

# PARTNERS

No. 1

A Resource from Diaconal Ministries Canada

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## Operation Manna: coast to coast

By Pam DeWilde

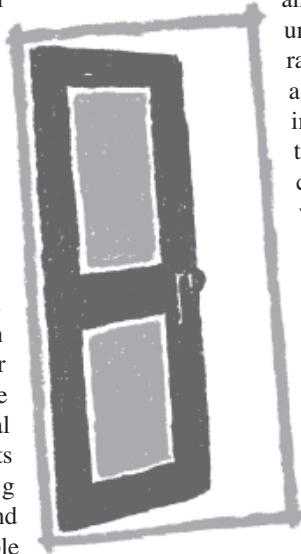
In a few months, Diaconal Ministries Canada (DMC) will be celebrating another significant step on the road to becoming a fully national organization.

In May 2005, the annual offering for Operation Manna (OM) will be held from coast to coast for the first time. I have been working with OM partners in Eastern Canada since 2001, and am excited that the program is now extending to Western Canada as well.

It has been a privilege for me to interact with more than 30 different churches and para-church organizations over the past three years. People have shared their dreams and visions, and the burdens God has laid on their hearts for others—for young people living on the street, for adults with mental illness, for recent immigrants and refugees, for young women facing a pregnancy and motherhood alone, for people who do not yet know the grace and acceptance of a loving Saviour. Many in ministry leadership have walked in the shoes of those they now serve, and their testimony of God's faithfulness is a spectacular blessing. Equally moving are the stories of how God has brought together people and resources to do the impossible. They experience in very tangible ways how God is able "to do immeasurably more than all we can ask or imagine" (Eph.3:20).

My primary role, along with other DMC staff, is to support community min-

istries that are applying for, and receiving, funding from Operation Manna. In addition to the funding that OM provides, DMC staff are available for training and consultation on the development of healthy, sustainable organizations. The excitement of a new ministry or a new program can sometimes be shaken by unexpected challenges: an insufficient number of volunteers, an unsuccessful fundraising event; the resignation of a key board member; a lack of interest among program participants. We often cannot change the circumstances, but we can provide encouragement, contribute to planning activities, and facilitate the sharing of experiences, resources and ideas among partners.



DMC board members and staff are aware that community ministry is not just happening in Eastern Canada! My colleague in Western Canada, Henry Bosch, has discovered ministries making valuable connections between people in need and the gifts of the church. For example, the "Sharing through Caring" program at First CRC in Vancouver is Operation Manna's first western partner. As DMC has grown into its vision and mission as a national organization, awareness of its strengths and resources has also grown across Canada. It will soon be May 2005 and your contributions to Operation Manna will be used to support an increasing number of new community programs and ministries from coast to coast.

What will these new ministries look like? That will depend on the unique mix of opportunities, resources and calling in

each place of ministry. We are always delighted to meet with deacons and other church leaders who want to know "what could outreach look like in our neighbourhood?" The stories and highlights presented in the remainder of this issue of *Partners* focus on a process known as a

Community Opportunity Scan (COS). It is one means by which a church can discover and learn about the people, interests, concerns, needs and opportunities for ministry in the places God is calling them to serve. Maranatha CRC in Lethbridge, Alberta, and First CRC in Calgary, have both recently undertaken a COS. We join them in praying that God will give them wisdom and discernment as they discuss possible changes to existing programs and contemplate new activities.

Wherever you might be in Canada we are grateful for your support of DMC and Operation Manna. We look forward to meeting you somewhere along the journey, and discovering the doors God has opened wide for those who seek to know and serve Him.

Henry Bosch and Pam DeWilde are Outreach Ministry Developers with Diaconal Ministries Canada.



**Operation Manna Sunday: May 1, 2005**

Materials will be arriving by the beginning of April at your church.



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\* A MINI-WORKSHOP accompanies this issue of *Partners*. The workshop provides probing questions to explore this topic and apply its theme in on-going ministry. This workshop—and other ones related to themes from previous issues of *Partners*—is available from your Secretary of Deacons or online.

[www.diaconalministries.com](http://www.diaconalministries.com)

# Community Opportunity Scan

## COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITY SCAN (COS)

\* It will guide a church to **SEE** and **HEAR** what God is already doing in the community;

\* It will help a church **UNDERSTAND** its community;

\* It will **REVEAL** ministry opportunities;

\* It will **CHALLENGE** a church to become involved in the community; and,

\* It will **NURTURE** a heart for the harvest.



## RESOURCES:

Diaconal Ministry Developers

Diaconal Ministries Canada Staff

Community Opportunity Scan available online at [www.diaconalministries.com](http://www.diaconalministries.com)

### THE JOURNEY, WATERLOO, ON

A Community Opportunity Scan helped The Journey, a church plant in Kitchener-Waterloo (K-W), re-discover that God is already at work in its community.

Members of the COS team began looking for potential ministry partners and soon became aware of the Mennonite Refugee Coalition (MRC). They worked with MRC to organize and host a Newcomers Picnic and saw this as an excellent opportunity to begin to build relationships and bless the K-W refugee community.

More than 200 people from around the world (Africa, Middle East, Eastern Europe, and South America) came to the picnic! They played games together, ate together and danced together to lively South American music provided by some of the guests.

A member of The Journey said, "It was awesome to see people from around the world laughing, dancing and having a great time. It was humbling to listen to many of their painful stories of how they have arrived here in Canada, many fleeing



*Kids enjoy themselves at The Journey's refugee picnic.*

a past that they would rather forget."

The local newspaper gave the story front page coverage on July 26, 2004. Adrian VanGiessen, pastor at The Journey, later remarked, "It was both humbling and affirming to read an account of how God allowed our little new church to contribute to making this a good day for many. I am proud of our team and the great job they did and am thankful for the way God is allowing us to be used."

### FELLOWSHIP CRC, BRIGHTON, ON

It started with a question: "How can we become more involved in our community?" God gave us a simple answer, "Ask the community."

Members of Fellowship CRC, Brighton, Ont., asked this question in connection with the church's purpose and vision. Connecting with and serving the local community emerged as a priority in our new vision.

A small team was formed to undertake a Community Opportunity Scan. The team interviewed numerous people from different parts of town. School guidance counselors, health care providers, and community leaders wanted to meet with us because they had so many stories, dreams and concerns to share with us. They were excited that we cared enough to ask their opinion. We truly saw God opening doors for us as one conversation led us to the next person and the next.

The interview that stands out the most was lunch with the Mayor. We were pleased our pastor, Rick Nanninga, was able to come. I believe this was key because it showed our church leadership was behind the project. The lunch was uplifting for us all and we ended it with a time of prayer.

God continued to open doors for us! As a result of this luncheon, the Mayor immediately formed a committee called "Brighton Leisure and Social Strategy Committee." Pastor Nanninga and someone from our church leadership will attend these meetings.

What an opportunity God has put before us! We are truly grateful that He is opening doors in our area. Please pray with us that we will be equipped for the opportunities that await us.

*By Ingrid Kapteyn, a member of the COS team at Fellowship CRC, Brighton.*