pressed to offer the very program that has spawned similar initiatives in over 50 countries. Not only does CJI want to continue this valuable program, it hopes to secure enough funding to help expand its scope.

Under the ministry's mandate, the program was limited to diversion-only cases involving relatively minor crimes. CJI, which has a long history of handling more serious cases, hopes to encompass pre-sentence and post-sentence matters as well.

**CJI is urgently seeking to find interim financial support to keep the program going past June when the ministry funding ends**

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To do so, we need financial help. CJI is urgently seeking interim financial support to keep the program going past June, when the ministry funding officially ends. In the meantime, it will continue to press various levels of government out of a belief that government should be supporting programs of such value. ●●●

## to volunteer

**“A barn is built one board at a time, social action is built one action at a time”** Like an old-fashioned barn-raising, Mark and CJI’s experienced staff build the structures, equipping community volunteers to do the work promoting social action.

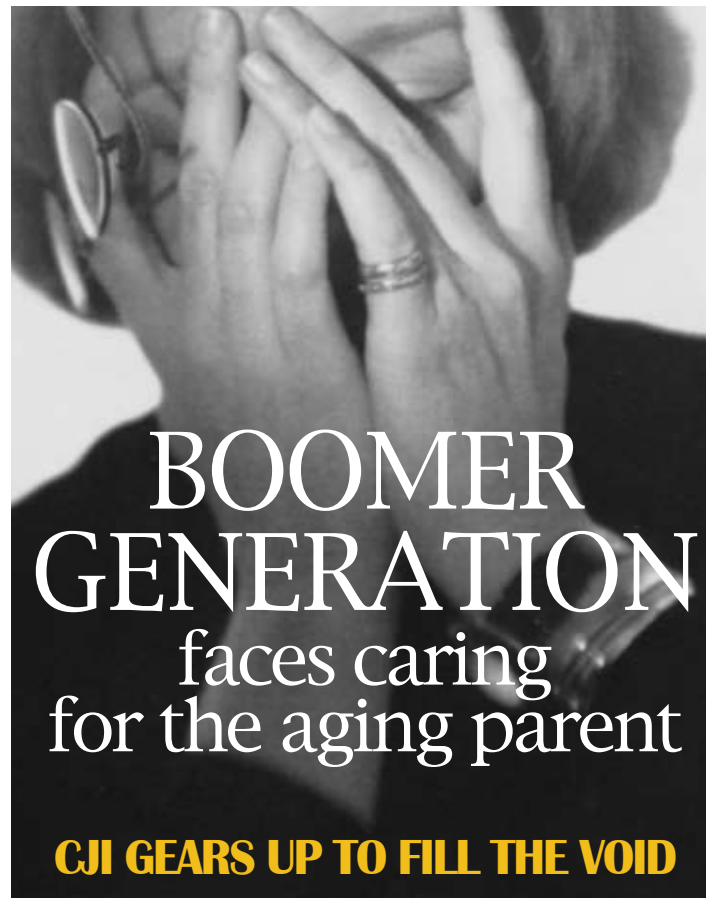
**Give to your community and help make our region a safer place. There are many ways for you to become involved:**

- Mediate conflict situations involving families, groups, neighbours, employees, etc.
- Facilitate groups for people who have survived sexual abuse or people who have offended sexually
- Participate in the weekly recreation program at Grand Valley Prison for Women
- Become a reintegration support Circle member for a woman leaving prison
- Present a workshop
- Assist with fundraising
- Serve on a committee
- Provide office assistance

Contact Peggy LaFlamme by email [peggyl@cjiwr.com](mailto:peggyl@cjiwr.com) or phone 519-744-6549 ext. 208. Volunteer application forms are available on our website [www.cjiwr.com](http://www.cjiwr.com).

## to donate

To make a donation by telephone, please contact Carolyn at 519-744-6549 ext. 105. Please make cheques payable to “Community Justice Initiatives” and mail to: Community Justice Initiatives 49 Queen Street North Kitchener, ON N2H 2G9 or donate online [www.cjiwr.com](http://www.cjiwr.com). ●●●



# BOOMER GENERATION

## faces caring for the aging parent

### CJI GEARS UP TO FILL THE VOID

At the boiling point of what had been a long-simmering situation, Andrew lashed out and struck the older, physically disabled sister under his care. The resulting welt and bruise over Betty’s left eye did not go unnoticed by the staff that ran the seniors program she attended each day. When Betty disclosed what had happened, staff called police. They turned to CJI’s Elder Services Program.

Despite a lack of significant funding, Wendy Meek, coordinator of CJI’s Elder Services Program, is determined to grow this invaluable service which gives voice to those elderly individuals who, through no fault of their own, find themselves in similarly precarious situations.

Meek says the voices of these individuals are often muzzled due to their physical and mental limitations, as well as their absolute dependence on those who care for them. She knows that although the details may vary, Betty’s story strikes a familiar chord within all too many families. She knows, too, that without programs like CJI’s, most of those families will suffer a heavy toll in strained, even severed, relationships and protracted, adversarial legal battles.

That’s why Meek hopes for the day when CJI’s elder services can enjoy the

***Despite a lack of significant funding, Wendy Meek, coordinator of CJI’s Elder Services is determined to grow this program***

luxury of full and long-term funding—enough to expand the program to expand into a wide variety of venues where seniors are found and facilitate up to 100 cases annually. In the meantime, she juggles her demands as coordinator of the agency’s Community Mediation Services with her elder services role. And in 2008, the program facilitated 14 cases involving some 90 individuals.

Andrew’s case is one of them. Andrew is not a bad person. In fact, he looked after his older sister for several decades without incident. But Andrew was growing older too, which complicated the already arduous burden of Betty’s care. In many ways Andrew was himself a victim of his family’s assumptions that he was coping well.

Once referred, CJI facilitators met individually with Andrew and Betty. They also met with seven family members, including siblings, children and children-in-law, as well as two staff members from Betty’s day program. In the subsequent, often emotional circle involving all these individuals, Andrew apologized to Betty and the rest of the family for the incident. Betty accepted the apology and the family members vowed to become more involved in her care. The staff members also offered their agency’s support as the family moved forward.

In follow-up, the family reported that not only had there been no further incidents but that it had grown much closer. Meek will tell you such success stories are the norm when similarly strained families can come together and talk about their issues in the safe, respectful environment CJI provides.

While elder abuse encompasses the bulk of the agency’s Elder Services Program, Meek says CJI also deals with other potentially divisive family issues like power of attorney and conflicts created when elderly individuals live with their children and grandchildren.

The bottom line, Meek says, “is that communication is strained or broken down and it is hurting the family. This program helps keep families intact.”

In addition to managing CJI’s elder services caseload, Meek spends much of her effort trying to increase awareness of the issues facing the elderly. She’ll speak to whatever people and agencies about the plight of some elderly individuals, while garnering support for the kind of service that remains unique to CJI.

“A lot of these issues go unspoken,” Meek says. “The elderly person isn’t going to report it. It often only comes to light when someone outside of the family notices there might be a problem. So awareness is a huge issue. And we want to let people know we’re here. We want to spread the word that this is the place an elderly person, who may feel he or she has no other choices, can turn to for help.” ●●●

### Did you know?

Since 2006 the Revive program (people who are affected by sexual trauma) has worked with 1,538 clients, and presented to 2,073 community members—with direct service hours totalling 30,680!