



# Monthly Newsletter



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

December 2008, Edition 32

**Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos to order, confusion to clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend. Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow.**

~Melody Beattie

## **Distress Centre Calgary: On the line for you**

December can be a very stressful time. Expectations, traditions, things we think we have to do because we have always done them. More demands on our time and not enough clarity to remember what is important. We tend to focus on the long list of tasks at hand. And of course all the things we want to do: treat ourselves and the ones we love; go to all those lovely parties; visit with lots of friends and find some time to focus on our spirituality, giving back to the community and giving thanks.

Amongst all this activity, stress will increase. Are you resilient enough to handle that stress? We all need resources to turn to. The Distress Centre is one of those resources. It's a confidential and anonymous place to phone and talk and it has an excellent resource database (call 211) to find other resources in the Calgary community to access for yourself, your neighbors or friends. Even for the teenagers in the house.

The Canadian Federal government ended it's National Housing Program in 1993. There are many without proper housing or living in shelters. The 10 year plan to end homelessness in Calgary states: "More than 58,000 Calgary households are living only one paycheque – or one crisis - away from homelessness". The holiday season will put additional stress on these families.

These services are for everyone. If you or someone you know needs help, call.

Free to call, 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, 365 days per year, ANYTIME. The calls remain confidential.

<b>Crisis Line -</b>	<b>403-266-1605</b>
<b>Teen Line -</b>	<b>403-264-TEEN</b>
<b>Drug Line -</b>	<b>403-269-DRUG</b>
<b>Men's Line -</b>	<b>403-266-HELP</b>
<b>Senior's Line -</b>	<b>403-264-7700</b>
<b>Out is OK Line -</b>	<b>1-877-OUTISOK</b>
<b>Suicide Prevention Line -</b>	<b>1-800-SUICIDE</b>

**Information & Referral services - 211**

(311=City of Calgary; 411=Telephone Directory; 911=Emergency assistance – medical/fire/police)

**All services are free of charge. Donations are gratefully accepted.**

When I sat down to write the December newsletter, I wondered what to write. What other creative ideas did I have to direct your good intentions for the holiday season. I thought of the work groups that adopt a family at Christmas time, or they go as a group or family to the food bank or to the soup kitchen to serve a meal. I thought I would focus on an entirely different side of that generosity.

How do you engage and be present to help someone in front of you with a more difficult problem. Where do you turn to nurture the soul, give the gift of the need to talk, the need to find the resources so they can get what they need from the wonderful people in Calgary who are helping out. I went to the Distress Centre to interview their new Executive Director, Carol Oliver. She comes from 10 years at the United Way and was previously the Executive Director at the Women's Shelter from 1983 - 1991. Her last role at the United Way focused on managing community investments and collaborations in the area of poverty reduction and homelessness. She will have much to add to this organization, and says "if I have one more big career job left in me then it's got to matter."

Distress Centre has three (3) main areas of service delivery: 24 hour crisis lines answered by highly trained volunteers, 211 information and referral service and free professional short term counseling.

Distress Centre Calgary has been around for 38 years. Carol talks about how the agency is now poised for deeper impact in the areas/services that are their mandate. She states firmly, "Bigger is not better, better is better." There is much work around re-branding the Distress Centre and working on their profile within the community. Carol gives the example of what a great service 211 can be to the community, but many people are not aware of it. It is important for her to give their work higher profile within the community. It is important for them to repurpose what they are doing, keep what is working, find innovative pockets, and look at sustainability.

I like the 211 number and have used it on behalf of other people in my community. It allows me to have access to someone on the phone who can lookup the entire non-profit community of Alberta and search for resources and think tank with you to come up with solutions to issues or problems and places to go for help or resources.

Before departing Carol mentioned to me that their greatest need for volunteers right now, is to have volunteers on the phone lines during the day. If you are interested in volunteering, call the volunteer program office at 403-266-1634 or refer to [www.distresscentre.com](http://www.distresscentre.com) for more information.

## **How to Help**

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 be added/removed from the distribution list or to provide comments, please respond to: [Richelle@childrenwithoutpoverty.com](mailto:Richelle@childrenwithoutpoverty.com).

