

EFry CONNECTIONS

VOL 1 NO 1 SUMMER 2009

A Newsletter for
Friends of the
Elizabeth Fry Society
of Greater Vancouver



Elizabeth Fry Society
of Greater Vancouver

A New Look for EFry

In honour of our 70th anniversary, EFry is introducing a new logo and fresh new visual identity. Building on our historical use of blue to represent all things EFry, our new logo is modern, crisp and friendly. Not only that, it helps folks easily identify how to refer to us when 'Elizabeth Fry Society of Greater Vancouver' is too much of a mouthful.

We are very proud of our long history. So for 2009, we will celebrate with a 70th anniversary version of our logo to recognize just how long we've been supporting our region's most vulnerable populations. In keeping with the hope and renewal we believe our work inspires, the 70th anniversary version uses green as a complement to EFry blue.

Everything that EFry creates from now on – this newsletter, brochures, our annual report and more – will adopt our new logo, colours and fresh modern look. We hope you like it. ■

A Message from the Executive Director

Welcome to the premiere issue of *EFry Connections*, our new quarterly newsletter for friends of the Elizabeth Fry Society of Greater Vancouver. We look forward to sharing the latest news about EFry's activities – from creating new programs and expanding our services to the positive differences we are able to make in our clients' lives.

This newsletter is about and for the EFry family – staff, volunteers, donors and supporters. Together we create and deliver the resources so desperately needed to support women, youth and children at risk or affected by the justice system in improving their lives. Thank you for making our work possible.

In fall 2009, EFry will celebrate our 70th anniversary. Our services have grown considerably in that time, and we are privileged to touch thousands of people each year. The size and scope of our client base continues to grow. This year, we expanded our offerings into Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, where EFry first opened our doors in 1939. In this issue of *EFry Connections*, we explore our work in Canada's poorest neighbourhood.

We hope you enjoy *EFry Connections* and would love to hear from you. If you have any comments, suggestions or stories to share, please send them to newsletter@elizabethfry.com. ■



Shawn Bayes,
Executive Director
EFry

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Shawn Bayes Wins YWCA Women of Distinction Award

On June 3, EFry's executive director Shawn Bayes won this year's YWCA Women of Distinction Award for her tremendous contributions in the non-profit and public service sector. The most competitive category of 2009 with 12 nominees, Shawn was honoured at a 950 guest ceremony at Vancouver's Westin Bayshore.



"This is a richly deserved award," says Susan Witter, chair of EFry's Board of Directors. "Those who've had the opportunity to work with Shawn know that she can and will move mountains to improve the lives of society's most vulnerable. We are thrilled that she and the work of EFry have been acknowledged by the YWCA."

Nationally renowned as one of the most prestigious awards for women, Women of Distinction honours those whose outstanding activities and achievements contribute to the health and future of their community.

Setting the BC Standard for Emergency Shelter Case Management

The ongoing need for emergency shelters is a sad reality in many BC communities. Also true is that most shelters are operated on goodwill and a shoestring budget. Too often, little exists in the way of training support for staff, who serve clients facing challenges such as addiction, mental illness and trauma in addition to homelessness.

Earlier this year, BC Housing chose EFry, together with Lookout Emergency Aid Society and OPTIONS: Surrey Community Services Society, to create a province-wide case management tool to help shelter operators provide an efficient and effective level of client support that is both standardized and customizable to individual needs.

"This new case management tool will support sector-wide improvement in the standard of client care in B.C. shelters," says Bonnie Moriarty, director of homeless initiatives for EFry. "To ensure we created the most effective tool possible, consultation with shelter operators was a huge part of the process. We are very excited about the result."

EFry delivered the case management tool report to BC Housing at the end of May. The tool should be available to shelters around the province this summer. ■

EFry at Vancouver's Downtown Community Court

Last June, the BC government opened the Downtown Community Court in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.

The first of its kind in Canada, the Court is designed to focus on repeat offenders of things like property crime that occur in the Downtown Eastside. It is unique in that it looks not only at the crime itself, but also its roots causes and seeks to provide offenders with the assistance they need to break the cycle.

Shortly after the Court's opening, it was clear additional support was needed to help the accused navigate the Court system. EFry was asked to become involved.

EFry now operates a small office in the Downtown Community Court. We provide a number of services including a weekly counseling group for women, monthly seminars and a volunteer court worker program that supports clients in moving successfully through the process. One of these volunteers, Myra Bindley, is profiled in this issue's Faces of EFry column.

Response to EFry's programs has been overwhelmingly positive — both from Court officials and clients. If you are interested in learning more about volunteer opportunities at the Downtown Community Court, please contact Blaire Skalnek at 778-551-0644. ■

Myra Bindley Downtown Community Court Volunteer

When Myra Bindley began exploring volunteer opportunities two years ago, she wanted to make a positive difference. The busy grandmother of two found the right fit in EFry.

"I began by wrapping Christmas presents for the client party," she recalls. "I'm usually not a big fan of wrapping but it was such a great atmosphere — everyone was just in there working together to do something nice for folks that don't have much. And I really enjoyed that."

Myra was also drawn to the culture of respect at EFry. "While I was at the office wrapping, a lot of people were coming in looking for help. EFry's staff treated everyone so courteously, offering coffee and snacks while they waited. There was zero judgment."

Earlier this year, EFry approached Myra about volunteering at the Downtown Community Court. She quickly accepted. After familiarizing herself with courthouse protocols, Myra began guiding clients accused of criminal activities through the court process.

"I accompany them to the courtroom, stay with them while their case is heard and help them navigate what they need to do afterwards," she explains. "Usually it involves filling out paperwork and helping them get it where it needs to go."

While she knows the mechanics of what she does at the Downtown Community Court are important, Myra believes the companionship she provides is just as vital. "Most of these folks have had really difficult lives," she explains. "They appreciate having someone there to support them through the process."

Myra cites humour as the key to creating a rapport with her EFry clients. "After introducing myself and shaking their hands, I just joke around with them. As a more mature lady, I'm not exactly threatening, so it just seems to relax everybody."

Through her work as a volunteer, Myra's respect for EFry continues to grow. "It's clear that EFry truly values my contribution. You can tell people work for this organization because they are passionate about improving the lives of others — and they are very good at what they do. It's rewarding to be part of that." ■



Myra Bindley

EFry's staff treated everyone so courteously, offering coffee and snacks while they waited.

EFry Behind Bars

The B.C. Public Safety and Solicitor General's Office has chosen EFry to provide substance abuse counselling and community integration services at Alouette Correctional Centre for Women.

"Supporting the needs of women in prison has been central to what we do since EFry was founded 70 years ago," says Shawn Bayes, executive director of EFry. "We are extremely pleased that once again, EFry will have the opportunity to serve these core clients."

The three-year contract begins June 15, 2009.



Babies on Board

This spring, EFry launched Transitions to New Beginnings, a bridge housing program for pregnant women leaving or awaiting drug treatment. We will welcome our first new babies this summer when four Transitions clients give birth.

Following the babies' arrival, the mothers will receive support in adjusting to life with a newborn, as well as help accessing safe, affordable long-term housing.



Downtown Eastside Community BBQ

Photos above: On Tuesday, May 12, EFry hosted our first annual community BBQ in the Downtown Eastside. More than 1200 area residents joined us at Crab Tree Park, enjoying over 1600 hamburgers and hotdogs prepared by 20 EFry staff and volunteers.

Have you moved?

Please update your contact information at newsletter@elizabethfry.com or call 604.520.1166



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A New Approach to Third Party Administration in the Downtown Eastside

For most people, accessing social services like welfare, old age pension and disability support involves a visit to their local government office. But not everyone is welcome. Difficult behaviour, often fueled by addiction or mental health issues, can get people banned from government buildings. Third Party Administration (TPA) was created to provide a way for such individuals to access the income support and assistance to which they are legally entitled.

EFry has provided TPA services around the Lower Mainland for the past decade. In March 2009, we were selected by the Ministry of Housing and Social Development to expand our service into Richmond, the North Shore and Vancouver. In April, we began serving TPA clients from six new neighbourhood offices, including two in the Downtown Eastside.

EFry's unique approach to TPA was a key factor in winning the contract.

"We believe our clients are both willing and able to manage their own funds," explains Shawn Bayes, executive director of EFry. "Human rights apply to everyone. People can and do take control of their lives when given the resources to do so. In some areas, like the Downtown Eastside, that's a shift in philosophy."

"In the past, people lined up for money daily. Now, clients are getting larger sums and managing it for longer periods. Ultimately, our goal is for them to receive their government cheques monthly like most people on social assistance do," adds Shawn.

EFry works with each client to determine the most effective way to support them along the road to independent financial management. All are encouraged to hold bank accounts. If they don't have one, we will assist them in opening one at the bank of their choice.

Our TPA clients can also access EFry's free services, including lay counseling, assistance finding housing or treatment, and help obtaining the identification necessary to access public or consumer services.

"Essentially, we operate a welfare office, provide people with time and a listening ear, and ensure they receive the resources they need," says Shawn. "Many of these folks don't even know what they are entitled to. Things like a subsidized transit pass are huge when you are living on a few hundred dollars a month." ■