

## **A Letter to Our Friends**

*Winter, 1997*

It seems the colder the weather, the warmer people's hearts. Here at The DAM, we have been overwhelmed by the generosity and caring of our friends and neighbours in the community in the mall itself, in nearby and not-so-nearby churches, and in the business world. Our special appeal at Christmas met with a tremendous response, not only from established supporters, but also from brand-new benefactors. And now, we're working on some new and exciting partnerships that we hope will enable some really amazing things to happen.

And none of this comes a minute too soon. The drop-in is packed with kids who bring us their questions, their crises, and their struggles with all that's dark and dangerous in this world. They need all the love and support we can give them. So, on behalf of the board of directors of Heart Touching Heart Ministries, the staff and volunteers of The DAM and, most of all, our kids, I thank you for your support.

Yours in Christ,

Michael Clarke  
Executive Director  
Heart Touching Heart Ministries

### **Wuz up with The DAM?**

*The following is excerpted from a research paper written by Tyler Williams, age 13, who is the grandson of Marie Holt, one of our volunteers:*

As I walked into the Dam Youth Drop-in in Meadowvale Town Centre, I was surprised to see a man sitting on a sofa, wearing long brown hair in a ponytail and looking as if he hadn't shaved in a week. He wasn't your usual director of a youth drop-in centre, but he was very easy to talk to (after all, it's his job to be able to talk to youths). We sat down at a table. The place hadn't really opened yet, so there weren't many other people there, but after a few minutes the people poured in and the music began to play. I asked Bill Crawford a few questions about the place and what he does there.

Q: What exactly is The Dam?

A: The Dam is a drop-in centre for teens aged 13 to 19 in the Meadowvale and surrounding communities.

Q: What kind of people go to The Dam?

A: Any youth from 13 to 19 are allowed in. We try to make connections with youths who are one or two steps away from becoming street kids, who are maybe having trouble at

home or at school or with friends, and who would otherwise fall through the cracks and become street youth downtown.

Q: What kind of activities do you have at The Dam?

A: There is the drop-in program where youth can play pool, foosball, computer games, or sit and talk. In this program, the staff and volunteers are responsible for getting to know the youths here.

Q: Have you ever had any trouble with the kids who come here?

A: No, not really. . . They know that this place is for them, so they respect it.

Q: What kind of people work at The DAM?

A: People who care about other people. Staff who work here have a heart for hurting kids, and want to help them stay off the streets.

The Dam is located upstairs, beside the Superkids karate dojo. It's a great place to hang out, and I recommend it.

News flashes

**Bake sale raises dough.** DAM kids **Stephanie Lake** and **Tracy Binns'** bake sale made \$530 for the Toronto Sun Christmas fund. Congratulations to them for a job *very* well done, and many thanks to all those busy bakers who donated goodies for sale.

**Volunteer news.** Welcome new volunteers **James Colgan, Anita Hunnensen, Sonja Nelson, Jason Stacey, Lynn Gauthier** and **Andrew Readman.**

James is a university student who leads the Misconceptions youth theatre group and volunteers at Cable 10. He attends St. John of the Cross Roman Catholic Church in Meadowvale. Last summer, he was a volunteer on the survey project team here at The DAM. James was named Mississauga's Young Citizen of the Year in his age group in 1996, and we're really glad he's made time for us in his busy schedule.

Anita is a two-for-one deal. She's made the regular two-year volunteer commitment, but she's also (for the next three months) doing an internship at The DAM, working on the summer survey report and other projects, as well as being in regular programs. Anita attends Humber College, where she's studying Developmental Service Work. She is a member of Meadowvale Community Christian Church.

Sonja is a former banker and current full-time mom, who is active at her church, Trinity Anglican in Streetsville. She volunteers on Thursday nights. Jason is a long-time member of Meadowvale Community Christian Church; he lives outside Georgetown, and works for a plumbing company. He's here at The DAM Thursdays after school. Lynn, who volunteers Fridays after school, has just finished a two-year addiction counselling course. She attends

St. Christopher's Roman Catholic Church in Clarkson. And Andrew is a resident support worker in a group home, and also attends Meadowvale Community Christian Church. He volunteers Fridays at lunch.

We were sorry to see volunteer Jennifer Meldrum leave us at the end of December. Her husband Colin has been transferred to B.C., so the couple packed up and headed west after Christmas. Jen has a very special way with young people, and her smiling face and loving heart touched many of us staff, volunteers *and* youth.

Besides volunteering at The DAM, Jen was, with Colin, an active leader in Trinity Anglican Church's youth group. (And this along with attending Royal York Baptist Church in Etobicoke.) Before she left, she took the time to write personal notes to the many young people she had become close to during her time here.

**The people in the pews reach out.** We're delighted to report that the following churches have recently come on board our team of financial supporters: Mississauga Gospel Temple, Christ Church United (Clarkson), St. Bride's Anglican (Clarkson), St. John the Baptist Anglican Church (Dixie), St. Joseph of Nazareth Anglican Church (Brampton), St. John of the Cross Roman Catholic Church (Meadowvale) and Clarkson Christian Reformed Church.

As well, we thank God for the continuing stalwart support of Eden United Church (Meadowvale), Trinity Anglican Church (Streetsville), Streetsville United Church, Meadowvale Community Christian Church, Oakridge Bible Chapel (Oakville), Chartwell Baptist Church (Oakville), Mississauga City Baptist Church, Westway United Church's Beaver Bible Class (Etobicoke), St. James the Apostle Anglican Church (Brampton), All Saints Anglican (Kingsway), Glen Erin Baptist Church (Meadowvale), St. Stephen's-on-the-Hill United Church (Mississauga), White Oak Presbyterian Church (Meadowvale), St. Paul's Anglican Church (Bloor St., Toronto) and St. Luke's Anglican Church Dixie South.

### **These are our kids**

Yvonne is 15 and in Grade 10. She comes in The Dam regularly with her friends, and has become close to several staff and volunteers. She has the usual adolescent struggles with school, home and the opposite sex, with a few complicating wrinkles thrown in: Yvonne is a witch or thinks she might become one. She has friends in a Wiccan coven right here in Meadowvale, and she often wears sinister-looking amulets and black makeup. She knows that The Dam stands foursquare against witchcraft, but she knows, too, that she's loved and welcomed here. Underneath the eyeliner and the attitude is a lovely, sad, young girl, who's just looking for the acceptance and belonging she doesn't find at home. But Yvonne also has a nasty temper, and it's gotten her into a heap of trouble. She's on probation for assault causing bodily harm and is now facing charges of uttering death threats (no minor matter, when the threatener is cosy with Satanists). The forces of good and evil are fighting over Yvonne, right before our eyes, and her future hangs in the balance.

Profile: Dave Smith

**There *is* life after the street**

Whatever trouble a youth at The DAM is in, chances are youth worker Dave Smith has been there at some point, too.

At various times in his colourful past, he was kicked out of high school, spent years on and off the street, got seriously into drinking and drugs, backpacked around Australia for the better part of a year, worked at a hotel in Muskoka, and ended up in a factory making plastic house wares. He says it's only now, at age 26, that he's learning to be a functioning human being.

He owes his survival to three things: his parents, who stuck by him through thick and thin, and never gave up on him; Mike Clarke, who in his earlier role as director of the Evergreen centre in downtown Toronto was a friend of his father, and who helped inspire and motivate him; and God. Dave likens his coming to faith in January, 1993, to a spiritual space shuttle experience. He now attends Chartwell Baptist Church in Oakville, and helps lead a youth Bible study group on Thursday nights.

Dave began working at The DAM just before the drop-in opened its doors, as part of the team that prepared the way with the kids who hung out in the food court.

**Matthew 18:10-13** “See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven. What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost.”