

INTERVIEWS OF PERSON 2 PERSON VOLUNTEERS

Spring 2015

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Introduction

My name is Courtney Zerk and I am a Youth Care Worker Diploma student at Saskatchewan Polytechnic, Kelsey Campus. I am completing my final practicum at the Micah Mission as the final requirement for my program. Peter Oliver and Dave Feick assigned me the project of interviewing former and current Person 2 Person (P2P) volunteers that visit at the Regional Psychiatric Centre in Saskatoon (RPC). I also had the opportunity to visit with a released offender that has been supported by Micah Mission inside the institution and outside.

Coming into the practicum I had very little knowledge of the P2P program and of Micah Mission as a whole. The little I knew was a result of hearing Dave speak in my Youth Care Worker Certificate class and from reading the Micah Mission website. Coming into the interviews I was in awe of the volunteers and that they would give their time to go visit inmates as I felt this was something that I could never do. I had knowledge of what the inmate's life stories could look like through my work at EGADZ for the Street Outreach program and I brought that knowledge into the interviews with me.

Peter and Dave developed questions based on three objectives for the interview:

1. To gather feedback that will help us understand the rewards people experience as they participate in this ministry
2. To learn about the experience volunteers are having as they engage in this ministry
3. To ask if there are any areas where there is a need for improvement in the way this ministry is being offered.

The questions sought answers to various topics such as: reasons for volunteering, talking to others about their experience, what is meaningful about the program, the satisfaction that is experienced, and the level of support that volunteers feel. Volunteers range from having less than one year experience to over 30 years, along with varying degrees of volunteerism from doing strictly P2P to CoSAs to supporting visitees upon release. Interviews were conducted with 21 former and current volunteers in a variety of settings from homes to coffee shops, the answers were transcribed and from their answers the topics and suggestions in this report were generated. All volunteers gave permission to be quoted anonymously in the final report and in future promotional material.

Reasons for volunteering

There is a very diverse base of volunteers with the P2P program ranging from people that are retired Social Workers to Dairy Farmers to people that are still working in their careers. That being said it is no surprise that there are a variety of reasons that they chose to sign up to become volunteers with the program.

Involvement through the church

Church was mentioned frequently throughout every interview that was conducted, however for some volunteers it played a part in the reason that they signed up with P2P. For one volunteer of 4 years that has long term P2P relationships, his pastor was instrumental in encouraging him to start volunteering at RPC by preaching about forgiveness and in the volunteer's words, "he sort of put a bug in my ear so to speak and then it wouldn't leave me alone I thought about it for a while. I talked it over with my wife and then long story short in three or four months I got in touch with him. He talked to me, I went to some orientation sessions and it was about six months from the beginning to the time I started meeting with my first guy." Another former volunteer of 25 years described that several members from a church that he had begun to pastor were P2P volunteers in Prince Albert and about a year later he joined them. The husband of a couple that has visited over 100 inmates over the course of 32 years is quoted as simply saying, "I guess, always figured we should do something, a person feels you should do something a little extra rather than just sit in the pew." Although, no one in their church necessarily steered them towards Micah Mission they still felt compelled to do something beyond attending church. With Micah Mission being a faith based organization, it also attracts people with faith that have a desire to act upon principles outlined in the Bible.

Biblical principles

There were two specific passages that were quoted by volunteers as being the major influence as to why they signed up with P2P. The letter of James prompted a Forward Step and P2P volunteer of less than a year to sign up as he told me, "I think it's part of the faith." Matthew 25 spoke to a current volunteer of 7 years and he shared with me that, "I started and went around for about a year running around in a circle trying to fulfill everything on that list." He also shared with me that he got tired out trying to fulfill everything in Matthew 25 and the only volunteering he stayed with after he reached that point was P2P. Since then his participation in Micah Mission has increased by getting involved with CoSAs and he is considering volunteering

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with Forward Step. One volunteer that has been visiting with his wife for 3 years stated that for him it was, “my belief in some things that Jesus said. This is one way of fulfilling something that he said I should be doing”. Whether it is specific passages or teachings, the Bible has been instrumental in prompting several volunteers to sign up. For some it was simply that they had an interest in working with inmates and a heart for inmates.

Interest in meeting and working with inmates

For some such as a volunteer of 7 years it was simply, “I've always been interested in this kind of stuff and I thought, oh at some point in my life I'd like to do that. At one point I thought, well I guess I think I have enough time now to do this, so it's just basically all interest”. With some volunteers it comes down to a matter of the heart and in the words of a female volunteer of less than a year, “five years ago, I just started having a heart for the misunderstood and prisoners and I had always had an interest in getting plugged in and seeing what it was like”. She followed her heart and got plugged in after a friend did chapel at RPC and told her about the program. Another volunteer of 4 years pins it on being, “a naturally curious person, interested in human nature, behaviors, communication, etc.” Inmates and their stories is something that has always fascinated me, so I especially resonate with this category of reasons, but for others it was their friends work with inmates that got them involved.

Referrals from friends

Friends can be very influential and can convince you to try experiences that you would never have thought of and sometimes you find a new love. This was the case for a former volunteer of 15 years as he simply put it, “actually I had a couple friends that were volunteering and they asked me if I would be interested and I said well I'll give it a try and so that's how I got started”. A newer volunteer of 1 year had heard of the program before and had never thought to volunteer until, “what moved me was talking to a friend of mine who had volunteered at a church for 3 months in Tangier in Africa and one of the things that he did while he was there was visit people in prison. I thought well that is something I could do as a voluntary activity, I like meeting people and I think I'm a good listener”. The longevity of the volunteer of 7 years and the fact that the other has stayed on for 1 year proves that their friends were on to something.

Reasons for discontinuation of volunteerism

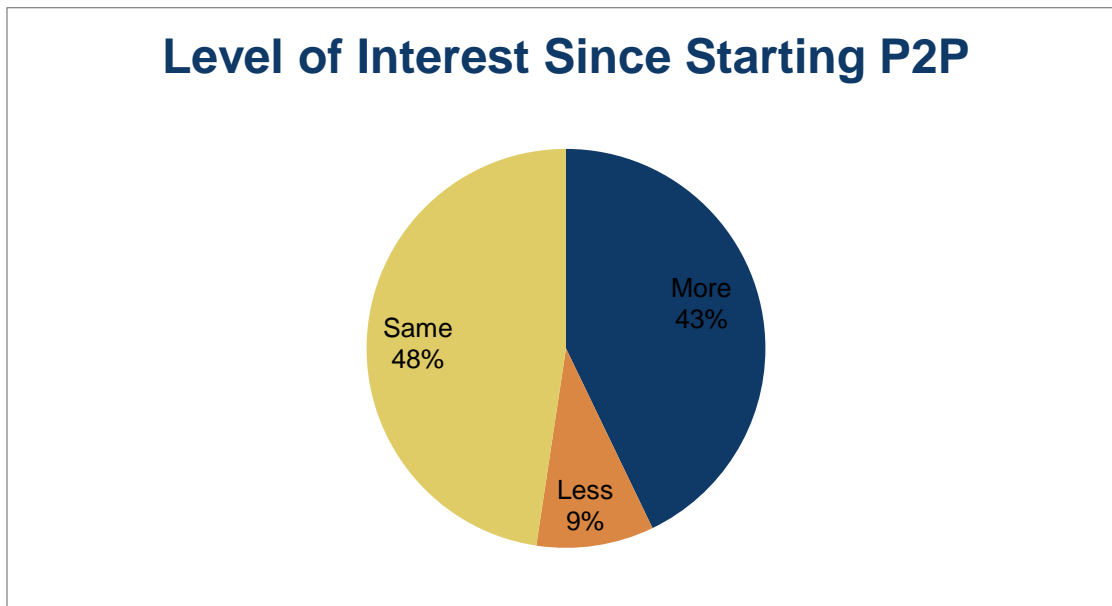
As mentioned previously during the interview process I had the opportunity to interview former volunteers and I was able to ask the reasons that they decided to move on. A former

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volunteer of 7 years stopped volunteering because he and his wife are leaving the province and he had some loose ends to tie up at his job. The former volunteer expressed interest in finding a CoSA or something similar to a CoSA to participate in once he moves. One former volunteer of 25 years retired from volunteering for a couple of reasons: “partly because I’m retired, I’m not as young anymore as I used to be. Also, when I was always going to Prince Albert there was always a carload of us and now coming to Saskatoon I always had to drive myself and when I got there I would discover the visit was cancelled or something. I decided it was time I probably just quit or simply I guess I was getting older and not wanting to drive in by myself when the weather wasn’t good.” The cancellation of visits being a slight deterrent was mentioned by several others and will be explored in further sections. Another volunteer of 15 years retired because his visitee was discharged and others that he knew had quit going, so in his words, “I thought that maybe it’s time that I quit too.” The last former volunteer of 16 years is on a hold from visiting with P2P because he is dedicating his time to CoSA’s and is supporting released inmates in the community. No matter the reasons the volunteers moved on, they were still very interested in the program even to the very end of their time with it.

Levels of interest

The volunteers, current and former, were asked to define their current level of interest at the moment or at their time of discontinuation. They were asked to compare their current level to when they first started and whether it was more, less or the same.

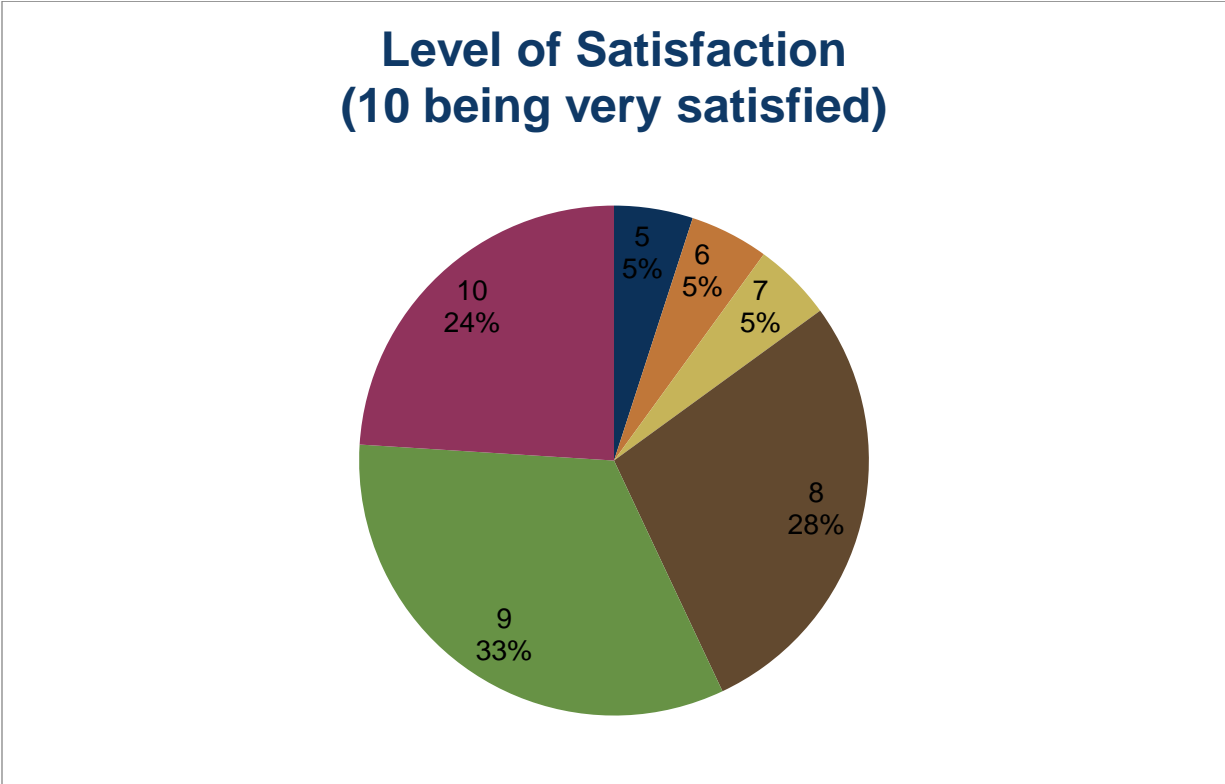


A current volunteer of approximately 7 years said his interest is “waning a bit” because he is supporting a Parolee in the community that is placing demands on his time. In his words, “he was released into the community knowing me, I didn’t realize what I was taking on and my interest is waning a little bit because I’m slightly introverted and it’s getting exhausting.” He went on in the interview to describe that he is making steps to correct this by setting up extra supports for the Parolee and that he feels supported by Dave. One former volunteer said that, “I think when I quit it was probably less, but there were times in between that it was more than when I started.” I went on to ask if it was a good time to finish off and he said, “I think it was yeah”. Developing a relationship with his visitee was a reason that a member of a couple that has been visiting for 3 years has an increased interest and his words, “we visited our person almost exclusively and I know him a little bit and you kind of hope for him.” and he went on to say, “you get to know him and he’s another person.” Then there are some volunteers that start with a high level that remains high and this is definitely the case for a 4 year volunteer that visits women at RPC. Whatever the reasons may be the volunteers were very open in sharing the reasons with me, which I appreciated. This carried on when they were asked about their level of satisfaction with the P2P program.

Volunteers' satisfaction

Levels of satisfaction

Volunteers were asked to rate on a scale of 1-10 how satisfied they were with their experience of the P2P program. With 1 being dissatisfied and 10 being very satisfied.



It was very encouraging to see that over 85% of the volunteers were quite satisfied (8 or higher) with their experience of P2P. A former volunteer of 7 years stated a couple of reasons why he rated it low, “I was very satisfied with P2P's engagement and their responsibility communicating with volunteers, but sometimes there was a bit of a lack of communication with the institution. I would arrive there quite a number of times and find that for whatever reason I'm not allowed to visit, I was disappointed with that.” Several others mentioned these problems in other questions that will be explored later. A volunteer that has been involved with Forward Step and P2P for less than a year is in his words, “thinking is there some way I can increase my volunteering? I must say I'm quite satisfied.” The reasons behind the volunteers' satisfaction vary, but fit into the general categories discussed below.

Reasons for satisfaction

- **Relationships**

Relationships are a major part of the volunteers' experience with P2P because that is a huge part of what P2P is and for some volunteers this element leads to a sense of satisfaction. When I talked to the released offender he had nothing but good to say about his relationship with his P2P volunteer as he said, "me and my P2P volunteer get along really well, I see him probably three times a week now. He's been such a big support to me since I've been out and while I was inside; I've been out now for 26 months. I get really good support with him and Micah Mission." It was different to hear about P2P from a visitees' perspective, but it really helped reinforce what the volunteers shared with me about their relationships. A former volunteer of 15 years that enjoyed the relationships with several of his former visitees and described the experiences and the people as, "so diversified, some were willing to talk about their past and some were sort of reluctant. But, all of them sort of wanted you to know part of their story and they were willing to share part of it. This was helpful in a way; then you could kind of see where they were coming from. "A current volunteer of 20 years who has supported people in and out of the institutions defined the relationships simply as, "part of it is they don't necessarily share the story the first visit, but after a while you truly get to be friends, Just because they're inside and you're outside doesn't mean that we're not friends. If I saw him today we would stop and have a coffee and have a visit, as far as I'm concerned he's still a friend of mine." The wife of one of the couples that visit with inmates together shared, "well I'm very positive as I think there is a lot of fear for criminals out there. So we talk about the guy we visit as a friend. We have visited him quite a number of years so we've gotten to know him and are quite comfortable with him." Lastly, a volunteer of 7 years defined the relationships formed as, "being able to make some longer term friendships with people that wouldn't normally be a part of my everyday experience and being able to cross the line in my social life into a different realm." Several other volunteers described the relationships formed as friendships with their visitees. For some that wasn't the main reason for their satisfaction; for some others it is the visits themselves that are satisfying.

- **Visits**

For some volunteers, simply the conversations that happen during the visits lead to a level of satisfaction for them. A P2P volunteer that visits women fondly recalled some of the

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conversations that she shared with one of her visitees. She recalls that, “the first woman I worked with is a very articulate and thoughtful person. We had some wonderful conversations and I thoroughly enjoyed my contact with her.” One of the volunteers that has been visiting alongside his wife for 3 years shared about their time spent with their long term visitee. He shared that satisfaction for him is, “sometimes just the amount of laughter we get out of going and visiting. Our guy is bubbly and he’s fun to be around, he tells stories, laughs and makes jokes. Sometimes when we came to visit him we could see he was not doing well and was a bit depressed. So, we get him to talking and sometimes you can see by the time we left he had kind of picked himself up a little.” A newer volunteer of less than a year shared that, “in general, my experiences would be just the visits, the opportunity to be there for this person. I try to listen as my role is to listen to them and the other person’s role is to share and it’s benefitted me I guess, to hear their stories.” Quite a few volunteers shared that this experience benefits them as much as it benefits the visitor. A volunteer of 1 year shared one visit in particular that benefitted him, “the one thing that sticks out in my mind is from last June where I had gotten some disappointing news. I went to my P2P visit and it was a nice day so my friend and I decide we would sit outside and have conversation. While we were there another inmate and his partner or girlfriend and I’m assuming his daughter came out and walked towards us. It was the experience of being on the outside even though it was surrounded by the walls and to have the sense of a sort of happiness about being with these guys and this little girl that stands out as a highlight. On a day when I was feeling a bit sorry for myself, that experience of visiting and seeing that interaction lifted my spirits.” Some volunteers receive satisfaction from the positive results they see in the visitees’ lives as a result of the visits.

- **Positive changes in the visitees’ lives**

One of the volunteers that has been involved in Forward Step and now in P2P for less than a year has already seen some positive changes which he defines as, “I’ve seen people become more positive and I’ve seen inmates become more positive, assuming responsibility for their mishaps and trying to do something to correct it. I’ve seen them gain more self-esteem. As for me, it made me feel better that I could be of help to people who needed that help.” Two volunteers that have been visiting as a couple for 32 years both recalled a story about one of their former visitees’ that resulted in a very positive change. They shared that when they began visiting with him he would regularly make derogatory comments towards them and after some dialogues would leave the visit to return to his cell. That changed one day during a social and

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this is what happened as told by the wife, "I asked, are you going to sing a solo today? He said not over my dead body, would he sing a solo. Then all of a sudden our coordinator asked if anybody wanted to volunteer for a solo. He went up and sang Amazing Grace in the most beautiful voice. When he sang 'saved a wretch like me' he started crying and our coordinator had to hang onto him. After that he was completely different." A P2P and CoSA volunteer shared this about one of his visitees, "there is some satisfaction and I've seen him develop in some areas, for example he regularly attends chapel services and he seems to have come some distance in his you might call, becoming more spiritual. But there are some disappointments as well, but that's the upside." With anything there is always some bad to go along with the good and volunteers were open enough to discuss some of the difficulties they face.

Difficulties experienced by volunteers

Communication with visitees

The difficulties of communication with visitees that volunteers experience range anywhere from having trouble making conversation to their visitee not communicating that they weren't going to show up to the visit. One of the volunteers of 4 years that has had long P2P relationships expressed that, "we don't have a lot to talk about from week to week, for these guys it's the same old same old. What do I, what can I bring to him? There's times he's in a bad mood and there are times when he's a bit down and I sort of wonder what am I doing for this guy? Just a few visits back he says to me, 'I'm glad that you come, it gives me, ah, something to talk about, a window to the outside world'". It was encouraging for this volunteer that he did receive some reassurance with this difficulty he has experienced. A volunteer that volunteers with P2P and Forward Step had some frustration that, "if the person doesn't show up, I'm not sure there's anything they can do better it's just the nature of the game and I guess I appreciate the fact that there's no coercion for them, it's nice if they make the commitment to have a visitor that they show up, but if they choose not to that's their choice." There is a volunteer that has been paired up with a female volunteer that expressed that when he visits alone he sometimes struggles to have a conversation due to the same reason as the volunteer of 4 years. He went on to say that when he and the other volunteer visit together that, "it really works well, I was actually there last night and I was really surprised how fast the time went as opposed to when he and I are visiting." Even though volunteers experience some difficulties in this area they are able to turn it around to viewing it in a more positive manner which speaks to their satisfaction.

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Being that the visits with these P2P volunteers are happening at RPC there is the possibility that they will encounter visitees that are living with mental illness and at times that can be difficult to deal with.

Visitees living with a mental illness

There is a volunteer that visits women that has some experience working with mental illness and she was thankful that she has that experience when she was visiting with one of her former visitees. In her words, "one woman I only had for a few months and she has a severe mental illness. I really enjoyed talking to her, but her mental health got in the way because she was extremely paranoid. That got in the way of our conversation and she felt that. When we last met we talked about whether we should continue meeting. She felt that our talking brought out the paranoia and she was aware that was happening and I didn't want to put her through anymore, so we just decided that I wouldn't meet with her again." In this situation it was wise of the volunteer to put aside perhaps her own desire to maintain contact and agree with the woman. One of the volunteers that has worked extensively with Micah Mission shared an experience that he had with one visitee after their visits moved to, "a whole deeper level of trust and commitment". He shared that at RPC this man had been transferred there to be stabilized on medications for his mental illness and that through the search for medications, "sometimes they were better and sometimes they were worse. There were visits where he was depressed and could only talk for a few minutes and other visits he could only talk for a few minutes for he was quite hyper." That would be very difficult especially for volunteers that have had little to no experience with people with mental illnesses. The skills do come with experience and an increase in knowledge, but even for ones with experience such as the first volunteer mentioned it can still be challenging. Other volunteers have difficulty with communication of another form and that is with the communication between them and RPC.

Communication with the Regional Psychiatric Centre

Since volunteers go to RPC during regular visiting hours, not in groups, there are quite a few visits that have to be set up and approved for each volunteer. Sometimes, as many volunteers have expressed, they get there and the paperwork hasn't been processed so the visit is not set up and approved. Other times it could be that the facility is on lockdown and no visitors are allowed in. Quite a number of volunteers expressed frustration with these occurrences and more. One volunteer of 3 years expressed it this way, "I have gotten here and the doors are locked, I mean, it's a lockdown or something, but they don't tell you, you drive 40

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kilometers to get here then all of a sudden oops no not today. It happened a couple of times, I mean I don't really make a big deal, ok it doesn't work, it's ok, and yeah that's fine." The former volunteer of 25 years that expressed this as a reason for discontinuing also had this to say on the subject, "I have to drive two hours in and two hours back home and so for me it's four hours driving and sometimes we'd show up and they wouldn't let us have a visit that day or whatever, you've driven for nothing and if it's winter and the roads are bad." A volunteer that participates in Forward Step and P2P expressed a couple of different difficulties with the communication breakdown, "you see with the people that are inmates, there's no way I can phone into the prison. Sometimes something would happen that they can't show up and I have no way of knowing until I get there. If I can't show up and that hasn't happened yet, but it came close to it, they would have no way of knowing. One time there was a mistake and I was waiting in the reception room for about a half hour and the person I was supposed to visit thought that I had found out why he was imprisoned and rejected him; when it was just a breakdown in communications." For the most part the volunteers informed me that they know there is probably not much that can be done, but they wanted to express this difficulty to me. Other volunteers expressed other difficulties that were related to the discontinuation of group visits and in turn debriefing which will be discussed further on. Along with the positive comes the negative, but despite difficulties the volunteers still find meaning in their experiences with P2P.

What volunteers find meaningful

Since the volunteer base is made up of diverse people that come from different perspectives there are different aspects that they derive meaning from. I have compiled the meanings that volunteers shared with me and tried to fit them into some general categories.

Connections with visitees

The uniqueness of people leads to them finding a connection with another that could look very different than what would connect you to another and this rang true with the P2P volunteers. A connecting point for a volunteer of 4 years that has had long term relationships with his visitees was a commonality of Christian faith. In his words, "well actually both of the guys I've met with indicated there was some Christian faith within their background, so to me there was commonality there and for me that was what made it a positive experience. Not to say that every inmate would make a confession or take a stance and that's fine and that wouldn't be an absolute necessity." Another form of connection that a CoSA and P2P volunteer of 1 year

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formed was the desire of his visatee to stay in contact with him and hears things from him like, “I guess what I think is interesting is how much he appreciates the business and how he’s actually told me that when he’s released he’d like to stay in contact.” If there was no connection then the visatee would not have a desire to stay in contact. One of the former volunteers explained the connections with some of his former visatees simply as, “I think probably the mutual meaning discovered in the course of a visit. For example, being able to listen to his stories and listen to his week and feeling that you're not just visiting someone in prison you're visiting another human being, like yourself and there's a connection, a oneness that say we're brothers.” Once some of those initial connections are formed the relationships that happen as a result can impact visitor and visatees lives in a positive manner.

Impact of their relationships

When going through the notes from interviews there was a surprising balance of quotes on the impact of relationships that alluded to a benefit for both sides. That to me speaks to the validity of the relationships because in true relationships there is a balance of give and take. One of the female volunteers that has been volunteering with her husband for a few years had this to say on the subject, “you do get to know someone and develop some continuity and rapport with somebody, so I think that’s been good. And just building a friendship with someone that is different from yourself and kind of breaking down barriers that you had with First Nations people as our guy is First Nations. You stop seeing skin color and you just see him for who he is and also for what he can teach us and we can teach him, kind of a two way thing.” Not only does P2P break down the barriers between the inside and outside of an institution, but it can also break down the barrier of racial interaction as in this case. Friendships formed not only with the people he visits, but also other volunteers and staff has been meaningful for a volunteer of 7 years. Not only do the visitors support their visatees, but it can be reversed as a volunteer of 20 years pointed out, ” to me it's all about... friendships, it's about becoming friends with people, it's about supporting people and again, it does help that we not only support the inmates that we support each other. We don't do our visitation in isolation, you know, and I think we all benefit from feeling that we're doing something useful and good. I believe it's also a need, I believe we all have a need to be needed and when we think we're needed, we respond to that need appropriately we feel good about ourselves and it helps our self-esteem I believe...” To me, that quote sums up the impact of relationships and the meaning behind any relationships we take part in. Some of the volunteers have had the privilege of seeing positive impacts in their visatees’ lives and to them that gave meaning.

Positive impacts on the visitees

Often we don't realize or get to see the impact that we make on others by simply being ourselves, so it is a rare gift when we get a glimpse of positive impacts. Some of the volunteers have received that rare gift in their time with P2P and shared those with me. A volunteer that has been with P2P less than a year who also participates in chapel services shared this with me, "I think that I leave there honestly encouraged by what the Lord is doing in a lot of their lives and like seeing the person that they were and how like their hearts have been transformed and been turned around; to me that's so meaningful." One of the volunteers that has been around for 9 years got to see the impacts after his guy was released and told me, "the fellow that I'm seeing now he got out of jail on Halloween, which was Saturday, he had a job by Monday." Positive impacts don't have to be a huge milestone; it can simply be that the visitee feels comfortable enough to open up to the volunteer especially for a person that is not open to sharing. This was a positive for a volunteer of less than a year that shared about how his guy opened up about his past and growing up years. The couple that shared the story of their guy singing Amazing Grace told me that, that to them was a positive result. Another aspect of volunteering that volunteers were asked about was the element of safety; ways that they prepare and an incident that some of them witnessed.

Safety

The questions that were posed were: tell me about some of the practices you employ to maintain safety and tell me if you have ever had any concerns about your safety while volunteering? I was very interested to hear what they had to say on this subject as I am sure that they get asked this question a lot when they talk about their volunteering. What they had to say definitely broke down some of the apprehension that I had in my mind as they all were very matter of fact when they talked about it.

Volunteers' preparation

A lot of the volunteers shared the following quote with me that they heard in training, "don't take anything in and don't take anything out"; which includes cell phones and snacks for the inmates. They shared that they can take money to buy snacks from the vending machines inside if they choose. Other volunteers that had been there for a while had some words of wisdom that they told me they would like to share with new volunteers who are, perhaps less experienced. A volunteer of 16 years passed this on, "keep your antenna up, basically keep

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listening and watching and trying to understand the subtleties of what's going on." The husband of a couple that has been going in together for a few years viewed being prepared as, "we go in knowing there is always a possibility something could happen." In my opinion, that is very sage advice given the experiences that I have had in my job because in my mind it is naïve to think nothing could happen because any person can be unpredictable. Most of what I heard from other volunteers was to be aware of the situations, go in with your eyes open knowing that you may get manipulated, but becoming wise to it comes with experience. Some volunteers shared how they safeguard themselves when in conversation with the inmates.

Conversational boundaries

Most of the volunteers that shared about what boundaries they have in conversation involved not giving out identifying information such as addresses, telephone numbers and they limited what they shared about their families. Long term volunteers, typically over a couple of years, shared that they shared some information such as addresses and telephone numbers with some of their longer term visitees especially if there was talk of support upon release. It is very situationally dependent and volunteers use their judgement on when it is the right time to share information and how much to share. Other conversation boundaries that volunteers talked about were when to redirect a conversation that is going down a negative path. For the husband of a couple that has been visiting for a few years that would be, "we have to always be careful when you know an inmate starts to rally against the system and he beaks off about the guards. You have to be tactful in bringing the conversation back out of the negative." A new volunteer of less than a year ran into this situation, "with the first person that I visited my sense is that he wanted to comment on his case on some of the facts of his, on some of the court proceedings that he had going on and I refused to do so. I said I am not a lawyer I can't say whether or not this is the way it was, so I guess that would be one thing I did do. I just said I am here to visit not to be an advocate for you, it was a big concern if I did say something that it could be used as proof of what this person said about this case." That again just points to having an awareness of the mandate of why you are going in and visiting and sticking to it. The only question left to answer is if they ever had any concerns about their safety; the answer is very reassuring.

Incident

The one and only incident that was mentioned that even came close to being a concern for the volunteers was a fight that broke out at a games night a couple of years. What I gathered from hearing different perspectives is that two inmates were interacting when they became

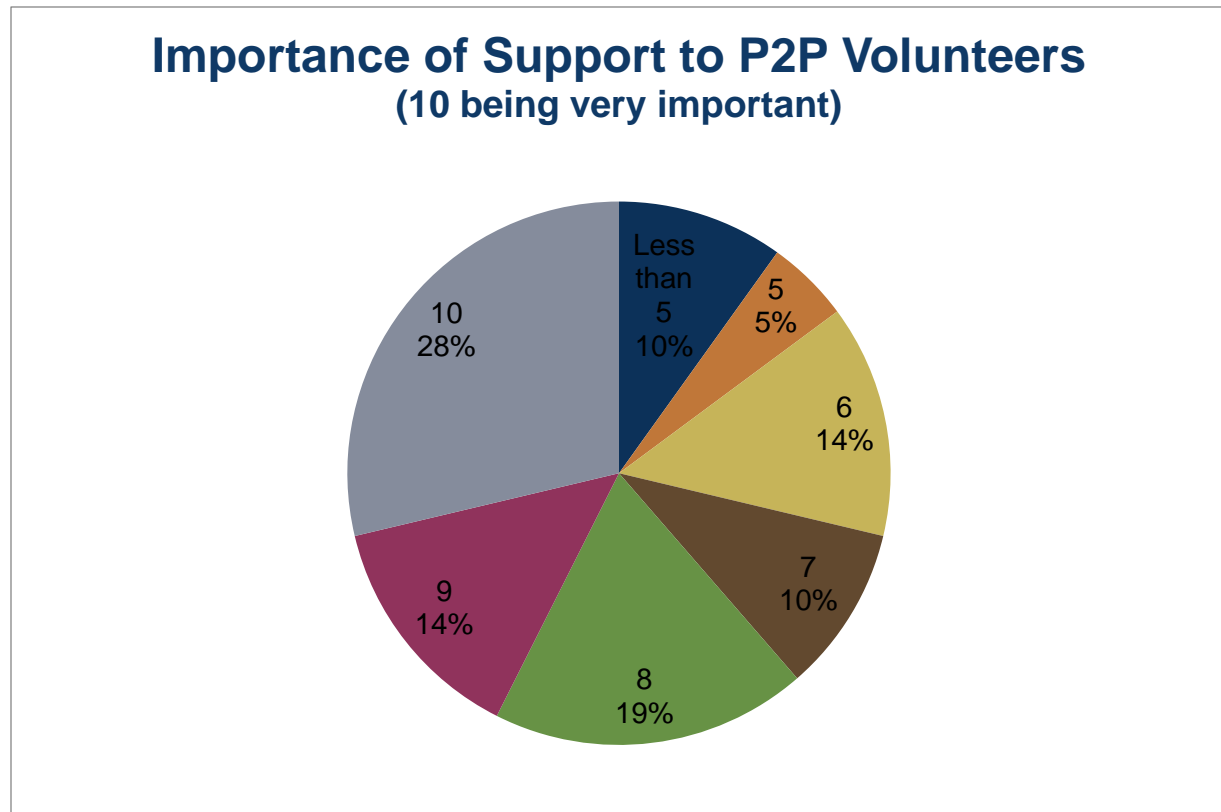
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agitated about something and began to get physical. At the moment it broke out there were no guards present and so a volunteer of a couple years at the time stepped in and immediately after the guards responded and diffused the situation. Nobody was hurt in the incident and a debriefing was held by RPC staff. Everyone felt that the situation was dealt with effectively and the volunteer that stepped in was told that he was not supposed to do that which he realized. What is interesting is that out of the volunteers that have been volunteering for longer than 3 years, 7 out of 16 or 44% mentioned the games night incident when asked about safety concerns. Yet, 100% of volunteers said that they have never had a concern for their safety while volunteering with P2P. Considering what the program is and the apprehension that people have when thinking of doing something like this; those odds are incredible. Even if safety isn't a concern volunteering can still be quite intense and tiring for volunteers as some visits they get unloaded upon with emotional stories about the realities of their visitees. That being said, the subject of support was explored while interviewing volunteers.

Support of Volunteers

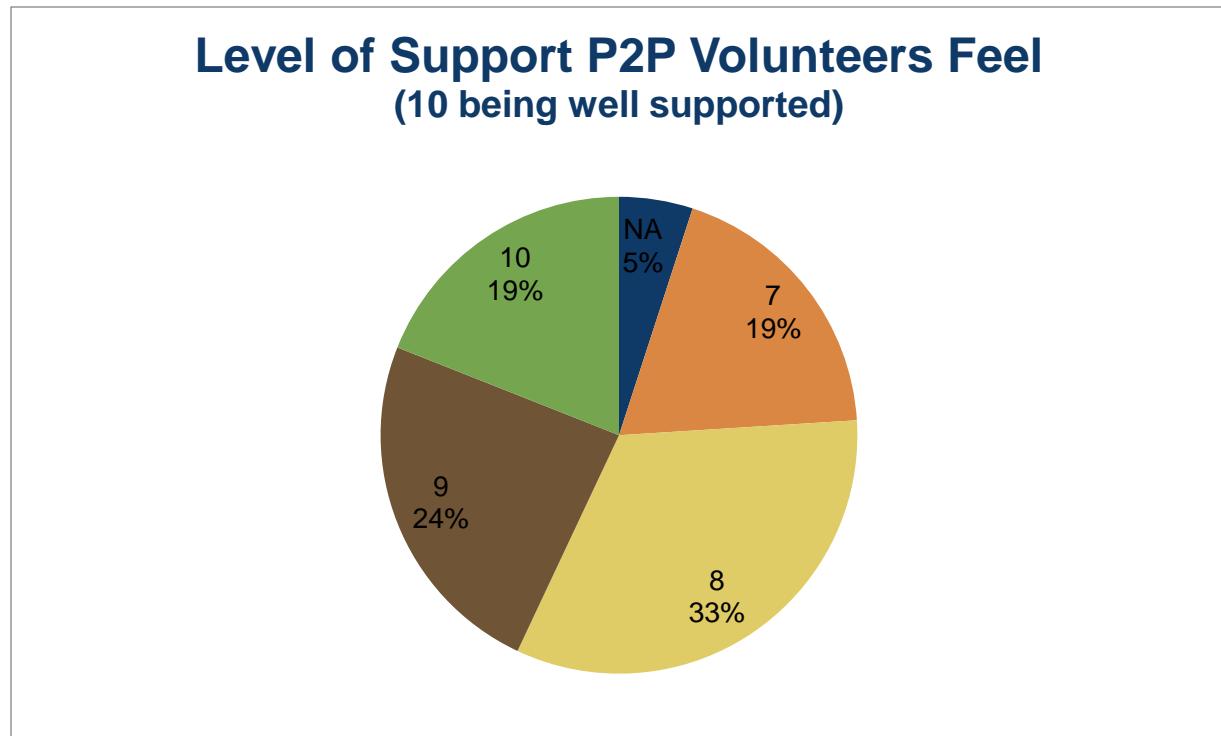
People's definition of support varied from simply being those that are in support of them volunteering to those that they talk to when they have had a more intense visit. Volunteers were asked who supports them in this ministry and were asked to rate on a scale of 1-10 (with 10 being the highest) to define how important support is to them in this ministry and how supported they feel.

Importance of support for volunteers



Clearly, the importance of support is quite varied among volunteers and the volunteers were quite honest when sharing why it is or isn't important to them. For a couple of volunteers their rating was low because they have worked in and retired from the Human Services industry, therefore they have experience working in this field. Another volunteer that has visited with his wife for a few years told me, "I think it got me started and after that it's something that we want to do and should be doing. So whether someone supports us in it or not is besides the fact." One of the volunteers that has been volunteering for less than a year shared her perspective on having support, which is, "it's one of those that, well I mean with anything that anyone is passionate about, if you don't have someone that you can share your heart to, you'd have days where sometimes it feels meaningless." Having support can give you that affirmation that you might need on days where you might not feel like going, or if you wonder what you're doing. Volunteers shared with me how supported they feel in the P2P program and what supports they have in place.

Supports that are in place for volunteers



The volunteer that said that it is not applicable told me that he did not feel that support was required for him, so he declined to give a response to this question. Others felt that they had an adequate amount of support to suit the level that they needed for themselves.

As far as the question of the supports that are in place there was a variety of combinations of answers from volunteers, but the same categories rang true in a lot of answers. The churches that the volunteers attend were mentioned by quite a few as well as spouses of volunteers whether they visit with them or not, friends of volunteers, family members such as kids and Peter and Dave. One volunteer shared that another place that he volunteers at is a great support to him in all of his volunteering and that it has given him training that has helped him in P2P. Along the lines of support, volunteers were asked whether or not they would be willing to support their visatee upon their release.

Support upon release of visatees

When asked if they would consider supporting a current or future inmate after release, 90% said yes. Of the 21 people interviewed, 11 have either already supported visatees upon release or have participated in CoSAs. One volunteer said that he wouldn't because time is a

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factor as he still works full time in his career. For another former volunteer he didn't because he never had the opportunity to. With these answers the focus shifted from whether or not the volunteers were willing to, to how they can and do prepare inmates for life outside the institution and how they do or need help preparing themselves to take on that role.

Release planning with visitees

Several volunteers shared specific steps that they have taken to prepare some people that they have visited for life outside the institution. A volunteer of 3 years shared this situation, "I was getting ready for it with this other guy because I was working with him for two years and stuff, even helping him to find a job and stuff like that. I'm setting up stuff with this guy, he's gonna go to the Lighthouse." Another volunteer of 16 years shared that he set up one of his former visitees with a CoSA before his release and that they, "had a couple sessions with him in the institution before he was released." Other volunteers shared how important they think it is that inmates receive help planning for their release and why it is important. One volunteer of 20 years gave this rationale, "I think it's important for these people that when they get released they have some support they need to find ways to get back on the rails, again, they're not evil people, they want to be useful, productive members of society, they want to be able to get a job, they want to have a family, but we have to find ways to make that happen. And, putting them up with nothing, I mean, you got these guys that have been in there 10 years and they've saved 1500 dollars and they think they've got the world by the tail." The support has even looked like helping the visitee sign up for a Saskatchewan Health Card a couple of months before his release so that upon his release he would have a card. When it comes to that day that the inmate is released and the support picks up it is important that the volunteers be prepared for that role change.

Volunteer preparation for outside support

Volunteers shared with me what they wish they had known and how the experience could be made better for those that do this form of support in the future. A volunteer that has been visiting along with his wife for 3 years who have supported a visitee outside had this to say, "what might be nice is P2P is kind of just visiting and so when you transition into helping someone when they come out that's a whole different ball game. If there was some teaching or training available with that or to help with that. We were kind of flying a little bit by the seat of our pants when he came out. I think there's more commitment to that, it's more exhausting. Something like that is more manpower if somebody's going to put the time in." He went on to

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say what would have been helpful, “we could have done this ourselves, to meet with a few people who have supported somebody on the outside, just to pick their brains a little bit you know to get a few ideas. We have people that support us, but not people that are experienced in this way.” To echo what he said, the released offender that I talked to shared with me what it was like when he got released 26 months ago. He said, “I mean like I was in a jail a long time. When I got out my P2P had to change his phone plan on his cell because I called him so much. I was out of jail maybe an hour and I’m on the phone to him saying, ‘I’m going back, I can’t handle it.’ I was so institutionalized that I didn’t know if I was going to make it. My P2P told me he’d be right there so he got in his car and took me for coffee.” That is a huge commitment and it shows the level of commitment that the volunteers have towards their visitees’ success, but I think it is only fair that they know what they should expect. Another volunteer of 3 years that is planning on supporting his visatee outside the institution shared that he would like to know, “how much would Micah Mission would want me to get involved with the guy, stuff like that.” This has not affected the volunteers’ desire to get involved and to continue to be involved; I added this to develop an awareness of the volunteers’ opinions. Another aspect of the volunteers’ opinions that was explored was how they describe their experience of P2P when they talk to others about their involvement. When I went through their answers 2 sub categories emerged and as I went through other questions I found quotes that fit under those categories that could be used in future promotional materials.

Volunteers sharing experiences

Relational aspects

A lot of the volunteers spoke matter of factly when they shared how they share their experience with others. I could tell that they don’t embellish the fact that they do it and that they are forthright about how simple and uncomplicated P2P actually is. In the words of a former volunteer of 7 years, “well, I don’t talk a lot about it actually, but I would describe it as something not over dramatic, but a good discipline which I think is valuable. It is looking beyond myself and caring for a stranger and I think it is also meaningful for that person that we visit and not just the visit. Someone that is able to be attentive and listen and tune in and making it his time; sort of drawing him out to do that on a regular basis I think is a meaningful discipline that helps us to live beyond ourselves.” One of the volunteers that has been with P2P for 3 years also said it well, “I think it’s important for us visitors to recognize that it’s not you know that we are there to try to save the world, or to make a big impression or to share expertise, but it’s the sense of one

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person paying attention to another person. The responsibility that we have for each other to care for each other, to get away from the mindset of, oh I'm spending time with a person with a downcast, but rather thinking of spending time with another person that is wise that is sensitive possibly and has some issues like I have issues. To see it more as someone that has a particular need rather than someone that is marginalized and sharing a sense of mutuality." A volunteer that visits women shared what it is like for her, "I just say that it's a very rewarding experience. I really enjoy hearing the stories of the people that are there. I like to think that when I'm visiting with them I'm providing them with something that they don't normally have. That is somebody from the outside to hear their stories and to support them in that way." Some volunteers such as a former volunteer of 25 years simply describe their relationship with some of their visitees when they share it with others; in his words, "well basically I would, first of all, I guess people wonder what you talk about or are you afraid, that sort of thing. What I talk about I guess it's just, the fellow I saw for many, many years wasn't particularly a good conversationalist and so in that sense he and I ended up playing a lot of games together and just talking as we played games. That seemed to be meaningful for him at least, he always seemed to look forward to my coming so one of the things I said was, well you really don't have to worry that much about what you would talk about, most of the conversations flow quite freely after a visit or two. There are different levels of depths of conversation; I guess it depends on how much people get to know each other. The conversations would change from the first few visits to later on. So I guess I would say that it was an opportunity to show friendship to someone and to particularly talk about things that were on the insider's mind and give them a chance to express his own feelings. It was interesting with time often those would change and they would look at what they had done differently too, they had a chance to process it with someone else." This quote also shares how the relationships formed can have a positive impact on the inmate. There are those volunteers that view P2P as a ministry opportunity that has a positive impact, therefore when they share it with others they talk about ministering to their visitees.

Ministerial aspects

Being that Micah Mission is a faith based organization it is safe to say that the volunteers that sign up do bring their faith into how they approach their visits and visitees. For some, this is one of the most important aspects of their volunteering and that is what they share with others. When I asked a volunteer of 1 year that volunteers with P2P and CoSAs if when talking to others it sparks conversation, he answered, "you know people ask me why I volunteered for well you know it's just something that I wanted to do and the Bible says that I should." A volunteer

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that has been involved with Forward Step and P2P for less than a year shared, “most of my friends are church people and the basis of our faith is forgiveness. I think the faith teaches that we have a responsibility for one another rather than condemning one another.” One of the newer volunteers that has been with P2P for 3 years told me that, “I tell them it’s Person to Person program, and it’s a good opportunity to somehow get involved and help somebody. I see it as a very good opportunity; I see it as a good ministry, so that’s basically what I pass on to them.” There was one volunteer of 4 years that viewed his ministry there in a different way and he said, “I do not view this as a personal “ministry” so to speak. I am not trying to convert people or bring them to a spiritual place. I am there to listen. If they ask about spiritual things (which they rarely do) I will respond with what I feel is an appropriate response.” He doesn’t see the ministry as a means to convert people, but he is open to ministering to them in that way if they approach it with him. It was interesting to see the volunteers’ different perspectives on how they share their experiences with others. Another question that was asked was if they would recommend P2P to other people and every volunteer said that they would and many said that they already have.

Recommending to other people

Some of the volunteers shared with me how they are getting the word out there to try to sign up some new volunteers whether it is through church or by taking people into the institution during events. One volunteer is at the ready for new people to sign up at his church and has received paperwork from Dave to hand out to anyone that wants to sign up. A longer term volunteer shared about what he set up at his church, “we’ve had a couple show and tells at our church where we encourage people to participate.” He had a core member from one of the CoSAs he participates in come up and they talked about P2P and CoSAs. Another volunteer that visits women describes how she tries to get people involved by trying to show people that it is not a scary thing. Here is her story, “for the last three years we’ve provided Christmas presents for everybody in the Psych Centre and last year I was in charge of the whole thing. I had to get a group of volunteers to go out there and help with the gifts and distribution. We sing Christmas carols and do it all. I had the same reaction from several people. ‘Oh my gosh going out there, oh I don’t know if I could do that’. In the volunteers I took this year there were some new people and they thoroughly enjoyed it, they really, really enjoyed it. It’s just a matter of getting out there and doing it. People realize that it’s not scary to do, it’s okay.” Several other volunteers mentioned that they recommend it to others all the time, but little to no people take them up on the recommendation.

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All that Micah Mission can do is try to ease the apprehension of people that are interested, but a little nervous and continue to get the word out there. Volunteers also shared with me some things that they miss about how the program used to run and ideas about how the program can improve.

Debriefing

I shared with new volunteers and reminded long term ones that the way the program used to run there was an opportunity for volunteers to get together and debrief afterwards. They were encouraged to share how they felt about this or would feel about this being organized in the future. Through talking to the longer term volunteers I found out that the debriefing was an informal coffee time that would happen after the volunteers visited RPC on the same night together as a group. They also shared that approximately two years ago the group visits were discontinued at RPC, thus making it difficult for group debriefing times to occur. Long term volunteers shared with me that they miss getting to meet the other volunteers and forming relationships with them and in some cases their visitees. They also miss getting to share their experiences with people that understand them and getting advice from them about how to approach some of their visitees. However, I got mixed responses when I asked how people felt or would feel about having a time of debriefing again.

Reintroduction of debriefing

There were a couple of volunteers that are no longer visiting that who said that they enjoyed the debriefing and thought it was useful. Of the longer term volunteers that were around when debriefing existed, 3 told me that they did not participate. One was due to having a long drive home afterwards and the other is a couple that have teenage children at home. Other long term volunteers told me that they enjoyed the mentorship as they were new volunteers at the time and that they would recommend it happen for new volunteers to benefit from. Lots of the longer term volunteers also enjoyed the time of socialization as well. New volunteers that haven't experienced the debriefing with P2P before had mixed answers about how they would feel about it. A couple of volunteers have debriefing time with other organizations that they volunteer with and they feel adequately supported with that. Some of the other newer volunteers hadn't really thought about it, but are open to the idea and 3 said that it would be useful.

When it comes down to the logistics of it that is when it gets trickier. There was a lot of interest in the meetings happening once a month to every couple of months in a supper setting.

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Also, people tended to suggest weekend such as Saturdays and also evenings during the week; they also indicated that it would be helpful if it was planned in advance. Due to the variety of answers, I would suggest constructing a survey and then sending that out to the volunteers to gather more concrete answers. This concludes the compilation of answers from the interview questions; there are some suggestions that emerged from the conversation that flowed during the interview.

Suggestions

Due to anonymity of the volunteers' answers I will not share the names of the people that made the following suggestions.

Volunteer clustering

The option of trying to create informal group visits of sorts was brought up by a few volunteers and this would allow for a short debriefing after if the visitors wanted. This was suggested by a former volunteer of 7 years, "I was just thinking what we might have been able to do is make it a foursome group, where two visitors would be with their visitees. That might help them in that setting to engage with each other and relate to each other." A volunteer of 4 years told me that he enjoys the group games nights that happen on occasion. The idea that was generated when I read through this would be to try to organize that some volunteers all cluster their visits together on the same night. I am not sure of the practicality or all the technicalities, but it is an idea to toss around.

Support circles

Another idea that was brought up by a volunteer is to have CoSAs for more than just sexual offenders and he was very passionate when he explained why. In his words, "the other thing is that I still think we need one more program and that is to support released offenders of all kinds. Right now we're basically concentrating on released sexual offenders that we put into circles of support, but I don't care if you've gone in there for drug use or if you've gone in there for armed robbery or whatever the reason, I think when they get out they need support. They need a place to live, they need a place to work, and they need a social group, they need to have some friends they need people they can go socialize with and sit and visit in the evening." He talked about this idea quite extensively and it was obvious that he would love to see this come off the ground. Micah Mission does provide support of this kind with the Forward Step program,

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so it could be advantageous to sit down with this volunteer to see if his vision matches with the Forward Step mandate.

Documentation

Another volunteer that is involved more closely with CoSAs currently made up a case study that I have submitted with this report and he indicated that he would like to see Micah Mission doing more documentation like that.

Training opportunities

Some volunteers expressed concern that they do not feel that there is enough training provided in RPC for new volunteers. One volunteer that has previous experience expressed his concern, "I think that someone without that kind of background or experience might need a bit more training, the kind of training that's offered to people other than the basic volunteer training program doesn't really include actual visitation skills." He even gave a suggestion where Micah Mission could gain some resources, "people from many different denominations and various congregations become members of the Stephen Ministries program. There's all kinds of resources available, training sessions for a week, it's actually a pretty good program that would provide good training for this ministry as well." A volunteer that has Social Work experience has this to say, "I think we know when you become a visitor you know the regulations of the government, but the interpersonal side of being a P2P visitor, that's what you learn from experience and making mistakes. If it was possible to have some kind of training in order to minimize mistakes that would be helpful." In my opinion, this would be a suggestion to explore further because in my career it would have been helpful to receive extra training that would have given me extra footing.

Palliative care

One volunteer that has been volunteering with P2P and Forward Step for about a year also volunteers in Palliative Care and is quite passionate about seeing volunteers come to RPC to offer Palliative Care. He shared that he has been in on a couple of occasions, but they have to place the hospital on lockdown while he comes in and that is a challenge. Also, it is difficult that because of the health of the inmates the visits are not very long and therefore it is a lot of work for them to place the hospital on lockdown for such a short time. He shared with me his heart behind seeing this happen, "Well, I am really concerned about trying to make palliative care a reality; about visiting terminal patients and trying to give them

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some kind of moral support. I think that should be a part of P2P because P2P is not just for healthy prisoners it's for everybody who wants it and could benefit from it." I could see his reasoning behind it and he definitely won me over in seeing the need for it.

Suggestions from the released offender

The released offender that I talked to was so passionate about the Micah Mission that he was full of ideas of improvements. One of the ideas he was the most excited about was his idea for Micah Mission to host barbeques at places such as Canadian Tire that let non-profit organizations host barbeques. He shared that several places donate to other agencies for their barbeques, for example: Old Dutch donates chips and Coca-Cola Bottling donates pop which means that it cuts down the cost of hosting quite extensively. Lots of non-profit organizations raise quite a bit of money hosting barbeques in the summer.

Another idea that he was quite emphatic about was: "this is only my opinion, I think that Micah Mission should go each month to Tim Hortons and buy a one hundred dollar Timmy's card and give one to Dave and I one to Peter and instead because right now they have to keep bills and receipts and then have to submit them." He had clearly thought this idea was good for all involved because he also said, "it's a pain for them to submit a bill for \$1.90. Sharon has got better things to do than write a cheque for \$1.90 because she's busy enough with a full-time job and running Micah Mission." It is logical and he has put a lot of thought into it. There were a lot of other ideas that he touched on such as going on the morning news to do a segment and doing group hang outs for released offenders so they can make positive friendships. I would definitely recommend sitting down with him and getting him to share ideas because he is full of them.

Conclusion

Through my many hours spent talking to the volunteers and the numerous hours spent transcribing and compiling the interviews I have come to a couple of conclusions. First of all, they have convinced me of the need for programs like P2P and organizations like Micah Mission and of the need to see them grow a larger volunteer base. Secondly, I think people could be convinced that this is something they could do if they want to meet new people, get involved and develop relationships that have a positive impact on both people. Also, that one of the biggest blocks in getting volunteers is that people think that prison is a scary place and if there is one thing I have learned, it is absolutely nothing to be feared. What there is to be feared is

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that programs like this will cease to exist that support some of the most vulnerable people that simply need to have an avenue to be heard, accepted, supported and loved unconditionally. In the released offenders' words, "the Micah Mission has been *incredible* to a *lot* of people and yet a lot of people don't give Micah Mission the credit it deserves. There's so many people that they are helping. Past, present and future. Micah has its blinders on because they don't care who you are where you're from, how much money you have, nothing, they'll work with you."

Appendix A: Case study

P2P Saskatoon Circle 3

The future Core Member of this circle (age 22) began his relationship with P2P in the Prince Albert Penitentiary, when a visitor (age 52) was assigned to him beginning with the Christmas banquet in Dec. 2000. Over time trust grew, and eventually the core member confided to his visitor that he had been convicted of multiple sexual assaults of children. He was in the middle of a 4 year prison sentence with an additional 5 years of prohibition from being in contact with children. He also admitted that he suffered from mental illness, including schizoaffective disorder. A major symptom was paranoia, particularly the conviction that others could read his mind. Attempts at controlling his mental disorders through medication in PA were erratic and largely unsuccessful. The strong commitment to remaining offense-free articulated and the basic honesty demonstrated at this time became characteristic of the core member's relationship to P2P.

The core member was accepted into programs at the Regional Psychiatric Center in Saskatoon in Oct. 2001. This was a difficult period for the core member, in part because the search for helpful medications continued, and because both the setting and the program environment tended to accentuate his paranoias. Eventually useful medications were somewhat stabilized, and the core member was released at warrant expiry in October, 2002, not having completed the sex offender program successfully. He was released under an 810 peace bond which required him to avoid schools, pools, parks, day cares and other areas where children congregate; live in an approved facility and report to the police weekly, among other things.

About a month before his release, the core member was introduced to the idea of a Circle of Support and Accountability by P2P staff, and immediately expressed strong interest. A circle of six individuals (with five members out of one MC Sask congregation, including the core member's visitor in prison) was quickly set up and trained. Circle members included a correctional centre chaplain, a trained and experienced mediator, a pastor with clinical training, a former offender and two long-term prison visitors. The circle met with the core member's nurse and parole officer before his release. They expressed the belief that he would re-offend within two weeks.

The core member was released to a group home, which he found a difficult environment because of his paranoias. His doctors continued to search for better combinations of medications, which contributed to several crises, each one leading to his being admitted to the Psych ward at City Hospital for short periods. The core member's Psychiatric Nurse met with the circle, and there were contacts with his psychiatrist, his parole officer and with the police liaison officer. After the second crisis requiring hospitalization, the core member spent 6 months in a work preparation program at the Saskatchewan Hospital in North Battleford. During this time he worked again, with more success, at a sex offender program but again did not complete it.

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The COSA met weekly through this early time with the core member (with individual members being in almost daily contact); continued to meet with him somewhat less regularly during his time in North Battleford and met regularly again after he returned to Saskatoon in Jan. 2004. Not long after his return to Saskatoon, the core member's 810 lapsed, and he was allowed to move into his mother's apartment. He continued to meet with his psychiatric nurse and participate in various work preparation programs.

By mid-2004 the circle ceased to meet formally, but three of its members continued to have individual contact with the core member on a weekly or biweekly basis, and the core member's ability to function continued to improve steadily, although he still found it stressful to be in crowds. The medications he was on require weekly blood tests, but are proving quite successful in controlling his illness. In May 2005 his mother bought a small house, and the core member has been deeply and successfully involved, together with his mother, in planning and doing significant remodeling and repair work, borrowing tools and asking advice from circle members. At about the same time, the core member took a part-time job delivering flyers, and successfully held that job for 16 months, the longest he has ever held a job in his life, giving it up only to begin full-time employment!

The core member's employment history over the past 5 years has been somewhat more erratic. After a short job-training employment at the Abilities Council, he has worked for periods of a number of months at a time at Restore, at several Fast food enterprises and at a grocery store. Most of those employments ended when job dissatisfaction or paranoias made it feel necessary to move on. He has successfully completed a meat-cutting course at Kelsey Institute including an internship process, but has to date not found satisfactory employment in that field.

Two 'girlfriend' relationships over the past years have stretched and developed the core member's relational skills. Both of the women involved had mental health issues as well, which eventually contributed to the breakup of the relationships.

While the core member's future remains unsettled (he is currently unemployed), there has never been a sense that he was in any immediate danger of reoffending, and we recently celebrated the 7th anniversary of his release from detention. Instead of being 'back within two weeks', he has been clean for seven years. His ability to think beyond himself, to let the conversation be about something other than his own needs, has increased dramatically. He has become a real friend to the two remaining members of his original circle.

What have we learned?

- There is always hope. Change may come slowly, but it does come. At the beginning it was hard to believe that the core member could ever have a meaningful life, but now it is much easier to believe.
- Trust plays a huge part in making circle relationships 'work'.
- There was a very helpful continuation of the 'visitor' friendship into the 'Circle'

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friendship, which clearly opened the door to trust relationships within the circle.

-The core member found it very hard to trust anyone in 'the system' during and immediately after his incarceration. His psychiatric nurse was in fact astonished to learn that he would voluntarily be a member of a CoSA; that this was not a condition of his release. Establishing trust within the circle required some distancing from the system.

- It was important to be flexible and able to adjust and change tactics, rather than being stuck in a given formula. For example, the Circle's attempt to write a formal covenant with the core member was never completed, primarily because he clearly experienced it as a 'system' approach. The relevant discussion resulted in a covenant written 'on our hearts' but not on paper.

- While there was significant trust within the circle, the core member did not react well to being 'pushed', typically responding by 'shutting down' and becoming unresponsive. We learned that the most helpful approach was to raise our concerns in a friendly way and let him take them away to think about. Most often his response at the next conversation would have taken the stated concern seriously as his own concern.

- He responded well to friendship, and in fact the members of his circle remain his most trusted friends to this day. He has said; "I couldn't re-offend because that would wreck our friendship!" and "You are my 'special' friends, because you 'know' and are still my friends. I don't have to be 'careful' with you."

- The core member continues to this day to 'test' ideas and plans with circle members on a regular basis, and obviously values their perspectives, encouragement and affirmation.

- Our society does not do well at helping sex offenders with mental illness. Good programs for the mentally ill are often not open to sex offenders because fellow clients are 'vulnerable' and staff are afraid, and sex offender programs that do not take mental illness into account are largely ineffective for these offenders.

- The core member has some history of involvement in church as a teenager, and in fact some of his victims were groomed in church settings. He currently does not express a need for church connection, but deeply respects the circle members' faith commitment and on occasion raises faith questions.

Issues and Challenges:

1. Keeping all the volunteers on the same page in their expectations of the core member was a struggle at times. Some volunteers expected to lay down rules and 'challenge' the core member into accountability/obedience. Other members saw more quickly that other approaches were needed.

2. The core member did not come in isolation. Knowing what to do with family (in this case his deeply caring but somewhat dysfunctional mother) was a question.

3. Integration of the former offender (a former core member of an earlier circle) was a bit of a challenge. He was in a different place in his journey than the current core member and tended to be frustrated when the core member did not react in the same ways he had. He was also in a different place from some other circle members in his understanding of restorative justice.

What would you do differently?

- Besides the ideas suggested above, there were a number of times when the core member was entrusting the circle with information that he did not entrust to the professionals 'in charge' of him. There was also a very obvious problem at times with one professional not having even the information that another professional had. It would have been helpful if we had worked more intentionally at helping the core member to trust those various professionals with more of his information

How were these resolved?

1. By meeting without the core member present. Even this was not entirely effective, but it was helpful, and we should probably have done more of it. Some of us were initially committed to working out our differences in the company of the core member, but this did not work well.

2. The mother gradually grew into the circle relationship, as the circle and core member seemed more ready for this. This began with social events (picnics, birthday parties). The mother was never a circle member, but clearly became a friend of the Circle, and she also benefited from the circle's support.

3. We did not do this as well as we would have liked to, but it became clear that we needed to provide more intentional support to the former offender. He also needed ongoing friendship, attention and community in his own right.

EJO
Oct. 25/2006
Revised
Oct. 30/2009

Appendix B: Interview questions

Interview Sheet for P2P - spring 2015

Thank you for meeting with me.

As I indicated when I contacted you, I'm a student, doing a practicum with The Micah Mission.

This is a final requirement for me to complete my studies in the Youth Care Worker Diploma.

The assignment Dave and Peter have given me is to invite feedback from you and the other volunteers of the Person to Person program.

We have three objectives for the interview:

- To gather feedback that will help us to understand the rewards people experience as they participate in this ministry
- To learn about the experience volunteers are having as they engage in this ministry
- To ask if there are any areas where there is a need for improvement in the way this ministry is being offered

I would like to record this interview this to ensure I am accurately documenting your comments. Will that be OK with you?

I will be compiling a report based on the information gathered from the interviews I am conducting. Some of this information may also be published in other contexts such as promotional materials. Will it be Ok with you if you are quoted anonymously in these materials?

In each of the following questions there is no right or wrong answers. I am interested in your thoughts, feelings and experiences.

1. How long have you volunteered with the program?
2. How many inmates/patients have you visited in that time?
3. What moved you to start volunteering with P2P?
4. As you participate in this ministry which of the following phrases describes your level of interest
 - a) I am becoming more interested in this ministry
 - b) I am becoming less interested in this ministry
 - c) My interest in this ministry is about the same as when I began
5. Tell me what experiences come to mind when you think of your satisfaction with the P2P program?
6. Tell me how you describe your experience with the P2P program when you speak to others about your involvement.

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7. Tell me who supports you in this ministry?
8. Tell me what would make this a better experience?
9. The way the program used to run, there was opportunity for volunteers to get together and debrief after each visit. Tell me how you felt (or would feel) about this debriefing time.
10. If a debriefing were organized in the future, tell me what would work best for you.
11. Tell me what you have found meaningful about participating in the P2P program.
12. Tell me if you would be interested in providing support the individual you are visiting if or when he (or she) is released?
13. Tell me about some of the practices you employ to maintain your safety?
14. Tell me if you have had any concerns about your safety while you have participated in the P2P program? Note for Courtney: determine if and how the concerns were resolved.
15. Tell me if you have any concerns about any aspect of the program that we have not touched on already?
16. Would you recommend the P2P program to other people?
17. On a scale of 1 – 10, with 10 being “very important” and 1 being “not important at all,” how important is it to be supported in this ministry?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
18. On a scale of 1 – 10 with 10 being well supported and 1 being not supported at all, how would you rate the support you have at this time?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
19. On a scale of 1 – 10, with 10 being very satisfied and 1 being dissatisfied, how would you rate your experience of the P2P program?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
20. Do you have any other comment that you would like to offer at this time?