
Heart Touching Heart Ministries

6677 Meadowvale Town Centre Circle, Unit 209, Mississauga, Ontario L5N 2R5 (905) 826-6558

A letter to our friends

October 1996

Greetings in Jesus' name! The days are getting awfully short, and we've been packing a lot into them here at Heart Touching Heart Ministries. As you may have read in our last issue, we're moving into a much expanded space next door to The DAM. We've also started up some exciting new programs, with more to come once we're in the new space. Now that school has started, we're seeing a lot of new kids, along with our "returning regulars", at the drop-in, and the staff and volunteers are busy getting to know all these wonderful new faces. As well, we took some positive steps towards realizing some other aspects of our ministry: alternative education and job training. More on that to come.

On behalf of the staff, the Board of Directors and, most of all, the young people we serve, please accept my heartfelt thanks for your support.

Yours in Christ,

Michael F. Clarke, CM, BA
Executive Director

Drop-in youth take the next step

Real progress is happening in the lives of the young people at The DAM, and two new programs are helping it along: youth Bible study and community volunteers.

The youth Bible study grew out of developments over the summer. Two young men who had been among the most broken and hurting of the "DAM kids" made the revolutionary decision to turn to faith in Jesus Christ. There was general rejoicing among the staff and volunteers, especially those whose patient love and role-modeling for over a year had helped bring these decisions about.

But there was no room for complacency. The problems facing these teens still existed; what had changed was their realization that they didn't have to face them alone. To better equip themselves, they needed to learn more about this Jesus they had chosen to follow. In addition, there were other young people, with some Christian background, who were eager to learn more.

So, a Thursday night Bible study group was begun, led by staff members Ruth Davis and Dave Smith. As well as the study group, which recognizes and respects where the teens are on their faith journey, there are plans afoot to participate in the youth Bible study and fellowship house groups (called LIFE, for **L**earning, **I**nsight, **F**riendship and **E**ncouragement) organized by Trinity Anglican Church in nearby Streetsville.

The Bible study is an integral part of the other new program, community volunteers. The DAM is designed for and restricted to youth between the ages of 13 and 19. But rather than disappear suddenly on their 20th birthdays, DAM “alumni” can choose to continue their association with the drop-in and give back to the community there, by applying to become a community volunteer.

If an applicant meets the requirements (which are quite high, although not as rigorous as those for regular volunteers), he or she will attend the Thursday night group and Saturday afternoon training sessions, and volunteer during the newly-established Saturday afternoon drop-in, as well as during one other shift per week. So far, two CVs are in training. Drop-in director Bill Crawford says he’s looking for amazing things from them in the next year.

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It’s the real thing: There’s a massive new presence at the back of the drop-in these days, and it’s not an unusually muscular 18-year-old; it’s a shiny new Coke machine. Many thanks to Coca-Cola for their partnership with us. **DAM cleans up:** The recent Mississauga Young Citizen of the Year awards saw DAM people walk away with two out of three top honours. Barry Townshend, the volunteer staff member who coordinated this summer’s research

project, received the prize in the highly-competitive 17-to-20 age group, and James Colgan of the Misconceptions drama group, who also took part in the summer project (and who we are hoping will come on as a regular volunteer), was honoured in the 21-to-24 category. The awards are sponsored by the Mayor’s Youth Advisory Council, and we are so proud of these guys! **John on the job:** Staff member John Shippam has taken on the job of coaching and pastoring our team of amazing volunteers. He has a featured role at the monthly training meetings, and is preparing a volunteer newsletter, along with his regular program staffing duties. **The write stuff:** That female voice you may have heard if you’ve called us lately is Anne Levy-Ward, a writer and former board member who has recently come on full time as HTH’s manager of communication and administration. She looks after newsletters and other writing projects, fund raising, special events, and office tasks. **On the street:** Thanks to the generosity of several friends of Heart Touching Heart, Mike, Bill and the program staff are attending a national conference for Christian street workers, called Street Level, later this month in Calgary. Mike and Bill are both involved in presentations; everyone is looking forward to three days of intensive learning, growing and networking. We’re very grateful to all those making this opportunity possible.

These are our kids

J., who is almost 15, has a lot to cope with. Because of his appearance, he's been teased and picked on all his life. When he was younger, he cried about it every day. Now, he copes by taking the offensive: tease first, fight first. Trouble is, he spends most of his time fighting. To further complicate his life, J. has Tourettes syndrome, which in his case makes him swear profusely when he gets excited. It's no wonder he's in trouble with the police. And he doesn't get any support from home, either: His mother abuses drugs, his brother is in jail, and he hasn't seen his father in years. What can we do for someone like J., with no hope, no chance, and no love? We can hope for him, we can give him a chance, and we can love him.

Profile

Ruth Davis: Star power

Ruth Davis knows some of Hollywood's brightest stars, and some of Mississauga's most broken street youth, and she's chosen to work with the kids. In fact, the more broken they are, the more she loves them.

Until recently, Ruth led a double life. Part of the time she was a youth worker, first on the streets of Toronto and later, at The DAM. The rest of the time, she worked as a waitress and hostess at the Stage West dinner theatre, where she rubbed elbows with famous actors like William Christopher (M*A*S*H), Don Knotts (Andy of Mayberry) and Billy Hufsey (Days of Our Lives, Fame). She recently resigned to devote her full attention to The DAM.

Ruth was first exposed to youth work through her involvement for several summers at Teen Ranch. That was fine for part of the year, but what about the rest? Then she heard Mike Clarke, the then-

director of the Evergreen youth drop-in centre downtown, speaking at her church, and she found a new direction. She began volunteering at Evergreen, and eventually changed her major at college to social work. After a stint at a group home, she came to work at The DAM early this year.

Ruth puts her drama background to good use in the Dam's Monday night drama workshop, which she leads. And now, she's using her background in the Bible (she regularly won trips to camp by memorizing Scripture, and can recite most of the Book of James) to help lead the new Thursday night youth Bible study group.

So why does Ruth Davis work at The DAM? "My life has been headed in this direction", she says. "I feel led by God to care about the kids no one else cares about."

By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. (John 13:35)
