

Celebrating Student Achievement!



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President's Message

Mike Shaw



Late spring and early summer are rewarding times for an alternate education teacher. Those students who have “bought in” to your program and its philosophy are probably working hard, trying to finish courses, possibly even graduate, before the looming June deadline. I know in my classroom, the course completion posters proliferate on my wall in the last two months of school at a far higher rate than at any other time. It is great to see the kids experience success and the pride that comes from having their name on the wall of fame.

It is also a time for celebration for those who have achieved their goals, big or small. For some, it is as simple as not coming to school stoned as often as they have in the past. For others, it is finishing a course for the first time in a long time. And for yet others, it means successfully completing one alternate program and transferring into another, making the transition into the mainstream school, or entering the world of work. For the most determined of our students, it means finally achieving graduation.

The BCAEA enjoys being part of that celebration. In this issue you will find a list of bursary and award winners. The \$500 bursary winners have made it to graduation and are now poised to continue their post-secondary education. Our \$250 Student Achievement Award winners have

experienced success in their current program and are ready to move on. The \$100 Student Development Award winners have shown significant improvement in their current program. We congratulate them on their hard work and determination.

We also congratulate you, their teachers, youth care workers, and administrators. As anyone who has been in alternate education for a while will attest, it is simultaneously the most rewarding and frustrating job there is in teaching. We all know it isn't easy, but it *must* be done for the sake of our youth, and you do it well.

So hang in there for a few more weeks. Keep prodding those of your students who need just a little more encouragement to experience success. Enjoy the excitement of your graduates, the graduation ceremony or whatever year end celebrations your program offers.

Then take a well-deserved rest over the summer. Catch up on sleep. Let all thoughts of IRPs IEPs, and sundry and assorted reports, meetings and conferences recede into a distant memory. Lie in the sun. Work in the yard. Go fishing. Rejuvenate your soul.

‘Cause remember: It all starts again in ten weeks, and your students will need a relaxed you! ♦

Sexual Exploitation of Youth

Cst. Jennifer Maher

As educators, youth workers and police officers, most of us do not have a clear understanding of sexual exploitation. The reality is that most of us come from stable backgrounds in which we had food, shelter and clothing, as well as at least one stable, loving parent or guardian. There weren't the pressures or risks that come with the Internet, instant messaging, cell phones and pagers. There wasn't the continuous glamorization of sex and violence through the media, and the ready availability of synthetic drugs such as crystal meth and ecstasy. The youth of today face many more obstacles and are exposed to many more risks than we were.

Most of us think of prostitution or sexual exploitation as standing on the street corner soliciting money in return for sexual acts. But the majority of the sex trade occurs out of sight at venues such as parties, hotel rooms, trick pads, strip clubs, bars, night clubs and escort agencies. Most of the youth involved in the sex trade are resistant to talking about their activities because they are in fear of, or seduced by a recruiter or pimp. Many are unaware they are being sexually exploited. They often believe they are engaging in the sex voluntarily to obtain items like food, shelter, clothing, drugs, alcohol, or money. Many are being exploited by persons with whom they are in relationships, making it increasingly difficult for friends, parents, teachers, youth workers and police to protect them from further exploitation.

Today, youth are partying not just with alcohol and marijuana, but also with crystal meth, ecstasy, cocaine and heroine. These drugs are cheap, easily accessible, extremely addictive and have dangerous

consequences. They dramatically affect the youth's ability to make safe and informed decisions, and drugs like crystal meth give the youth a false sense of courage, often causing them to engage in dangerous activities.

These drugs make youth vulnerable to sexual predators, pimps, and recruiters. We face the challenge of learning about what drugs are out there, what the availability is and what the signs and symptoms of a person using these drugs are. If we are educated, we can in turn educate, protect, and intervene when necessary.

The media inundates our youth with sexualized images on television, in video games, in magazines and on billboards. What we as adults see as inappropriate or pornographic, many youth see as normal. Young people dress, act, and dance in a very sexual manner to "fit in" with their peer groups. Many believe it is appropriate to trade sex for drugs or alcohol at a party, which leads to diminished self esteem and desensitization to dangerous sexual behaviour.

Many youth use the internet as a way to meet people. It is not uncommon for youth to have their own websites on which they provide personal information and methods to contact them.

For a person already engaged in the sex trade, this is a way to meet potential customers or set up dates, but the internet is also a perfect medium for predators to meet and develop relationships with potential victims. Once a relationship is established, it is very difficult to protect the youth from the predator.

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CopTalk: After Meth – One Addict’s Story

Cst. Shelley Arnfield



She is a living whirlwind, spinning from crisis to crisis, leaving a path of exhausted and exacerbated support people in her wake. Now 17, she has a 21 month old son and is pregnant again. She’s enrolled in school but barely attending. There are a lot of burned bridges behind her.

Tiffany is a meth addict, 31 months clean.

When I wrote my first article for this CopTalk series in the spring of 2005, methamphetamines were a hot topic. Unfortunately they still are. At that time I sat down with Tiffany to hear first hand the living hell of meth addiction. I’ve learned a lot more about meth since then. For this, my last article, I thought it would be interesting to follow up with Tiffany.

With nine months sobriety under her belt I initially dubbed Tiffany a success story. But I worried. She was way too confident that she’d beaten the odds. And I’d met way too many people who had slipped back into their addiction after being off their drug of choice for a lot longer than she had.

On this day Tiffany apologizes to me for eating her breakfast (a bagel with cream cheese) while we talk. Then she laughs. Eating is a good thing for her. She describes dropping from 150 to just

98 pounds in 18 months of meth use when she would go for days on end without eating anything.

I ask about her son. Almost two, he is happy and apparently healthy. She credits him with pulling her out and keeping her clean. When she found out that she was pregnant, she had been drug free for five weeks. Had it not been for the pregnancy she believes that she would have used again.

And not just meth. Like many addicts, Tiffany did it all – PCP, ketamine, acid, ecstasy, mushrooms, heroin. When she couldn’t get meth she used cocaine and crack but didn’t like them. The high was too short. But she loved meth. And it loved her back.

It took three stints in juvie and two in rehab for her to get clean. Heroin was the hardest drug to come off of physically but meth was the worst mentally. She couldn’t have done it without rehab and knows no other meth addict who did it on their own.

I ask her about any lingering or long term effects from her years of use. Physically there are a few scars on her back and chest from the clogged sweat glands or “speed bumps”. The biggest physical change, besides the dramatic weight loss, was the damage to her teeth. Commonly known as

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“meth mouth” the harsh chemicals used in the production of meth do incredible damage to the teeth. While using, Tiffany described that it looked like a sweater on her teeth from a combination of the chemicals, lack of nourishment and poor hygiene. Her teeth have since been fixed. Half of them are fake.

What can't be fixed? Tiffany finds it hard to stay focused. She can't read a book anymore. There are memory problems. And breathing problems. And lingering paranoia.

More than that though is the loss of family. “I haven't seen my siblings for four years,” she laments. As a user she was always lying and even now finds herself falling into that pattern. “Nobody wants to put up with my shit anymore.”

Any relapses? I know Tiffany has had some difficult months leading up to our talk. If she had relapsed, I wouldn't have been surprised. Six months ago, at the height of her stress, her cravings got really bad. She found herself at her dealer's house and didn't remember going there. But something made her turn away. Now she avoids trigger places and people that remind her of her meth days. She swears she has only smoked one joint since the birth of her son. Cigarettes are her only habit these days.

Sexual Exploitation

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Technology, cheap and readily available drugs and alcohol, and the glamorization of sex in the media are just some of the complicated issues facing our youth today. Many youth come from unstable homes, have mental health issues, drug addictions, low self esteem, and any number of other chal-

I tell Tiffany that I do a lot of talks on meth in middle school, high school and at public forums. Does it do any good or is it a waste of time? Her answer gives me reason to keep going.

“Meth is Satan in disguise. You sell your family, everything you own, yourself, anything and everything for that pipe. You become a different person.” Three years of her life were dedicated to a drug she knew nothing about beforehand. She wishes that there had been education when she started. She believes she would have made a different choice.

Of course hindsight is 20/20, but who knows? If talking makes a difference in the life of just one person, then it's time well spent.

And so I've come full circle. In September I will be “retiring” from the RCMP. It has been a pleasure working in the schools for the past four years and I count them as among the most enjoyable and fulfilling years of my career. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Jim Lawson for allowing me to contribute to your newsletter for the past two years. My association with the schools has given me a new appreciation for the work that you do everyday. ♦

Cst. Shelley Arnfield is a soon-to-be-retired school resource officer with the RCMP Port Alberni Detachment.

lenges and stresses that come with being a kid today. This combination can be deadly, and any one of these factors make you an easy target for pimps or recruiters.

As influential people in the ...continued on page 11

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2007 BCAEA Bursary and Award Winners

Julie Bird, Port Alberni (\$500 Bursary)

I am so happy to be walking the stage this year. And that means I can continue my academic education. I have planned on going to North Island College to proceed with my education, now that I am on the right path. I've grown up so much with the help of the youth workers here at VAST. I got a job at a bookstore, I got my FoodSafe and first-aid certificates, and I have done a lot of volunteer work. This school has taught me discipline and respect; they taught me how to be an adult.

Natalie Boardman, Maple Ridge (\$500 Bursary)

I am a grade 12 student at Maple Ridge Secondary School in the Journey/Outreach Alternate Program. I had started skipping school, not doing my homework, and just not caring about school. The more I behaved this way, the more I got in trouble with my teacher. The more I got in trouble, the less I came to school. One of the counselors recommended I attend the Journey Alternate Program. I have been in Journey since the end of grade 10. If it wasn't for this program I wouldn't be graduating. My plans for the future are to go to Vancouver Community College for the Culinary Arts Program.

Bethany Enns, Abbotsford (\$500 Bursary)

My long-term goal is to become a counselor; helping others and maybe helping them work through problems. The last few years have been a never-ending roller coaster of emotions, family struggles, and learning to accept myself for who I am. I decided to make some positive changes in my life. I joined the Integrated Studies Program at Abbotsford Senior to try to pull myself from a downward spiral. By the end of grade 11 my grades and attendance had improved. Now I am going to graduate and I am more motivated and happy.

Meryl Heppner, Burnaby (\$500 Bursary)

I have been attending the POWER Program since May 2005 and have found what I can only describe as a school for second chances. I had found little success in public school and correspondence. Since I have enrolled at POWER, I have maintained an A/B average and successfully completed 13 courses. I am constantly inspired to do better by my teachers. I realize that it is the people around us that make the difference between simply going to school and learning. I have decided that is the kind of person I want to be. I want to become a teacher.

Laurie Ross, Kelowna (\$500 Bursary)

I had dropped out of high school when I was 17 because I couldn't handle it anymore. Over the years I learned that some things get easier and some things don't. I eventually decided to go back to get my high school diploma, it was something I wanted to do. I not only succeeded in gaining my high school diploma, I graduated with honours. Now I plan to take a six week certificate program in Make-Up at Marvel College. Once I have completed this course, I will take the ten month Esthetics Program at Marvel. I dream of one day applying the skills and training to a job that I love.

Kiran Thind, Abbotsford (\$500 Bursary)

I am currently enrolled in grade 12 at Abbotsford Collegiate in the Integrated Studies Program. ISP is a program for at risk teens who have the capability to be academically successful. I have been in the program for three years. I have achieved honour roll status three years running as well as student of the month three times. The progress I have made since being in the program amazes even me. I have made the decision to attend a post secondary institution and pursue a career in teaching. The reason I have chosen to become a teacher is that I was so touched and inspired by the teachers of ISP. I would also like to make a difference in children's lives.

Michelle Chan, Delta (\$250 Student Achievement Award)

As I was growing up I have always been what some call a problem child, getting in trouble every few months in elementary school. I had my own desk in the office at my junior high school. I got kicked out of my senior high and went to the POWER alternate program. Since I have been enrolled at POWER I have enough credits to graduate. Now I would like to go to college and take a course about youth workers.

Katie David, Port Alberni (\$250 Student Achievement Award)

I am 18 years old and have attended VAST for the past two years. I am from the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations tribe. I have lived in Tofino/Ucluelet before I came to Port Alberni. This award will assist me with my post secondary training, probably attending North Island College to pursue a career in the business field.

2007 Bursary and Award Winners

Emily Duffin, Abbotsford (\$250 Student Achievement Award)

I am a very ambitious and driven person. When I have my mind set on something I follow through. I have always been very interested in law and enforcement and hope to pursue a career in that field of work someday soon. There are three careers in the field that interest me more than anything, a parole officer, probation officer, and police officer. There is something about helping people and keeping them safe that I love.

Shayna Falk, Abbotsford (\$250 Student Achievement Award)

The Integrated Studies Program at Abbotsford Collegiate has been a tremendous experience for me. Since I have joined ISP, my grades and short-term goals have become a reality. My future goals are to become successful in Hotel Management; I hope to run a large Hotel. I want to be a person who loves their job and can enjoy it and to do it with a smile on my face.

Amber-Lynn Flamand, Abbotsford (\$250 Student Achievement Award)

I am a grade 10 student at Abbotsford Continuing Education Secondary School. When I first started going to ACE I was a little bit shy and not comfortable with a lot. ACE teachers have made me confident and strong. My goals are to finish my grade 12, graduate and enter university, committing my time to try and become a law enforcement officer, social worker, peace officer, or parole officer. My definite aspirations are to try and make a difference and a good impact on our civilized earth.

Roxanne Lackner, Maple Ridge (\$250 Student Achievement Award)

I dropped out of an Alternate school when I was fourteen. I didn't think it would affect me, I thought I knew it all and didn't care about anything. Now it has affected me in a big way. I got pregnant when I was seventeen. I knew I needed to get my life together. I want a good life for me and my daughter. Now I'm back in school and I am so proud of myself. I can't wait to graduate and get a job and have a great future. I realize you can't get anywhere in life if you do not follow your dreams and goals.

Nathan Millar, Courtenay (\$250 Student Achievement Award)

I have been enrolled in the Opportunities Program for about 3 years. I am a 17 year old full-time student living on my own. Throughout my high school experience I participated in junior and senior varsity football. I have worked part time on Mt. Washington for 2 years during the winter season. I volunteered for Habitat for Humanity and Van Isle Millwork and Kitchens. I would like to work in construction in the summer to earn income before I attend a post-secondary institution. I am going to take a welder-fabricator course offered through North Island College.

Lauryn Miller, Courtenay (\$250 Student Achievement Award)

I am a 17 year old student attending Mark R. Isfeld Secondary School full-time. I have been attached to the Opportunities Program for the past three years. Upon graduation, in June 2007, my plans are to attend Malaspina University College in Nanaimo. I plan to take the ten month Hairdressing Certificate program. After completing Malaspina's program and working in the industry for one year, I will apply to the Apprenticeship Board to write the Interprovincial licence.

Chantal Williams, Smithers (\$250 Student Achievement Award)

I have been told by many people I am living proof "you can pull yourself out of the gutter" if you really want to. My achievements: I'm graduating, I'm drug free, and I am the Youth Director for this region on the Youth Governance Round Table. I have raised a beautiful girl who is smart, and has inspired me to take Early Childhood Education. I feel I have a great connection with kids and feel I have the desire to work with kids and start off my long awaited career.

Carleena Brekke, Courtenay (\$100 Student Development Award)

This is my first year at the Opportunities Program. This is also my first year of high school and I didn't have such a great start but have managed to turn myself and my grades around. My goals are to graduate and attend Malaspina University-College in Nanaimo to take a hospitality and management course.

2007 Bursary and Award Winners

Bryon Devisson, Courtenay (\$100 Student Development Award)

I am a grade nine student in the Opportunities Program. I am new to this school. I came from Campbell River where I skipped all the time. Campbell River was not working for me so I moved to Courtenay. Now that I am with the Opportunities Program I attend school 5 days a week and I am passing my classes. I enjoy school a lot more because I am actually doing the work and having success.

Jessica Olisoff, Maple Ridge (\$100 Student Development Award)

I am 15 years old and live with my Aunt, Uncle, and their 1 year old son. Before I came to the Journeys Program, I was failing grade 9. I was skipping almost everyday. I have been able to accomplish most of my grade 9 academic subjects. I come to school everyday and on time. I try and get as much work done as I can, so that I can move back into a regular school and graduate with my friends.

Thea Schumacher, Maple Ridge (\$100 Student Development Award)

I am 18 years old and have been in the Journey/Teen Parent Program for four years. At the start of this program I used to skip class every day and I was extremely rude to all my teachers. Then I found out I was pregnant. I changed. Thanks to the Teen Parent Program I am able to graduate. The health nurse that comes into our class teaches me a lot of parenting and life skills, things I needed to know about the care of my child. One day I will go into university to become a registered nurse.

Danielle Weiman, Courtenay (\$100 Student Development Award)

I have been attached to the Opportunities Program for the past two years. I have been able to accomplish attending regular classes, completing electives, and playing on the senior girls' basketball team. Being in this program has enabled me to pass all of my classes. I have made a huge improvement from last year when I struggled to get credits and failed almost everything.

Building Attachments with Connection-Wary Youth

JC Chambers

Dr. Bill Glasser (Control Theory/Reality Therapy) states that when youth take adults out of their 'quality world' there are three guaranteed results (and I added one). There will be a rise in addiction, violence, inappropriate sexuality, and I'd add, an increase in suicidal thinking and attempts.

Why would youth remove adults from their "quality world"? I believe youth do this as they have encountered adults who relate from three positions. The first position that provokes adult distance is feeling misunderstood or worse, disregarded by adults in their lives. Youth begin to distance when they perceive that their reality is odd, unfathomable and/or beyond consideration. Secondly, youth distance themselves from adults who connect conditionally. If adults are only available when life or interactions with kids are clear, it is experienced as an unsecured connection, therefore greeted ambivalently or simply avoided. Thirdly, youth back away from adults who deepen or add to the frustrations they've already experienced. Often, in spite of youth experience with adults, they hope this time "it will go better," so when frustration is added they... move away.

Building connections with adult-wary youth requires three conditions within a context of a dynamic flexible

relationship: (a) sympathy, (b) confidence, and (c) access to strength.

Sympathy is the first condition all kids look for in adults. We must demonstrate the ability to understand life from the youth's perspective while at the same time challenging that perspective. Secondly, youth must come to experience adults as supportive. This support must endure the test of time. Young people must develop confidence in the adult support which translates to security. Thirdly, the connection between youth and adult has to be encouraging. Encouragement is a kind of strength given that helps youth persevere through frustrating circumstances. Encouragement is the kind of strength that helps young people continue to breathe and process through challenging situations.

Reclaiming Youth International is committed to providing training aimed at building lasting and encouraging connections with troubled and troubling youth. When building connections and trust between adult-wary youth and caring adults, both youth and adults benefit. ♦

Dr. JC Chambers sits on the Board of Directors of Reclaiming Youth International. Article reprinted by permission. www.reclaiming.com

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Sexual Exploitation

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lives of the youth, it is important for us to be aware of the many factors affecting them and the choices they make. The experiences we had as youth are far different than the experiences of youth today. We can better protect and educate our youth by understanding the dynamics of sexual exploitation and

the factors that make youth vulnerable to exploitation. ♦

Cst. Jennifer Maher works for the Saanich Police Department. This is her first article for the newsletter.

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