

*Circles of Support and Accountability*

CoSA-Ottawa

*No More Victims*

*No One is Disposable*

**INSIDE THIS ISSUE:**

A Courageous History	1
From Phoenix to Niagara Falls	2
News & Events	3
CoSA-Ottawa Patrons	3
Core Member Perspectives	4
Support CoSA-Ottawa	4
Building Commonality	5
Acknowledgments	6
About Us	6
Contacts	6

**A Courageous History**

I believe it was 1998 when Garth Bulmer, the rector of the Church of St John the Evangelist and I were discussing restorative justice principles when he showed me a pamphlet he had received dealing with Circles of Support and Accountability.

There had been a group already established at St. John's surrounding a man and his wife who had come to Ottawa and operated on the same principles as CoSA. There was no connection with the organization, however, the atmosphere had been established.

It was with some excitement that we went to meet our first Core Member at the provincial court house. Our experience with him had its ups and downs over the years but he never committed an offence of the seriousness of his past. He did have one subsequent charge for which the Crown Attorney attempted to have him designated a 'Dangerous Offender' (DO). Garth and I, and sometimes his other volunteers, attended all of the court hearings and spoke on his behalf. Ultimately, he was not deemed a DO.

A Dangerous Offender designation hands down an indeterminate sentence for the most persistently violent or sexual crimes. Most recent figures indicate that there are 415 active DOs currently in Canada.

Though he is no longer a member of a circle, many of his volunteers continue

to keep in touch with him. One member of St. John's congregation, not a CoSA volunteer, employs him on a regular basis.

Over the years we have had about 25 Core Members who, for the most part, have completed their term with CoSA successfully.

Sadly, one experience ended in tragedy. A Core Member who had breached several parole conditions was returned to custody to await trial. He was placed in "protective custody" in a cell with another prisoner, who was psychotic and murdered our Core Member.

His death impacted us all very deeply, and Garth arranged a memorial service for him at St.



John's, which pleased his sister immensely.

Our time with this fellow was brief; we had so hoped that he would be with us for years and we could see him flourish and grow in his efforts to turn his life around.

*Pat Love, Founding Member of CoSA-Ottawa and retired volunteer*

## From Phoenix to Niagara Falls

Thanks to the Ontario Trillium Foundation and the Community Foundation of Ottawa, CoSA–Ottawa was able to participate in two exceptional opportunities these last few months.

Susan Love, the Program Coordinator, attended the [29<sup>th</sup> Annual Research and Treatment International Conference](#), hosted by the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers (ATSA) October 20–23 2010 in Phoenix Arizona.

The conference focussed on transformation, a theme which recognized that our lives become “enlarged” through respectful caring for one another, since indeed we are all in this together.

The conference and its workshops allowed Susan to learn about particular areas of interest, meet leaders in the field, and

build relationships, both new and old.

A particular highlight was hearing from Dawn Fisher, a Clinical and Forensic Psychologist from Birmingham, UK, whose session, **A Self Compassion Approach in Working with Sex Offenders: A Place for Alternative Approaches** emphasized that kindness, common humanity and mindfulness form the basis of her treatment approach.

Karen Langford, CoSA–Ottawa’s Office Manager was similarly fortunate to attend the [2010 International Conference on Special Needs Offenders](#) in Niagara Falls from September 19–22, 2010. She reported on an excellent showcase of the work being done both in Canada and internationally to improve services for this very unique

population of people in prisons, forensic psychiatric units and in the community.

These eight knowledge streams guided rich and comprehensive conference events: research; youth; female; risk & violence; collaboration; dual diagnoses & FASD; treatment, and; reintegration.

In particular, Karen highlighted the value of hearing from Dr. Dvuskin, University of Arizona, whose reflections resonated with her:

- Who is not a “Special Needs Offender”?
- The state of California spends more money on imprisonment than education.
- “Catch ‘em doin’ something right.”
- Punishment sucks.



*Susan Love, Geris Serran, Jan Looman and Pamela Yates at ATSA*

- Teach your children well.

She also brought back a salient message for CoSA–Ottawa to remember: Through increased partnership between correctional facilities and mental health programs, people with a mental illness can avoid some of the criminalization they face every day.

We hope to be a positive contribution to successful linkages within these complex correctional and health systems in our own unique way.

*Susan Haines  
Program Associate*

*“The healer resides in each of us.”*

*~ Gerald Blanchard, Chair, 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Research and Treatment International Conference, ATSA, October 2010*



## News & Events

The burgeoning CoSA-Ottawa office is closing off another busy year with celebrations and thanks for all we've accomplished in 2010.

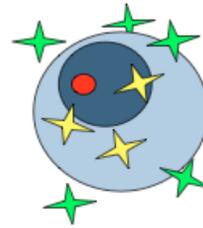
After another gorgeous walk in Gatineau park – our 6th annual – we successfully completed training and screening for 13 new community volunteers in November. We are doubly pleased to have accepted our newest Core Member shortly thereafter, bringing our active circle count up to eight.

**Sincere thank yous go to the guest speakers and presenters who gave their time, resources and expertise with us throughout the Fall 2010 CoSA-Ottawa training.**

Our communities are more engaged, active, informed and safer as a result of the collaboration between our “inner” and “outer” circles.

### CoSA's Inner and Outer Circles

Core Member and volunteers supported by experts and professionals



In December, Susan Love was ecstatic to welcome CoSA-Ottawa's newest Steering Committee, complete with governance structure, Executive officers and President. It's with pride and appreciation that we recognize each of them for their commitment and leadership.

### Steering Committee Members:

Emmy Verdun (President)  
 Khoa Hoang (Vice-President)  
 Sharon Humber (Treasurer)  
 Dasa Farthing (Secretary)  
 Andrejs Berzins  
 Pat Connolly  
 Robert Cormier  
 Nathan Hoedeman  
 Susan Love (ex-officio)  
 Kristin Reimer  
 Sharon Rosenfeldt

We'll be sure to keep you updated as the Steering Committee and staff continue to develop and refine the policies and procedures which help us strive for No More Victims in our communities.

### CoSA-Ottawa Patrons:

- ☞ Rt. Rev. Eric Bays, Bishop, Qu'Appelle (Ret)
- ☞ Rev. Canon Garth Bulmer, Executive Archdeacon, Anglican diocese of Québec
- ☞ Rev. Canon Chris Carr, Former Director General, Chaplaincy Division, Correctional Service of Canada
- ☞ Pat Connolly, Director, The Well/La Source
- ☞ John Edwards, Commissioner (Ret), Correctional Service of Canada
- ☞ Patricia Love, Probation Officer (Ret) & Founder, Elizabeth Fry Society of Peterborough
- ☞ Ana Paquette, Area Director, Northeast Ontario & Nunavut Parole, Correctional Service of Canada
- ☞ Dr. Michael Petrunik, Prof. of Criminology (Ret), University of Ottawa
- ☞ Don Wadel, Executive Director, John Howard Society of Ottawa

### We're on the Web!

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

Look out for an announcement about our New Website, Coming Soon!

## Core Member Perspectives

When we began producing **The Chronicle**, we thought it was important to provide a forum for CoSA–Ottawa Members – volunteers and Core Members alike – to share their thoughts and ideas about what matters to them.

“Chris” shared these poems with us upon our call for submissions from the Core Members.

### If I Could Catch a Rainbow

If I could catch a rainbow  
I would do it just for you  
And share with you its beauty  
On the days You’re feeling blue.

If I could build a mountain  
You could call it Your very own  
A place to find serenity  
A place to be alone.

If I could take Your troubles  
I would toss them in the sea  
But all these things I’m finding  
Are impossible for me.

I cannot build a mountain  
Or catch a rainbow fair  
But let me be what I know best  
A friend that’s always there.

~ Unknown

### There’s a Reason

For every pain that we must bear,  
For every burden, every care,  
There’s a Reason.

For every grief, that bows the head,  
For every tear drop that is shed,  
There’s a Reason.

For every hurt, for every plight,  
For every lonely, pain racked night,  
There’s a Reason

But if we trust in God, as we should,  
It will all work out, for good  
He knows the Reason.

~ Elizabeth Steiner Rice

## Support CoSA–Ottawa

Since its inception, CoSA–Ottawa has relied upon the support of its community, grants and contributions and individual donors like you. The stigma associated with sex offending – especially against children – brings financial and other challenges with it. Your contribution helps.

**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, Memo: “CoSA”**  
 154 Somerset St W, Ottawa ON K2P 0H8.

- Please contact me about volunteer opportunities.**  
 **Please sign me up to receive the CoSA–Chronicle, quarterly:**

By E–Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

By Regular Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

*Donations of time and service are also welcome. You can do more than be in a Circle! We need volunteer support for office administration, IT and web development, translation, fund raising and special events planning. Please [contact Susan Love](#) for information.*

**Donate online at**  
[www.CanadaHelps.org/](http://www.CanadaHelps.org/)  
**St. John's**



## Building Commonality with CoSA Sites Across Canada

After much anticipation, Susan Love, Adina Ilea and Susan Haines attended the CoSA Gathering 2010, hosted by the Church Council on Justice and Corrections (CCJC) from Nov 22–25 2010.



Sites from across Canada participating in the Demonstration Project supported by the National Crime Prevention Centre (NCPC) came together in Victoria, British Columbia to reflect upon progress to date, discover and build upon commonalities and share better practices, while

building meaningful relationships.

Despite bringing the snow with us, the atmosphere at the conference was warm and congenial. Workshops provided everyone with a rich opportunity to learn from one another and share ideas about:

- The Life Cycle a Circle: from start to end;
- Volunteer Training: selection, preparation resourcing of volunteers and staff;
- Safety and Risk Management;
- Accountability, Support and Confidentiality: balance and boundaries;
- Documentation: role and place;
- Process of a Circle Meeting;
- Financial and Activity Reporting; and,
- Data Collection.

Approximately fifty participants discussed Public Safety Canada's Phase I Evaluation Report, NCPC's site visits, and the demonstration project's next steps.

In true CoSA form, an open and honest conversation among CoSA providers and federal government partners – at times with some tension – provided important clarifications about the evaluation, and brought about a deeper understanding of each others' perspectives.

Indeed, the similarities and differences across Canadian CoSA sites were explored and celebrated. It was perhaps most palpable at the open-mic night, during which coordinators, staff and volunteers shared their

heartfelt stories of tragedy, hope and inspiration.

All in all, we left the Gathering feeling comforted and energized, and reminded that we aren't alone in our efforts.

*Susan Haines  
Project Associate*

*"Hospitality is not to change someone, but to offer them space where change can take place."*

*~ Henri Nouwen*

## Acknowledgments

CoSA–Ottawa is grateful to:

Community **Volunteers**

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

Funders:

**The Correctional Service of Canada**, Chaplaincy Services

**The National Crime Prevention Centre**, Public Safety Canada

**The Ontario Trillium Foundation**, and

**The Community Foundation of Ottawa**



Public Safety  
Canada

Sécurité publique  
Canada



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***No One is Disposable***

**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 offences and request CoSA's help to prevent further victimization. CoSA–Ottawa is one of 18 Canadian cities operating CoSA programs, 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.