

Circles of Support and Accountability

CoSA-Ottawa

No More Victims

No One is Disposable

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

It Takes a Community...	1
CoSA Meets the Senate	1
A Warm Welcome	2
News & Events	2
Core Member Perspectives	2
An End to Victimization	3
Acknowledgments	3
About Us	4
Contacts	4
Support CoSA-Ottawa	4

It takes a Community...

CoSA-Ottawa is no stranger to reaching out to the community to raise awareness about our work. Given the very sensitive nature of CoSA, and since our minimum age for volunteering is 21, we find ourselves often making presentations to adult audiences.

When the chance to speak with the grade 7-8 class at [Tancook Bell School](#) in Nepean presented itself - thanks to dedicated teacher Harmina Tungal - CoSA-Ottawa was just ecstatic to have this unique and refreshing opportunity to interact with school-aged children on these salient community issues.

CoSA Volunteer and Part-Time Professor with the Faculty of Education at the University of

Ottawa, Kristin Reimer and I were delighted to speak with the students on February 24 about Restorative Justice, Circle processes and CoSA.

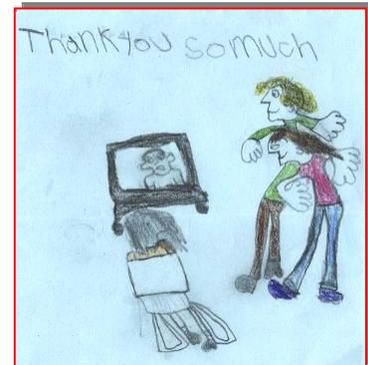
Picking up on a book the students were reading, [Touching the Spirit Bear](#), (B. Mikaelson, 2004) the morning's

"Circles are useful because they help people stay out of jail and give them a new beginning."

-Student, Tancook Bell School

conversation with this bright and inquisitive group explored these related themes:

- o People can and do learn, grow, change and forgive.
- o We all have a responsibility to help and support one another.



o Anger and pain begin somewhere; it is how we deal with them that matters. The kids' understanding of community-based justice left us feeling enthusiastic, recharged and hopeful.

We should be so lucky to have a future as thoughtful, caring and engaged as Ms. Tungal's class!

Susan Haines, Program Associate

"I learned that circle meetings are useful for people who have done very bad real things."

~ Student, Tancook Bell School



Susan Love,
Program Coordinator

CoSA Meets the Senate

On April 14th, I received an invitation to appear before the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs from the Chair, Sen. Joan Fraser. The committee was considering amendments to Bill S-2, *Protecting Victims from Sex Offenders Act*. My response was both of extreme privilege and outright trepidation! I thanked my lucky stars that Andrew McWhinnie, the National Coordinator of CoSA, was available to join me. I don't think either of us were certain what the Committee was hoping to achieve by inviting us, other than to highlight that there are other, less invasive means to

deal with the issue of sexual offending in our communities; indeed we explained how CoSA offers a unique approach to the dilemma. We were preceded at the hearing by Jim and Anna Stephenson, whose sexually-abused and murdered son, Christopher, was the impetus behind the Ontario Sex-Offender Registry, aka "Christopher's Law". For all the Stephensons have been through and the victims' advocates they have become, they are great proponents of CoSA. They understand that providing support and accountability for people who

have done wrong, is the only solution. The whole experience was quite humbling for us. We got the attention of our country's decision-makers, and we continue to have their ear, it seems. We were invited by this Committee to appear before them and relate, first hand, who we are and what we do. We were invited into the halls of power to tell our story. We addressed our Government directly. And that, for us, was humbling and a major step forward!

Susan Love, Program Coordinator & Andrew McWhinnie, National CoSA Coordinator

News & Events

CoSA-Ottawa has been busy on many fronts this spring in addition to managing 9 Circles and over 30 volunteers.

CoSA's volunteer Steering Committee has started to develop formal structures in order to help establish CoSA-Ottawa as a self-governing organization in the long-term. Thanks are owing to **Emmy Verdun** for taking the lead on this Governance Working Group! Your leadership and contributions have been invaluable.

We were delighted to welcome friends and partners to our official Office Warming on April 14. It was a rare treat to bring together Core Members, Volunteers, funders, service-providers, Police and Parole to celebrate and catch up. It was also a great opportunity for Susan Love, the Program Coordinator, to thank everyone for their commitment, courage and involvement. Thanks go to [Olga's Deli & Catering](#) for serving up delicious snacks, and to everyone for coming and supporting CoSA as we grow.

At the invitation of the Church of St. John the Evangelist, Susan Haines and Susan Love presented an overview of CoSA to the congregation on May 2. We had a very interactive conversation and hope that we can build upon these relationships for the sake of our communities. Thanks to **Rev. Dana Fisher, Rev. Naomi Kabugi** and everyone at the Church for having us!



*Rick Goodwin and Nathan Hoedeman help Susan Love celebrate CoSA-Ottawa's new office
(Photo: Ned Vani)*

Thanks to the **Community Foundation of Ottawa** and the **Ontario Trillium Foundation**, Karen Langford has been working diligently alongside Susan Love to plan the *2nd Annual Self-Care Retreat for CoSA Volunteers* on June 5-6 at the [Galilee Retreat Centre](#) in Arnprior.

A report on the 1st Annual Retreat is available on request.

"It is significant that we are appearing before this committee during National Victims of Crime Awareness Week and also National Volunteer Week, as it gives us the opportunity to draw attention to CoSA's success in reducing victimization through the hard work of volunteers in our communities."

*Susan Love, testifying before the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs,
April 22, 2010*

Core Member Perspectives

- The best preparation for tomorrow is to do today's work superbly well.
- Success is more attitude than aptitude.
- Nothing lasts forever – not even your troubles.
- Think of what others ought to be like, and then start being like that yourself.
- An eye for an eye only leads to blindness.
- A warm smile is the universal language of kindness.
- Be true to your teeth or your teeth will be false to you.
- A true friend is someone who is there for you when he'd rather be anywhere else.
- Our greatest glory is not in failing, but in rising every time we fall.
- You don't get ulcers from what you eat; you get them from what's eating you.
- There is no greater loan than a sympathetic ear.
- If you think you can, you can. If you think you can't, you're right.
- Teaching kids to count is fine, but teaching kids what counts is best.
- Behold the turtle! He makes progress only when he sticks his neck out.
- Never ruin an apology with an excuse.
- You can never find yourself until you face the truth.
- Six word formula for success: THINK THINGS THROUGH, THEN FOLLOW THROUGH!

An End to Victimization

Learning to include former sex offenders in our communities

The reintegration of sex offenders is not an easy subject to raise, even for those of us who would like to believe we have no biases and are pretty open-minded. The presence of sex offenders in the community, especially pedophiles, can make the most open-minded person become afflicted with the “not in my back yard” mentality. People generally do not want any sex offenders living amongst them, but when asked where they thought they should live, few ideas are given.

I am a parent myself and I can certainly relate to a parent’s concern about their children potentially being exposed to sexual predators, but at the end of the day, former sex offenders have as much right to live in our community as we have.

I recently had the chance to meet with a young male who was a convicted sex offender through an organization whose mandate it is to reintegrate former offenders in the community. This young male had recently moved into his own place after completing his sentence and wanted to connect with a “friendly” police officer in case he experienced backlash from the community. I was impressed by this young man’s courage to come forward and identify himself as well as his commitment to accept the necessary support to minimize his risk of re-offending.

Many sex offenders have been victims of sex abuse as children and this affects their ability to have healthy and sustainable adult relationships. When they are further rejected and

marginalized by adults in the community, it can trigger poor choices, which can ultimately lead to more victimization.

I fully endorse CoSA’s work, as I believe the more you know about the people you share your community with, the better. I have been struck by the level of compassion shown by the volunteers who are committed to ensuring there are no more victims.

*Nathan Hoedeman, Volunteer,
Steering Committee*

*This article was originally drafted for
The Centretown News, before
Nathan joined CoSA-Ottawa’s
Steering Committee.*

“I also learned that I would like to join CoSA some day when I am older.”

~ Student, Tancook Bell School

Acknowledgments

CoSA-Ottawa is grateful to:

Community Volunteers

The staff and congregation of the **Church of St John the Evangelist, Ottawa**

Funders:

The Community Foundation of Ottawa

Correctional Service of Canada, Chaplaincy Services

The Ontario Trillium Foundation

and the

National Crime Prevention Centre, Public Safety Canada



Public Safety
Canada

Sécurité publique
Canada



Community
Foundation of
Ottawa
Fondation
communautaire
d'Ottawa
For good...forever Le bien...toujours

THE ONTARIO
TRILLIUM
FOUNDATION



LA FONDATION
TRILLIUM
DE L'ONTARIO

Program Coordinator
Susan Love
slove@cosa-ottawa.ca

Executive Assistant
Karen Langford
klangford@cosa-ottawa.ca

Community Engagement
Susan Haines
shaines@cosa-ottawa.ca

Data Coordinator
Adina Ilea
ailea@cosa-ottawa.ca

No More Victims
~
No One is Disposable

COSA-Ottawa

200 Isabella Street
Suite 303
Ottawa ON K1S 1V7

Phone (613) 288-2284
Fax (613) 237-6129

We're on the Web!

[www.stjohnsottawa.ca/
pages/cosa.html](http://www.stjohnsottawa.ca/pages/cosa.html)

Donate online at
www.CanadaHelps.org/St.John's



Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) is a community-based reintegration program designed to support people newly released from prison who have been convicted of sex offenses and request CoSA's help to prevent further victimization. CoSA-Ottawa is one of 18 Canadian cities operating CoSAs, representing almost 200 Circles that aim to:

- Prevent further victimization through accountability; and
- Assist former offenders become increasingly responsible and productive individuals through support.

CoSA works with former offenders, who we refer to as "Core Members," who have been held in prison to the end of their sentence, have little or no community support and are considered high-risk. Core members participate voluntarily, and must therefore commit to leading a positive, crime-free life.

The Core Member and three to five community volunteers comprise a Circle. They meet individually and as a group on a regular basis to:

- Challenge the Core Member's behaviours and attitudes that may be associated with his offending cycle;
- Support the Core Member's community reintegration by facilitating his practical needs and by providing a consistent network of support; and
- Develop constructive and pro-social strategies and solutions to everyday problems and concerns; and
- Celebrate successes.

Support CoSA-Ottawa

Since its inception, CoSA-Ottawa has relied upon the support of one-time community grants and individuals like you. The stigma associated with sex offending - especially against children – brings financial challenges with it. Your contribution helps. Donations of time and service are also welcome. Please contact Karen Langford for information.

I support CoSA-Ottawa and am enclosing a tax-creditable donation of:

- \$25
- \$100
- \$50
- Other: \$ _____

Please make cheques payable to **The Church of St. John the Evangelist** noting "CoSA" in the **Memo line**, 154 Somerset St W, Ottawa ON K2P 0H8.

Please sign me up to receive the CoSA-Chronicle, quarterly:

By E-Mail: _____

By Regular Mail:

Name: _____

Address: _____
