

# IN CONNECTION



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April 2009 Issue

## CRISIS LINE WORKERS... WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

**O**ftentimes Crisis Society staff members are described as being “passionate about what we do.” This is certainly the case with all of our programs but even more so with the crisis lines.

Not only do the 24 hour crisis lines provide an invaluable, support service to the communities we serve, they are, truly, the heart and soul of our organization and the place where we all got started.

Every person on staff at the crisis society has taken the crisis line training and has volunteered at one time or another on our crisis lines. This rich experience has given each person on our staff the empathy and understanding of what it takes to be a compassionate helper. It also contributes to our Crisis Society “culture” of empathetic listening, non judgement, caring, and support. Qualities you will see in action as much in our staff room as on the crisis line.

Because of this culture of empathy and compassion, it's no surprise that the people who volunteer on our crisis lines are incredibly kind hearted individuals. People who give of their time and their energy with no thought of repayment.

But it's another part of our crisis line culture that may surprise people. The Central Vancouver Island Crisis Society also strives for excellence in training and service delivery.

This is reflected in our volunteers. Many who go forward into exciting and rewarding careers as a direct result of their experiences on the crisis line and the skills they attained in training and answering the phones.

Over the years we have seen our volunteer crisis line workers go onward into graduate studies programs in psychology, social work, English literature, medicine, and nursing.

Our crisis line workers have been hired by police forces like the RCMP, the Saanich Police, and the City of Victoria in recent years.

Our volunteers have also been hired into government positions with Child and Youth Mental Health, the Vancouver Island Health Authority, the Justice Access Centre, and Human Resources Development Canada.

Several are using their skills in crisis and suicide intervention working front line positions at places like Edgewood, Clearview Detox, and Mental Health and Addictions Services.

And still more are filling staff positions at non profit organizations like Nanaimo Hospice Society, Haven Society, the Telephone Visiting Society, and Cowichan Women Against Violence Society.

It is in no small part because of these accomplishments and the wealth of skill, compassion, and knowledge these kind hearted individuals take onward with them that we are thought of as “passionate.”

This fabric of empathy that blankets our communities has been lovingly and painstakingly stitched together over the years by many skillful hands. It is gratifying to know that our culture of non judgement and compassion lives on and ripples forward.

Lyndsay Wells,

Community Education Program Coordinator

### CRISIS LINE VOLUNTEERING

#### STOP WAITING

**FOR THE RIGHT TIME  
... YOUR COMMUNITY  
NEEDS YOU**

**TO VOLUNTEER CALL**

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**Crisis  
Society**  
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your life...**  
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# Contacts

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**Cowichan Crisis & Info Line**  
**Serving North of Malahat to Chemainus**  
**including Lake Cowichan**  
**Phone No: (250) 748-1133**

**Nanaimo Crisis & Info Line**  
**Serving Ladysmith, Nanaimo area including**  
**Gabriola Island**  
**Phone No: (250) 754-4447**

**District 69 Crisis & Info Line**  
**Serving Parksville/Qualicum and**  
**surrounding area**  
**Phone No: (250) 248-3111**

**The Cowichan, Nanaimo and**  
**District 69 Crisis & Info Lines**  
**are also the number for public access**  
**to Mental Health Crisis Response**  
**Services in the respective communities.**

**Provincial Suicide Line**  
**1-800-SUICIDE (784-2433)**

**Suicide Bereavement Support Group:**  
**Support for surviving the loss of a loved one**  
**to suicide. For information call 250-753-2495**

**Phone (250) 753-2495 for...**  
**Volunteer Training on the Crisis Line**  
**Suicide Prevention &**  
**Intervention Training**  
**and other customized workshops for your**  
**business or group**



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I'm currently sitting in surprised "wonder" looking at the blanket of white out my window, wondering what happened to our early spring. Vancouver Island, it seems, does this every year. Tantalizes us with the promise of hope and new growth in early February, and then, just as we find ourselves basking in the beauty of it, March rolls in and slaps us back to reality.

It occurs to me that this is much like the journey we each face. We move forward. We breathe. Breathing on the hard days is sometimes all we have the energy for. We wonder how we'll ever be able to get through it. How we'll ever be able to survive.

We carry on. We pray, we hope, and we grieve. We know that life will never again be as it was. But after a time we begin to notice a balance between good days and bad. We're surprised that, despite the pain, we still have the capacity to feel happiness, love, and even hope. We're each in our own way and in our time moving towards our "New Normal."

But just as the snow unexpectedly fell from the sky last evening shaking us out of our early springtime reverie, so it is sometimes with our grief. An unexpected comment, a smell, a face in a crowd and we are suddenly overwhelmed by our loss again.

Yesterday I went to do a talk for a group of teachers and school resource staff at Frances Kelsey Highschool in Shawnigan Lake. As often happens, a few people stayed behind. Uneasy and unsure but needing to talk. One of them was a woman who had lost her twin sister

four years ago. We ended up going for a walk and we walked and talked for almost an hour. Pain had been sitting on her heart that she had been unaware of, and I could see a visible difference in her as she unleashed it.

In talking, she was able to let go of another layer. Release it to the wind. And let it fly. Much like the snow of last evening. Sometimes our setbacks are our soul's way of signalling readiness for another layer of healing.

While we brave the cold and the grey, we can rest in the knowledge of a certain spring, and in the comfort of friends who understand and want to help you get there.

Lyndsay Wells, Community Education Program Coordinator



## REMINDER MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME

It is that time of year for your membership renewal. Current members of the Crisis Society are asked to renew their memberships before April 30, 2009 to continue receiving their benefits such as 2009 Community Resource Directory at cost \$13.00 – Member discount



- Member Discount on Training Workshops
- FREE Semi-Annual Newsletter
- Member Discount on Conference Room booking for your group meetings

**If you are not a member of the Crisis Society and would like to become one, just call our business line at 753-2495 to sign up. New members welcome.**



# Thank you to all our Donors

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## ANCHORS (UNDER \$499)

Acme Food Co.  
Adventures Sea Kayaking  
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Julie Anderson  
Jumping Jiminy's  
Just Jakes Restaurant  
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Regis Hair Salon  
Rick Scheffers  
Rickwood's Menswear  
Ricky's Restaurant  
Robert Bateman  
Sarah Brewer Clowes  
Sheer Essentials Lingerie  
Spanish Sol/Terminal  
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West Coast Air  
Wild Play  
Woodgrove Centre  
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Harbourview Autohaus  
Heydemann Art  
Knappet Industries  
Knights of Columbus Ascension C#7991  
Mark Hobson  
Nanaimo Daily News  
Royal Canadian Legion Br #257

## LIGHTHOUSE KEEPERS (\$1000-\$2499)

Black Press  
Edgewood  
Nanaimo Traveller's Lodge

## NORTHSTARS (\$2500 - \$4999)

MacIsaac & Co.

## VISIONARIES (\$5000 +)

A Channel Television  
Intraworks IT Management  
Island Radio  
Province of BC - Gaming  
United Way Central Island  
Vancouver Foundation  
Vancouver Island Health Authority

With economic times being what they are, the Crisis Society is proud to acknowledge this event as another huge success. Thanks to the generous community support we received, the evening brought in over \$10,000 – money that will go directly toward providing ongoing 24 hour coverage of our crisis lines, and more community training in programs like Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training, Crisis Intervention Skills Training, and our Three Tiered Approach to Suicide Prevention in the schools.

Our three business sponsors this year were: MacIsaac & Co, Intraworks I.T. Management, and Edgewood. In joining A-Channel to help the Central Vancouver Island Crisis Society put on this fabulous event, all of our sponsors have demonstrated how truly community minded they are.

There were 37 tables hosted by local businesses and 46 different auction items donated by organizations from varying communities of the Central Island; all to say thank you, we value the work that you do.

On the surface of an organization we see the logo, the brochures and even in some cases the uniforms.

What really counts though is the human being behind the crisis line phone or in the RCMP's case, the member behind the uniform. Thank you for your dedication in doing your job with compassion.

There is stigma in our local communities when it comes to suicide. We believe that suicide is not a random choice made by someone out of the blue. It is a struggle to stop the pain someone is feeling who at a certain moment in time seems to see no other options.

Suicide isn't just about the tragic finality of death. It's about all of the things that can lead up to thinking that life isn't worth living. For some children, thoughts of ending their own life can begin as early as five or six years old. It becomes an option. Our goal is to build resiliency by giving young people new coping skills in order to deal with life so that the option of suicide is taken off the table.

We as a community are robbed of the gifts our youth, elderly and others would offer if they lived, not to mention the pain of those left behind. I truly believe suicide is a community and public health concern that we need more education about, resources and support. Often people think that suicide should be left to the professionals, but this isn't the case. We are all



From top to bottom

Table setting; Pacific Gael Pipe and I Channel's Maggie Cox, Phil Stiller of Director, John Jordan of MacIsaac Superintendent Jeff Lott and A-Char Brian French, Astrid Braunschmidt & North Cowichan Members Cst Craig



community gatekeepers and are all responsible. We believe in Suicide Prevention initiatives and we at the Crisis Society have seen the positive impact first hand.

*Every choice we make ~ Every action we take  
We change the world*

We want to share with you some of the things we were able to do with the funds raised from this event last year and will be targeting similar training for the year to come.

- The crisis line answered over 17,800 calls over the last year
- We were able to provide training for 129 students, 32 teachers & over 150 school personnel and administrators.
- We offered 28 sponsored training seats to various organizations that do not have training budgets but work the front lines supporting people with mental health and addiction issues.

We are extremely grateful for the generous financial support from the RCMP Appreciation Night that allows us to continue our suicide prevention initiatives and the operation of our crisis line service 24/7 in our local communities.



Drum Band; Canadian Idol finalist Theresa Sokyrka; Cheque presentation with (l to r) A-Intraworks, Heather Owen, Event coordinator, Elizabeth Newcombe, CVICS Executive & Co. and CVICS Board President, Lorne Hildebrand of Edgewood, Nanaimo's OIC Inel's Astrid Braunschmidt; Head Table, Mr. & Mrs. John Jordan, Maggie Cox and guest husband Stephen Chang, Elizabeth Newcombe, Superintendent Jeff Lott with wife Meg; Blanchard, Cst Kelly Allan, Cst Bert Calvo and Cst Roc Atleo.

**Pictures by Heyedemann Art Photography**

# Upcoming Community Training

## CRISIS INTERVENTION SKILLS TRAINING

Do you work in an environment where you come into contact with difficult or demanding people? Do you find yourself in situations where you're having to deal with crisis and are lacking the confidence to effectively diffuse situations? Our two day Crisis Intervention Workshop will increase your professional development skills and give you the confidence to effectively deal with crisis situations. From the monies raised at the RCMP Appreciation Night we are able to offer 8 seats into the Crisis Intervention Skills training at no cost to non -profit agencies (one seat per agency). These seats will be given on a first come first served basis.

**November 19th & 20th**  
**9:00 am - 4:00 pm both days**  
**#30-1708 Bowen Rd, Nan. - Cost: \$199.00**

## APPLIED SUICIDE INTERVENTION SKILLS TRAINING (ASIST)

Do you want to feel ready, willing and able to prevent the immediate risk of suicide? Just as "CPR" skills make physical first aid possible, training in suicide intervention develops the skills used in suicide first aid. ASIST is a two-day intensive, interactive and practice-dominated course designed to help caregivers recognize and estimate risk, and learn how to intervene to prevent the immediate risk of suicide.

The workshop is for all caregivers (any person in a position of trust). This includes professionals, paraprofessionals and lay people, military and civilians. It is suitable for mental health professionals, nurses, physicians, teachers, counselors, youth workers, police, correctional staff, school support staff, clergy, and community volunteers.

From the monies raised at the RCMP Appreciation Night we are able to offer 6 seats into the ASIST at no cost to non-profit agencies (one seat per agency). These seats will be given on a first come first served basis.

**October 1st & 2nd 8:30 am to 4:30 pm both days**  
**#30 - 1708 Bowen Road, Nanaimo Call 250-753-2495 Cost: \$295.00**

## **Crisis Line Statistics - April 1, 2008 - March 31, 2009**

	Crisis & Info Calls	MH Crisis Response & Intervention Calls	Total	% of Calls
Cowichan Crisis Line 748-1133	1851	366	2217	14%
Nanaimo Crisis Line 754-4447	9525	2360	11885	77%
District 69 Crisis Line 248-3111	760	77	837	6.5%
Suicide Distress Line 1-800-SUICIDE	533	8	541	3.5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12669</b>	<b>2811</b>	<b>15480</b>	<b>100%</b>

• Average calls per day 42 - 290 voice messages left & 2360 missed calls due to crisis line worker supporting another caller



# A Sad Goodbye ~ An Excited Welcome

Nine years ago, I saw an ad in the local paper asking if I wanted to “help my community by volunteering on the Crisis Line”.

*“I’d be good at that”, I thought. “People always come to me with their problems.”*

So I gave them a call and we set up an interview.

*“Oh....there’s training involved?” “I can’t just jump on the lines tomorrow?”*

Boy did I have a lot to learn. And so began my journey. I thought I was a good listener. I thought that when someone told me their problems, it meant that I was to tell them mine. Surely they would feel better if I told them how much worse my problems were than theirs. I thought that if someone was suffering emotionally, they wanted me to tell them to cheer up and look on the bright side. Did I say I had a lot to learn?



*From left to right: Debbi Mahaffy, Lyndsay Wells, Elizabeth Newcombe, Kelli Stiller, Heather Owen and sitting in front Karen Vandersluis and Raymonde St. Hilaire.*

Volunteering became more than just ‘giving back to my community’. What I was really doing, was learning about myself. Learning to actively listen, validate, empathize and support, was something I was starting to do with *all* the people in my life.

As time went on, I noticed that I was changing. I learned the difference between selfish and self-care. I

started understanding that boundaries are connections, not barriers. Basically, I started learning how to *really* communicate.

I loved the work so much that I joined the Leadership Team and helped mentor new volunteers. Eventually, I applied for a position as a staff member and stayed on for a wonderful 3 years. It was bittersweet when I had to say good-bye and I know that the relationships and friendships I made at the Crisis Society, are ones I will have with me for the rest of my life. I guess you could say that I’m grateful, but I don’t think that really covers how the Crisis Society, its staff and its volunteers have truly changed my life. Thank-you. *Submitted by Kelli Stiller*

It’s always sad to say goodbye to a valued member of our staff team that has contributed so much of herself. Our Society is a richer organization for the contributions that Kelli has brought. We know she will be sadly missed by both volunteers and staff. We will especially miss her smile, her infectious laughter and her ability to always make us feel good about ourselves.

We wish her all the best and know that our connections will continue even though she is not in the office any more.

We would like to welcome to the staff team, Carly Gronlund, the new Crisis Line Shift Coordinator. Carly will be starting on April 14th.

Carly has been a volunteer since 2005 and has spent over 800 hours on the Crisis Lines. She is a member of the American Association of Suicidology and holds her B.A. in Psychology. Carly brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the job. We know that Carly will make a great addition to our staff and look forward to having her as a part of the team.



Elizabeth Newcombe,  
Executive Director



## Volunteer at the Crisis Line!

**You can help save lives and build a healthy community.**

**And you'll gain valuable, practical skills for your**

- education • employment •
- every-day life •



**The Crisis Line is looking for caring dedicated volunteers from all walks of life to**

- support people in need through our 24/7 service •

**If you would like to volunteer at the Crisis Line, check out our website: [www.cvics.ca](http://www.cvics.ca)**



**Central Vancouver Island  
Crisis Society**



**Want to make a difference?  
Volunteer at the Crisis Line!**

Call 250-753-2495 or email [info@cvics.ca](mailto:info@cvics.ca)

**Online at [www.cvics.ca](http://www.cvics.ca)**

## Introducing GRASP...

**G**rowth  
**R**esiliency  
**A**cknowledgment  
**S**uicide Awareness  
**P**revention and Planning

**S**uicide is the second leading cause of death for BC children ages 12-18. On December 2, 2008 the Child Death Review Unit of the BC Coroners Service released a special report on child and youth suicide. The report looked at the 81 children and youth who died by suicide in B.C. between January 1, 2003, and December 31, 2007 and outlined several recommendations that support the 3 tiered program that the Crisis Society has developed for the schools.

In response to this report the Crisis Society, together with the Ministry of Children and Family Development and School District 68 struck a committee to address the concerns of youth suicide in our area. Together we are working on a plan to implement our programs in School District 68 that includes evidence based training and information on the subject of suicide to three target groups: Counseling and School Resource Staff through School Protocols Training; reaching teachers through a program for Suicide Prevention in the Classroom presented at Pro D training days; for the school assembly we can do a multi media presentation called Reach Out/ Speak Out/ Help Out and for selected students we have a 12 hour training program called **GRASP**, where youth in grades nine through twelve will receive gatekeeper training. Young people often turn to their peers in times of difficulty or crisis. GRASP was developed to provide youth with the skills needed to help their peers while boosting their own self confidence and resilience.

## IMPORTANT - PRIVACY ACT

On January 1, 2004, the new privacy legislation came into effect. It is designed to protect individual's personal information from being misused. As you know, we love to stay in touch, keeping you posted on what's happening with the Crisis Society. We now require your consent to do so. We also want to respect your privacy. So if you no longer wish to receive our mailings, newsletters, etc .... please let us know and we will delete your name from our database. If we don't hear from you, we shall assume we have your consent to stay in touch. Enjoy reading this issue of "In Connection," the Central Vancouver Island Crisis Society's newsletter.