

StreetHealth

“ONE DOOR CLOSSES, ANOTHER DOOR OPENS” BARB CRAIG, RN, RETIRES FROM STREET HEALTH AFTER 12 YEARS

Barb did not realize when she started working as a nurse at Street Health in the fall of 1995 that she would immediately be faced with the devastating aftermath of Mike Harris’ “Common Sense Revolution”.



At the end of March, Street Health said goodbye to one of our most treasured nurses. Barb Craig has retired after 12 years with Street Health. We will truly miss her.

If she had known this, perhaps she would have thought twice about taking the job - but after knowing Barb for the past 12 years, I doubt it.

What none of us were prepared for in 1995 were the shocking consequences of mean-spirited legislation that reduced the income of those on welfare to almost half overnight, and removed controls on rising rents. There was a massive increase in eviction rates and in the number of people who became homeless. The city

went from having a homelessness “problem”, to having a homelessness “disaster”.

The poorest people were not only stripped of an income that barely paid for shelter, food and clothing, they were also stripped of their dignity; and in many cases, their physical and mental health. Community and social service agencies such as Street Health scrambled to do what we could to alleviate some of the suffering experienced by thousands of people across Toronto and throughout the province.

Barb was certainly up for the challenge. In a job that lends itself to “burnout”, Barb hung in there, driven by her passion for humanity and her sense of social justice.

Barb trained in the 1960’s at the Nightingale School of Nursing. Little did she know at the time that the Nightingale building would later become a temporary homeless shelter where she would provide nursing services as part of her job at Street Health. In the early 90’s she went back to school part time to receive her BA in Health Studies at York University. When Barb came to Street Health she had a wealth of experience from her work with the Regional Geriatric Program, and the “K” Wing at Sunnybrook Health Science Centre.

Barb became aware of Street Health through her volunteer efforts of bringing donated food from large grocery stores to the Toronto Friendship Centre, a drop-in for homeless people located at Dundas and Sherbourne. She began to volunteer her nursing skills with Street Health and once her talents were quickly recognized, she was offered a full time position. Barb traded in her Nightingale nursing cap, for Street Health jeans and sweatshirt.

The work of a nurse at Street Health includes a number of different aspects and responsibilities; over the past twelve years Barb has embraced all of them with enthusiasm and commitment. She has provided compassionate nursing care to hundreds of homeless individuals. To a few she has become a surrogate “mum”, providing unconditional support when it was needed most. One of her talents is seeing the potential in people that others might overlook. She strongly believes that we cannot judge another until we walk some distance in their shoes.

Barb has also challenged how the health care system responds to the needs of homeless people. In particular she took a keen interest in preventing the spread of tuberculosis (TB) among homeless people. When the incidence of TB began to increase in Toronto, Barb and others recognized the threat to those in crowded living situations, such as homeless shelters. She was instrumental in convincing the Toronto Public Health department to dedicate more of its resources to screening and follow up for TB among the homeless population. Her growing expertise in TB also led her to become an active member of the TB Subcommittee of the Ontario Lung Association, and has gained her a seat on the TB Subcommittee of the Toronto Board of Health. Barb has more recently been working to bring the issue of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder to the attention of those who work with homeless people and to the general public.

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Barb's tireless efforts have made life better for so many of Toronto's homeless people. Barb Craig is seen here with Ernie, a long-time Street Health client.

STREET HEALTH'S current board members include:

- Marguerite Ethier - Chair
- Samuel Awe - Vice Chair
- Michael Treuman - Treasurer
- Brian Dubourdieu - Community Liaison
- Chris Archer
- Dennis Chow
- Sharole Gabriel
- Brenda Johnson
- Jeff Lewis
- Jim Meeks
- Maureen Neville
- Jackie Schlifer-Taylor

THANK YOU FROM THE BOTTOM OF OUR HEARTS!

Thank you to everyone who supported Street Health in 2006-2007. We would not have been able to continue our good work without you. A special thank you to our major donors:

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We look forward to your continued support in 2007!



In January 2007, the Tzu Chi Foundation made a donation to Street Health of sleeping bags and nursing supplies. Tzu Chi Foundation is an international disaster relief organization providing care and compassion to people all over the globe. Thank you so much for your generosity!

FEDERAL HOMELESS FUNDING SAVED: THANKS TO COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION ACROSS CANADA

Street Health's ID Safe program and Partners for Access and Identification (PAID) continue to operate thanks to the efforts of people across Canada to save federal funding for homeless programs. The federally funded Supporting Community Partnership Initiatives (SCPI) was the centerpiece of a national program implemented in 1999 to reduce and alleviate homelessness. SCPI funded programs in 61 communities across Canada.

In Toronto, the SCPI funds enabled the City of Toronto to invest in the creation of needed transitional housing units, undertake capital improvements to shelters and other community facilities, and implement innovative programs and services, including Street Health's ID Safe and PAID programs.

This funding was to end in March 2007. A coalition of Toronto-based agencies organized in the spring of 2006 to begin lobbying efforts to ensure the continuation of federal funds. Two press conferences were held in the fall and winter of 2006 that attracted hundreds of people. A car rally on National Housing Day also brought together people from the Canadian Auto Workers Union (CAW), students, community agencies, faith groups and city counselors. We also organized a demonstration and turkey lunch in front of the federal finance minister's office which drew needed media attention. At the same time, events occurred across Canada calling on the federal government to commit to alleviating homelessness by continued investment in

successful community programs. On December 19, 2006 the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) announced the new Homelessness Partnering Strategy to take effect April 1, 2007 with funding of \$270M over two years to combat homelessness in communities across Canada.

We applaud this announcement and are thankful to everyone who worked with us to make this funding possible. The letters, fax campaigns, press conferences and rallies worked!



Shown here, the Supporting Community Partnerships Initiative (SCPI) Forum in September, 2006 at the Holy Trinity Church. 500 people attended and hundreds of people signed the banner asking the Federal government to renew funding for homelessness programs.

The battle continues, but for now ID Safe and PAID, two very essential Street Health programs will be maintained. And we will continue to put pressure on all levels of government to commit to ending homelessness.

Written By: Jane Kali

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For the past seven years, Barb has also been an influential member and co-chair of the Homeless Community Advisory Committee of St. Michael's Hospital. Barb also has a talent for drawing media attention to homelessness issues. She has been featured in numerous articles in the print media (most recently in the Toronto Star, February 1, 2007), as well as some TV appearances. Barb has also spoken to countless audiences, from conferences to church congregations, using every opportunity to put a human face to homelessness and dispel the negative stereotypes that persist.

Barb's passion for nursing and social justice for homeless people have combined to make her the perfect mentor for the many nursing students who have come through Street Health over the past years. She has passed on her understanding of the social determinants of health and how they relate to the people we work with. Students have left with a better understanding of community nursing, inequality within the social and health systems, and inspiration to challenge these disparities.

Barb is embarking on the next exciting phase of her life – which I know will involve lots of travel, time with friends and family, and golf! Her warmth, passion and laughter will be missed but she leaves behind a legacy at Street Health that she can be proud of – I know we certainly are!

Written By: Laura Cowan

THE NEW NURSING TEAM!

In case you haven't heard the news - Street Health's nursing team has undergone a dramatic personnel change in the past year. Yes, that's right; a total transformation of our nursing staff has taken place. "Why?" you might ask, and, "What does this mean for the future of Street Health?" Excellent questions, let's see if we can't answer them.

First let's have a look at our ex-Street Health nurses: Anita is now an Osteopath in downtown Toronto. Alicia is working with the Regional Geriatric Outpatient team in Hamilton, a lot closer to home. Sarah continues to nurse downtown as part of the Primary Care team at a St. Michael's Hospital Family Practice and is a member of a multidisciplinary outreach team. And as I write this, Barb is on the verge of enjoying her retirement.

Our new action-packed team includes Laura Hanson who comes to us from Winnipeg where she worked at a Community Health Centre serving the needs of marginalized youth; myself-Drew Kostyniuk who was a home

care nurse in Toronto and has previous Emergency Department experience; and Andrea Rossignol who worked in St. Michael's Hospital Emergency Department. We are still searching for a replacement for Barb; a tall order by any account.

This transition has been noted by many of our clients, with frequent comments like "I loved (insert ex-Street Health nurse's name here). She was the best nurse ever!" Luckily, our new nurses are also compassionate, capable, patient, and well on their way to being oriented to the complexities, personalities, and challenges of the job. No major changes are planned for the nursing program at this time, and all the nurses are working hard to get up to speed with their exciting new role. Nursing responsibilities include holding regular clinics, as well as working with people outside of clinic who need nursing care, making referrals, and providing more intensive assistance as required. The nurses also help with the education of nursing and medical students and go to many meetings to advocate on behalf of our clients. What a great job!!

Written By: Drew Kostyniuk

THE STREET HEALTH CRACK USER'S PROJECT - CHANGING LIVES FOREVER

After 18 months of rapidly growing success, Street Health's Crack User's Project (CUP) has been renewed for another year. The project is funded by Health Canada's Drug Strategy Community Initiatives Fund, a new financial source for innovative substance use related prevention and harm reduction projects across Canada.

The Crack Users Project (CUP) is a community capacity building initiative with the goal of reducing the harms associated with the use of crack cocaine in southeast downtown Toronto. CUP officially began on October 31, 2005 with a drop-in exclusively for crack users. Other project services include health care, peer support, case management, training, community involvement and social activities.

Crack cocaine swept into our community of downtown-east Toronto well over a decade ago, and has had a stronghold on the neighbourhood ever since. Crack is now the most commonly used illicit drug among people who are homeless or street involved. With crack came an increase in violence, diseases such as hepatitis C and HIV, mental health problems, desperation and despair. Crack is powerfully addictive, has a terrible social stigma attached to it and there are few treatment services available. All of these issues can make crack use a recipe for disaster.

Health professionals and other service providers are often at a loss as how to work with crack users and bring positive change to their communities. Good intentions are often impeded by myths, misconceptions and fears. Eighteen months ago, Street Health's Harm Reduction team set out on

a mission to not only help individuals struggling with crack use, but to dispel myths and create a model of service delivery that could be replicated in other communities with similar issues. Early results from the CUP project far exceeded our expectations. Not only have we met our markers of success, we have passed them with many surprises along the way. After the first six months of the project we witnessed individuals turning their lives around. "It's making me focus on something else other than drug use. I'm doing something that's going to better myself and hopefully the community. It makes you feel better about yourself. It makes you walk with your head held higher." *CUP Participant*

One young woman in particular, who was using crack on a daily basis, was homeless, rarely smiled, and did not use any of the other services we provided became involved in the project. After a few months, she started to believe in herself again. She got housing, stopped using crack daily, began to open up and connect with staff and became one of the best 'students' in our training programs. One year later, she still has housing, she smiles brightly every time we see her and she helps other crack users through street outreach and peer education activities. She will be attending the International Harm Reduction Conference in Poland this year to present the CUP project along with Street Health staff.

Formal evaluations of the project support the staffs' thoughts and observations. As the report states: "CUP has already had a positive impact for participants who report an increased sense of self-worth, greater awareness of crack issues and safer crack use practice, increased sense of community, a reduction in crack use, and a more positive outlook on life, since they began participating in the project. Staff observations confirm these positive impacts. Additional short-term project outcomes have also already been achieved, in particular: increased communication between users and service providers, identifying and supporting peer leaders".

The report goes on to state that the success of the project is largely due to "the crack-specific, non-judgmental, welcoming space that has been created for users, and the supportive environment that has been created around the project through the provision of services and supports, which address and improve all aspects of participant health".

The CUP project continues to have a positive impact on the community. Like all of us, people who use crack need to feel welcomed and valued. A small amount of care, concern and meaningful involvement can change lives.

Written By: Lorie Steer

**I SEE A MILLION
PEOPLE OF EACH
AND EVERY KIND
I WONDER THOUGH
HOW MANY
PEOPLE KNOW**

**THE ART OF BEING
KIND**

**DO ALL THE GOOD
YOU CAN IN EVERY
WAY YOU CAN**

**THE WORLD
SEEMS FILLED
WITH GREED**

**MORE LOVE,
COMPASSION
UNDERSTAND**

THAT'S OUR NEED.

**By:
Fred William Dunn,
Street Health
Client**



Congratulations to the Crack User's Project (CUP) participants on their incredible success over the past year. Shown here is the first group of "crackologists" to complete the Peer Outreach Worker training program

THE 2007 STREET HEALTH REPORT: COMING SOON

In 1992 Street Health published a ground-breaking piece of research, the Street Health Report, which documented the health status and the barriers faced by homeless people in accessing health care. Several of the policy recommendations made in the report were implemented, resulting in improved conditions for homeless people. The 1992 report continues to be cited by academics and community groups today.

Important social and political changes have occurred since the Street Health Report was first released, including government cut-backs to social programs and new health issues which have had a dramatic impact on the health of homeless people. There is a serious lack of up-to-date information on the health status and needs of this population.

In 2006 we began the Street Health Survey project to fill this gap. This project has surveyed 350 homeless men and women in Toronto about their health and well-being, demographics and access to health and social services. A team of fifteen Peer Researchers with lived experience of homelessness and poverty conducted these interviews, and will help with the analysis of our findings.

The 2007 Street Health Report, which examines these study results, will be released in early June 2007. The report will provide valuable health information and a sound evidence base to inform program planning and strengthen advocacy efforts aimed at policy change.

We hope you will join us for the launch of the 2007 Street Health Report. For more information, contact Erika Khandor (erika@streethealth.ca). Details regarding the launch will be posted on our website (www.streethealth.ca) soon.

This symbol was used by American hoboes in the early part of the twentieth century. It indicated that "if you are sick, they will care for you here"

MISSION STATEMENT

Street Health is an innovative community-based health care organization that provides services in non-judgmental and respectful ways to meet a wide range of physical, mental, and emotional needs to those who are homeless, poor, and socially marginalized. Education, advocacy, and support are important components of our services.

STREET HEALTH

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416 921 8668 x 229 OR amanda@streethealth.ca

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ORGANIZE A FUNDRAISER-
Street Health would love to help you plan a fundraising event through your club, church or office. Please call for more details.

ADVOCATE FOR THE HOMELESS-
Express your concerns to your municipal, provincial and federal politicians...
WRITING A LETTER CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

GIVE STREET HEALTH A VOICE-
Our staff would be happy to speak to your organization, staff or club about our programs and the needs of our clients.

DONATE SLEEPING BAGS-
Please give your used sleeping bags to Street Health for our Sleeping Bag Exchange Program