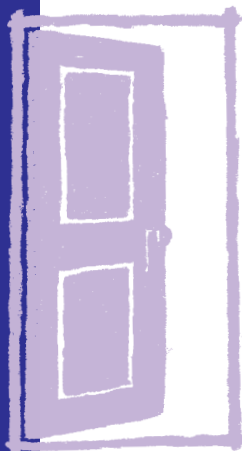


OPEN DOORS



The snowstorm that hit Halifax, Nova Scotia, in February may have shut down the city, but it didn't dampen the enthusiasm of the participants of **the Micah 6:8 Project**. This initiative gave nine university students from across Canada the opportunity to spend their reading week involved in service projects within Halifax's inner city and exploring the meaning of Biblical justice.

Elna Siebring, All Nations CRC's Community Networking Coordinator, was instrumental in organizing this week-long service initiative, coordinating the involvement of numerous partners including member agencies of the Halifax Homeless Network, Operation Manna, ServiceLink, the CRC Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action, Christian Reformed Campus Ministry, and the All Nations CRC community.

One of the Micah 6:8 activities was a work project at **The Ark Drop-In Centre**, a ministry offering a safe gathering place for street-involved and homeless youth. Micah participants built storage shelves, painted and cleaned, and heard stories about some of the youth who come to the Centre. Rachel, a Micah participant, said, "It has been both overwhelming and inspiring to see (staff) people, like Dorothy and Emily at the Ark Ministries, who devote their lives completely to their work with street youth." In 2004, Operation Manna is supporting the work The Ark as it seeks out new partnerships and resources that will allow it to expand its services.

Despite the weather, and other hurdles encountered during the week, the group left with a deeper understanding of the causes of poverty and injustice and a renewed commitment to seek out ways to serve in their own communities.



Micah 6:8 participants: Front (L to R) Sherise Helder, Monique Ouwdehand, Lisa De Groot, Rachel Van Geest, Tamara Guillaume, Karen Diepeveen
Back (L to R) Daniel Spoelstra, Steve Martin, Annelise Schuurmans, Laura Kapteyn, Jenna Bloemendal, Elna Siebring

OPERATION manna

Working in partnership is vital to the work of **Operation Manna**. It is through partnerships with churches and para-church organizations involved in community outreach ministries that Operation Manna contributes to Diaconal Ministries Canada's vision of *Transformed Communities in Christ*. Operation Manna provides funding and development services to strengthen and equip local community ministries.

We hope that the stories shared on these pages will inspire you to contribute to Operation Manna, and support the **16 community ministries** receiving funding in 2004 (see back cover). Last year, Operation Manna received close to **\$175,000**. Thank you for your generous gifts that blessed and encouraged valuable ministries and the people whom they serve. In 2004, we hope to exceed the goal of \$175,000 in order to further support and equip new partnerships.

It is our prayer that these stories will also inspire you to become involved with Operation Manna projects in your community, or encourage you to search out ways that your church might initiate or partner with organizations like these. Diaconal Ministries staff is available to help you locate projects in your area. They are also available to provide support as you and your church search for ways to be Jesus' hands and feet to those in need.

"Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message."

Colossians 4:2-3

Sharing Through Caring: Operation Manna Moves West

For most of Operation Manna's 30-year history, it has supported projects from Halifax to

Winnipeg. In 2003, it began funding its first Western partner First Vancouver CRC's **"Sharing through Caring"** program. Janet McPhee, First CRC's Minister of Outreach, explains, "The

church's desire is to create a vital and flourishing outreach ministry that meets real needs in the community; and, to disciple and train the people of the church to participate fully in the community."

In September, First CRC partnered with other churches in their neighbourhood to host a Fall Kid's Fair. The church hosts a weekly evening of dinner and programs for people of all ages, including Alpha, a Pastor's Class and more. First CRC is also creating closer connections with other organizations and ministries through social justice initiatives and by participating in the Network of East Vancouver Community Organizations.

Conversations are ongoing between Diaconal Ministries Canada staff and other potential Western partners. DMC is preparing for a national Operation Manna offering to be held in 2005.



Vancouver First CRC Fall Kid's Fair

Friendship Builds Bridges

Picking up garbage is not what most young people choose to do on a Saturday afternoon. Yet eight highschool students from Willowdale CRC recently did just that when they responded to an invitation from the **Girls' Program at Friendship Community Church** to help with a Saturday clean-up.

Sarah Walker, one of the leaders of the Friendship Girls' Program said the young girls and teens had a lot of fun cleaning up and getting to know each other. "It made the girls feel special that people would want to come and spend time with them," she said. The two groups were only together for a short time but much was accomplished in terms of building bridges and better understanding.

Friendship Church is building bridges with many partners in Toronto's Jane-Finch community. The Friendship Youth Ministries program, which includes the Girl's Program, is overseen by an alliance of local area churches. As a result of the values and friendships shared through its social and athletic programs, more than 60 registered youth are staying in school and growing in their knowledge of and love for Jesus.



Friends having fun and building bridges of understanding

Community Kitchens Cook Up Caring

The **Community Pantry** is a new collaborative effort among three local churches in Listowel, Ontario, to build community and skills through a cooperative cooking program. When a member of the group missed a session due to illness, another participant suggested that they deliver a portion of the meals they were preparing to their new friend. A similar situation arose among the members of the **Collective Kitchens** at New Life CRC in Guelph. In both cases the initiative came from the members of the group, not the leaders. Kitchen coordinators and volunteers in these programs say they have learned from program participants that you don't need to be materially rich in order to share the gifts of generosity and compassion.

A growing number of churches are being richly blessed by making their kitchen facilities available for groups of people eager to prepare low costs meals for themselves and their families through programs like these.



Community kitchens prove that you don't need to be materially rich to share the gifts of generosity and compassion.

Health and Hope

John Kok Ayom is program director of the **Sudanese Ministry Centre** that opened last year in London, Ontario. John is a trained medical doctor, yet he knows that mental, social and spiritual health are just as important as physical health.

The Ministry Centre and other programs organized by the Sudanese Ministry Team seek to address the stress and isolation found among members of the Sudanese refugee community by offering hope, support and valuable services. At the Centre, volunteers from Good News CRC offer English as a Second Language (ESL). A weekly women's group invites speakers from local health and social service agencies. Bible Studies have also started at the Centre, and plans are underway to offer more youth programs.

The Centre, which has been open only a short time, already enjoys widespread support from the community, providing services and opportunities that are not available anywhere else in the city.



Ministry Centre offers access to valuable services

“Live a life of love just as Christ loved us.”

Ephesians 5:2

Community Opportunity Scans

“It is well known that the world in which we live is a world in need: in need of love, in need of hope, in need of faith,” says Christine Vanderberg of **Maranatha CRC** in Lethbridge, Alberta. At Maranatha, Vanderberg and other church leaders are undertaking a Community Opportunity Scan (COS) to help the church see what the needs are in their community – and help church members discern how God is calling them to use their gifts.

The **Collective Kitchens** program in Guelph came about as a result of a COS. The **Sudanese Ministry Team** in London also undertook a COS prior to the opening of their Ministry Centre to ensure that the services they plan to offer do not duplicate existing programs.

Pastor Adrian VanGiessen of **The Journey**, a Christian Reformed Home Missions church plant in the Kitchener-Waterloo area sees another valuable outcome for Community Opportunity Scans. “There are many service agencies in our community,” he says, “and we would like to partner with them in their work and find any gaps in service to the community that we could fill as a church.”

If your church feels God’s calling to be involved in the community, wants to work in partnership with other organizations, start new ministries or make changes to existing programs, consider conducting a Community Opportunity Scan. Diaconal Ministries Canada is available to help.

RE-create Reconnects

Mosaics was the name of a recent art exhibition and sale showcasing the work of youth involved with **RE-create**, an open arts studio for street-involved youth in downtown Hamilton, Ontario.

This was RE-Create's first art exhibition since it opened its doors in September 2003. More than thirty artworks were on display and over half the pieces were sold, with the youth receiving eighty-five percent of the net sale. Through creative arts, the youth begin to reconnect with themselves and their

community, while also gaining valuable life skills.

One participant shared, “I discovered that art is a great stress relief for me. I also realized that I have a lot to say and it is easier in art than words.”

RE-create seeks to provide studio space in an atmosphere of acceptance, thus allowing them to imagine and create new possibilities as they explore and work with their own life experiences.



Mosaics: RE-create's premier art exhibition



Artwork by RE-create artists

community ministries

Bancroft, Ontario: A new **Pregnancy Care Centre** provides women with support and care throughout their pregnancy.

Georgetown, Ontario: Georgetown CRC is offering the **"Just Me and the Kids"** program designed to help parents and young children experience healing and hope following the pain of divorce and separation.

Guelph, Ontario: Members of the **Collective Kitchens** at New Life CRC are preparing nutritious meals together, and building a community of care and fellowship.

Hagersville, Ontario: **Helen's Treasures** is a non-profit thrift store that sells used goods and provides donated household items to people in crisis.

Halifax, Nova Scotia: **The Ark Drop-In** is a safe gathering place for homeless youth in Halifax.

Hamilton, Ontario: **Homestead's** community-based program supports persons who experience mental illness to cope with independent living.

Hamilton, Ontario: **RE-Create** is a new arts studio available to street-involved youth in downtown Hamilton.

Listowel, Ontario: Three local churches are working collaboratively to establish a **Community Pantry program** that offers people an opportunity to learn cooking, nutrition and financial budgeting skills.

London, Ontario: **The Ministry Centre** provides a valuable meeting place and training opportunities to members of the Sudanese community.

Madoc, Ontario: **The Anchor of Hope Pregnancy Centre** responds to the needs of women facing crisis pregnancies.

North York, Ontario: **The Friendship Youth Ministries program** operates in partnership with area churches to provide athletic and social programs for boys and girls.

Oshawa, Ontario: **The Refuge** staff and volunteers build relationships with at-risk and street-involved youth through programs offered in local schools and the Second Chance Youth Centre.

St. Thomas, Ontario: Staff available around the clock respond to the needs of the resident young women preparing for motherhood at **Rehoboth Home**.

Thunder Bay, Ontario: The adult literacy program at the **Thunder Bay Christian Community Centre** provides encouragement and skill development for different levels of adult readers.

Vancouver, British Columbia: A **Community Outreach Coordinator** is equipping church leaders and members of Vancouver First CRC for compassionate service in Christ's name.

ServiceLink connects volunteers from across Canada with opportunities for service in this country and abroad.

DMC is thankful for your support in providing funding opportunities for community ministries from coast to coast.



Diaconal Ministries Canada works in partnership with local churches transforming communities in Christ. **Operation Manna** is a program of Diaconal Ministries Canada (DMC) providing funding and ministry development services to churches and agencies. Visit www.diaconalministries.com to read more ministry stories and to find links to Operation Manna funded partners. The website also includes resource material for deacons and others involved in outreach ministry and information on how to contact DMC staff and regional Diaconal Ministry Developers.

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