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#### August 2014

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“Summertime and the livin' is easy  
Fish are jumpin' and the cotton is high”

The Gershwins' words remind us that summertime is a different time for most of us. I don't know about the cotton, but the corn is certainly growing tall and I'm sure there are plenty of fish jumping. I hope you had your opportunity to catch some of those.

We've certainly had our share of storms this summer, causing flooding and wind damage and disrupting people's lives. Our prayers are with those who have been adversely affected.

Summertime has perhaps made the living a bit easier around The Micah Mission as well.

- We've had opportunity to take some holidays and get away.
- Some CoSA members have been able to move out of rather stressful living conditions and into a nice apartment.
- The Micah Mission office has also moved again, but this time just down the hall and into a more spacious office.
- Another CoSA member bought himself a car and is enjoying the new freedoms which that purchase provides.
- Visits continue at RPC with new volunteers taking part.

- A games night at RPC is planned for the end of August to provide opportunity for all volunteers and participants to gather together for a good time of fellowship.
- So it's been a good summer, but it quickly draws to a close.
- Perhaps the summer has given you opportunity for reflection, to think about the changes in your life. If that reflection has resulted in a decision to do some volunteering, why not give The Micah Mission a call? You'll be glad you did!

## UPDATES

### Person to Person

We seem to be holding steady at 13 inmates/patients being visited at Regional Psychiatric Center. These 13 are being visited by 16 volunteers, three of whom are very new. With moves and releases, the matchups are constantly changing. As a result, there are currently no women inmates/patients being visited, but with several women now cleared to visit, we are hoping that this part of the program will pick up again in the near future. In the meantime, relationships continue to be built with the men with as many as five visits happening some Tuesday evenings and two each on Monday mornings and Wednesday evenings. Please call if you are interested in joining us.

### Forward Step

There is a continually changing but lively group of men meeting inside the Saskatoon Correctional Centre talking about what they need to do to stay out of prison when they are released. The group on the outside is growing slowly and currently meets Monday nights at Queen's House. Volunteers are welcome to provide support for these men. Please give us a call.

## In Tribute



The Micah Mission lost another valuable, long time volunteer when Arthur Wiens passed away on April 30, 2014. Art had visited for some time through the Person to Person program and had also begun participating in Forward Step when the person he was visiting joined Forward Step and anticipated his release into the community. Unfortunately, Art's illness resulted in having to leave both programs a few months prior to his death. Art enjoyed his P2P participation even when he was paired up with someone who's theology was quite different from his own and who challenged him regularly. Art was a farmer, a pastor, a father and grandfather, and a dear friend to many. We miss Art as well as his participation at the prison.

### Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA)

Since our last newsletter, core members have increased to 9. Not everyone who requests a CoSA or is referred to us becomes a core member. Sometimes those who come to us are looking for something we cannot provide; do not admit to having offended sexually; or are simply not interested in being held accountable. When this is the case, there is nothing we can do for them. Those with whom we work are committed to staying out of prison and not reoffending. However, one of our core members who had a CoSA several years ago, has reoffended. He is now serving time in the Prince Albert Penitentiary and his former CoSA members are visiting him through the Person to Person program there. They do not want to give up on him and he is grateful for their support. Please seriously consider volunteering with CoSA. We currently have volunteers who are part of 2, 3, or even 4 CoSAs - not because they have to due to a shortage of volunteers, but because they want to. Why not give us a call?

*In the midst of our recent move down the hall, I was able to unpack some things that I had not had room for in the old office. In the process I encountered some interesting newspaper articles from past years. The following is from the June 17, 1998 issue of The Star Phoenix. The author is Kim McNairn. It seems not much has changed since then.*

Correctional facilities fail to provide aboriginal offenders with a supportive link between prison and outside life, and that increases the likelihood that offenders will strike again when released, a conference on violence was told Tuesday.

Norma-Jean Byrd, who works with aboriginal communities on issues such as family violence, justice, parenting and community development, said when many aboriginal offenders are released, they have nowhere to turn.

They will revert to what they know - drinking, drug abuse, stealing and violence, she told delegates at the Symposium on Violence and Aggression.

And it cannot be left up to the individuals to find their own support because many of them come from broken homes and unstable communities, she said.

“A lot of times they are shipped off the bus and they come into a community and it is like they are drowning in water,” she said.

“If the people who come out of the prisons don’t mind being there and become conditioned to that way of life, we cannot expect outmoded methods of rehabilitation to do much for helping them develop personal characteristics that will make them good citizens of a democratic society.”

Byrd said more culturally sensitive support programs are needed in and outside prisons.

She also said more halfway houses and followup resources are needed to help released offenders adjust.

Byrd said the problems multiply when it comes to young offenders.

Youth who grow up committing crimes will continue to do so when they are adults. And by then, they are comfortable with the lifestyle, Byrd said.

But children need healthy home lives to help them avoid violence and illegal activity, she said.

The symposium, sponsored by the Regional Psychiatric Centre and University of Saskatchewan extension division, ends today.

*Given that little of what she talks about has changed, it shows that our programs, which are providing support for just a small handful of the people about whom she speaks, are much needed and need to continue to grow with the support of volunteers.*

## “How can I get involved in The Micah Mission?”

1. P2P stands for Person to Person. This program provides support to individuals who are in prison through bi weekly prison visits. The contact person for this group is Dave Feick at 306 653-3099. Security clearance and an orientation to the prison are required before one can provide this support.
2. Forward Step - Provides support for people who are leaving prison and as they first come into the community. Currently there is a group that meets at the Saskatoon Correctional Center on Tuesday mornings, another that meets at the Regional Psychiatric Centre on Wednesday afternoons and one that meets in the community on Monday evenings. Sponsors are people who join the group to offer support for the individuals who have left prison. Contact Peter Oliver if you are interested in this group. 306-260-6213.
3. CoSA stands for Circles of Support and Accountability. It is a support group for individuals who are leaving prison and have committed serious sexual offences. Several people gather weekly to journey with the person. Orientation and training are provided to the support persons. To enquire further about this group contact Dave Feick at 306-653-3099.
4. More detailed information can be found on The Micah Mission Web Site: [www.themicahmission.org](http://www.themicahmission.org)
6. Volunteer to serve on the board. We do have good representation from the Mennonite Church and recently two new board members were appointed from the Roman Catholic Church and one from the Anglican Church. We gladly welcome people from all denominations and all faiths who have a heart for restorative justice. Please call.
7. Release Kits. When we have them available, we like to present the men with a backpack containing some basic necessities upon their release. Perhaps you or your congregation would like to provide the materials required for one or more of these kits. Items that could be included are: a backpack, band aids, Kleenex, a can of spam, a can of chicken with crackers, a bag of bunny grahams, instant noodle soup, some gum (note: for people dealing with addictions it is important not to allow hunger to take over.), instant coffee, A razor and razor blades, tooth past and tooth brush, shampoo, note book, pen, water bottle, deck of cards, a pair of socks, a towel, some deodorant, a comb, more socks, a gift certificate for Tim Hortons for 5 dollars, a coke, a contact list for important agencies, a map of saskatoon, bus route map. Please contact Peter for more information.
8. Donate to The Micah Mission. Donations are gratefully accepted to assist in the ongoing work. Please send checks to the address below, or download a form from our website for direct deposit donations.

The Micah Mission  
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