



# Monthly Newsletter



Working locally (Calgary, Alberta) to stop the cycle of poverty for the children

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**“The future is not some place we are going, but one we are creating. The paths to it are not found but made, and the activity of making them changes both the maker and the destination.”**

John Schaar

**By Sharon Edwards**

I am pleased and honoured to have been asked to contribute an article to the Children Without Poverty newsletter. The idea for this article came from a discussion I was having with Richelle Wilson about how people engage with big problems in the search for solutions. We talked about poverty, children, safety, hunger, war, and social justice. Yep, those are big problems alright. The question is: What do we do about them? Now, this is usually the point in any discussion about big problems where people talk about politics or the United Nations. Some people roll their eyes and throw up their hands in a gesture of surrender. The problem is too big, the solutions are too complex, the process is out of our hands.

That scenario has prompted me to write about two general themes: time and heart.

## **“I don’t have time”**

How many times have you said that in the last week? How about the last month or year? The truth is we are all very busy. This has turned us in to masters of multi-tasking as we juggle commitments to our families, our careers, our parents, and, if we are very lucky or very good at scheduling, we carve out some time to contribute to our communities. Sometimes it seems like the only hours that aren’t allocated for an activity, a meeting, a car pooling trip or work are the hours when our eyes are closed. And I won’t even ask if you think you are getting enough sleep. Our lives are very full, highly scheduled, and hopefully, rewarding. Heck, you might even be having some fun in there somewhere!

Busy lives and a lack of time can insulate us from some of those greater problems. If you have to plan weeks in advance to be able to spend an hour or two with your aging parents or with your best friend what can you possibly do about ending child poverty? If you are having conversations with people at work while looking at your computer or reading your BlackBerry at the same time how are you supposed to find time to address social injustice? It’s overwhelming. And that brings me to the second theme – heart.

## **“What can I do about it?”**

We care about children and their welfare. We care about social and economic injustice. We care about how people live even if we don’t know them. Successful communities are made up of individuals and families who have chosen to live together peacefully by respecting one another. We want the best for each other. We have heart. Is it possible that we become overwhelmed by the idea of finding solutions to big problems because we care but feel we don’t have the time or ability to make a difference?

In my work as a communications consultant I help people improve the way they talk to each other – in the workplace and in their personal lives. I also help them discover more effective ways to share their expertise through presentations, speeches or when talking to the media. I decided to do this kind of coaching when, after being a broadcast journalist for 25 years, I realized that intelligent people with great passion for what they do often have a difficult time sharing their knowledge with others. When people run into a communications block then both parties lose – you lose the opportunity to share what you know and I lose the chance to learn something that could change my life or the way I look at the world. One of the first things I tell a client is “you have to be in your body to win”. This means, we all need to be present in the moment to communicate what we feel, know, need, or want. So what does that have to do with finding solutions to big problems? I believe being present is the first step to finding solutions.

### **Be Present then create a plan**

So, we've established that you are a multi-tasking machine, with no time, but a big heart and you care about big problems but are overwhelmed when it comes to getting to a solution. And now I'm asking you to be present – what exactly does THAT mean? It means start with just one thing in one moment at a time. Which big problem do you find more interesting or urgent? Which one gets you going, makes you mad or sad? Start there and get educated. You can download pod casts or MP3's of news programs and listen to them while you are on the treadmill working out. Multi-task it.

Think about how you can talk to others about the problem you've chosen. Do you belong to a book club? Good for you! You've found time to read! Now, can the club choose a book about the issue you want to learn more about? Talk to others. What do your friends care about?

Are you a volunteer in your children's schools? Are you raising money? Is there a way to bring attention to child poverty or social equality as part of the fundraising campaign? Is there an opportunity for education there? Can the kids become involved too?

What skills do you have? How might you use them to connect with issues of poverty, children, and social justice? If you want to become inspired, check out Moms Making it Happen [www.momsmakingithappen.org](http://www.momsmakingithappen.org) to see how a nurse and a chef teamed up with a motivational speaker in Calgary to raise money after seeing an episode of Oprah. Three very busy women with big hearts have made a difference because they chose to be present, get connected, and take it one step at a time. Here's another example: you are reading this newsletter because Richelle Wilson decided that she needed to do something about child poverty and chose to develop a mentoring program to support families to become more resilient and therefore stronger members of society. You don't necessarily have to start a charity or a program to take a step forward – you can join someone else who has already started down a path that resonates for you or makes sense to you.

A wise woman told me recently that our 'life's purpose' isn't an activity but a state of being. When we start from a position of openness with honest inquiry into how we can make a difference we begin to create that state of being. I'm not saying I have it all figured out yet. And sometimes I get it after the fact and not in the moment but that same wise woman told me that is ok too – that the whole point is to grow in degrees; a little bit at a time. If that's true then everything counts.

We engage with solutions to problems by stopping long enough to remind ourselves that we can make a difference in any number of ways. Start locally and see where it takes you. Be present, create a moment, connect with your heart and then look for the open doors to the solutions for all problems – big and small.

Sharon Edwards is the President of Edwards Communications. Her Voice of Influence communications workshops are offered in Alberta and BC for individuals, corporations and professional associations. She is also the Coordinator of Awareness and Communications for Kids Help Phone in the Alberta/NT region.

### **Hands in your pocket**

Bring the family closer together this Christmas. Do you often buy things for family members who don't need anything, or are difficult to buy for so they end up with things they don't need or want? Get together and pool your funds, and sponsor a family as a team at work or as a family and bring joy to your family by bringing joy to another. Other ideas include: volunteer at the food bank together, cook a meal for the homeless, purchase items from the Oxfam catalogue (chickens, clean water, medical supplies, a cow or goat) as gifts, sponsor a family locally, sponsor a family overseas. The ideas are endless, pick something you and your family are passionate about.

To have people added/removed from the distribution list or to provide comments, please respond to:

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