

Big Hearts, Big Success



ArtStart participants show off their art work created during the event.

When you first walk through the doors, you may notice the larger-than-life mural of antique aiplanes on the back wall. Or perhaps your eyes would be drawn to the row of colourful art pieces across the room, or to the cluster of white-coated chefs in the far corner. You've just entered ECCCC's first annual *big Hearts fill tummies* fundraiser.

On February 28, almost 200 guests joined the Edmonton City Centre Church Corporation at the Blatchford Field Hangar in Fort Edmonton Park to raise funds in support of Edmonton's School Lunch Program, the Nutrition Snack Program and ArtStart.

The night kicked off with entertainment by children in the ArtStart program. 22 children showcased their talents through dance, choral, and instrumental presentations. The bright music and dance numbers were a fun opening to the evening, and offered a sample of the success of ECCCC's programs.

Next on the night's agenda was an auction of enticing appetizers created by chefs from eight gourmet restaurants and caterers in the city, including Characters Restaurant, Chateau Lacombe's LaRonde, Fairmont Hotel MacDonald's Harvest Room, GEM

Catering, Packrat Louie Kitchen and Bar, Ric's Grill, the Westin's Pradera Café, and Terry Vaughn's Sport's Lounge. Jasmin Hoeven, the program manager of Edmonton's School Lunch Program, says this unique auction idea was a great success. "The chefs really went above and beyond—they were having a great time competing with each other, and of course, everyone loved the results."

Following the intense competition, guests queued up for a buffet dinner, and wandered across to the art displays and a wide variety of items to make silent auction bids. Jacqueline Biollo, founder and director of the ArtStart program, says auctioning pieces created in the ArtStart program was great for the event—and for the children. "The kids knew that their art was for the auction, so they were really proud that their work was going to be sold." Bright crayon colours and abstract paper shapes, framed and covered in sparkling glass, waited in line to be taken home by the highest bidder. And on each table, miniature works of art made eye-catching centerpieces. For Jacqueline, the art showcase was the highlight of the event.

The snappy music of the Big Breakfast

Boogie Band rounded off the evening, and concluded a successful first run for the *big Hearts fill tummies* fundraiser. Budding young artists and gourmet chefs are already looking forward to next year's event, which no doubt will be packed with big entertainment, big competition, and big smiles.

big Hearts fill tummies raised a much needed \$20,000—more lunches for Edmonton's children.

Kelsey Thompson



A-Channel's Jennifer Martin asks LaRonde Executive Chef, Jasmin Kobjica, to describe his creation.

Items Needed

ECCCC is looking for donated items to assist our clients and programs

- Infant/Toddler car seats and cribs (CSA approved)
- Vacuum cleaners
- Microwaves
- Disposable diapers (all sizes)
- Baby wipes
- Kitchen "starter" items (pots, dishes, can openers, etc)
- TV/VCR for conference room at Alex Taylor School
- Freezer, washing machine and fridge

Please contact the ECCCC office at 424-7543 for more information or make arrangements for a donation

ArtStart needs volunteers and related supplies such as:

- Dance slippers (ages 5 – 10)
- Art supplies
- Musical instruments (wind, brass, piano, etc.)
- White glue
- Scissors
- Plastercene
- Books for fundraising sale
- Clothes hangers

Top 100 Edmontonians of the Century

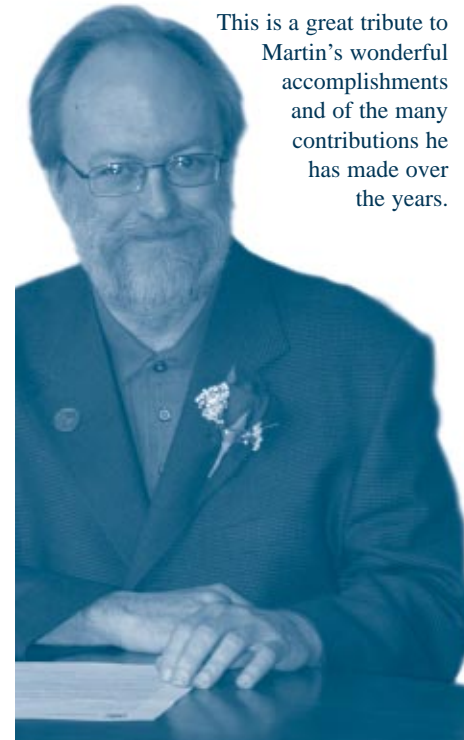
ECCCC executive director, Martin Garber-Conrad, has been named one of 100 Edmontonians of the Century. The announcement was made at City Hall on May 3 as part of the city's centennial celebrations.

The Celebrate 2004 committee chose Martin from over 900 nominees submitted by the public. Ten individuals for each decade were selected with the common thread that each person on the list made a lasting, significant contribution that changed the city for the better.

Martin was listed in the 1984 to 1993 decade as instrumental in Edmonton's School Lunch Program and the Kids in the Hall Bistro.

Biographies of the 100 on the list will be compiled in a book to be released on October 6th, two days before the city's centennial celebration in the renovated Churchill Square.

This is a great tribute to Martin's wonderful accomplishments and of the many contributions he has made over the years.



Betty Hamilton recognized



Betty Hamilton was awarded the Esquao Social Services & Advocacy Award for her years of service helping women in Edmonton's inner city. Over 800 people were in attendance at the Esquao Dinner and Awards Ceremony on May 6, 2004. The event is held to honor aboriginal women in our community for their outstanding achievements in various non-profit organizations and government sectors. Various Canadian aboriginal artists such as Crystal Anne, Jesse and the rap group War Party entertained and delighted the audience.

Betty Hamilton has worked at the Women's Emergency Accommodation Centre for 24 years and is richly deserving of this great honour. With her love, patience, and understanding she is committed to seeing abused and homeless women become successful, independent and productive citizens in our community.

Over 800 people were in attendance at the Esquao Dinner and Awards Ceremony on May 6, 2004.



Betty admires a gift from her colleagues at WEAC.

Crossroads Duplex: Hope incarnate

After considerable efforts to secure sustainable funding for the program, we announced the closure of Crossroads Duplex on May 3. The matter was raised in the Legislature and many supporters in the community contacted us. Some donations and offers of assistance were received, including a small funding proposal from Alberta Seniors. In sum, the funding available was not at all sufficient to keep the program operating. The remaining residents moved out at the end of May.

*Martin Garber-Conrad
Executive Director*

A tidy, modest pair of duplexes brings the to-and-fro bustle of 15 survivors and their support network to 103 Avenue just east of Edmonton's downtown. Opened in spring 2002 on two inner city lots where fortified drug dens once sucked life away, the four suites add a key piece to the Edmonton City Centre Church Corporation's Crossroads program, one of the interlocking initiatives offering hope to people in Edmonton whose life story sadly includes prostitution.

Crossroads Duplex is termed transitional housing, and aptly so. Aided by round-the-clock staff and numerous other resources, the women and transgendered individuals living here are piecing together the skills and connections they need to make the transition from homelessness to a stable home of their own.

For Trina, 26, the duplex spells survival. While conducting a tour of the four-bedroom suite she has called home for two years, she

recalls watching too many people die while embroiled in prostitution and drugs. "If I kept on, it would have been death, institutionalization or jail," she says now. "I don't want to be any of those three." A skinny 69 pounds when locked out of her Winnipeg crack house following a fight, she appealed to her adoptive parents, who bought her a one-way bus ticket to their Edmonton home. Despite best intentions, old habits pulled her under until staff at Kindred House, a Jasper Avenue drop-in centre for women working the streets, convinced her to try turning her life around at the Duplex.

Supported by staff and peers at Crossroads and other downtown agencies, Trina has learned a lot about herself and is using that insight to plan her next steps. She now realizes, for example, that FASD and ADHD played a hand in the outbursts of temper that turfed her out of previous jobs, and knows she needs a low-key, supportive environment. She has also completed treatment for drug addiction, taken life-skills training, reconnected with family and undergone long-neglected medical care. After surgery that put steel plates in her back to minimize the effects of scoliosis, it was the duplex she turned to for care during recovery.

"A couple of years ago, I would never have enjoyed those nice days of balmy weather we just had," she muses. "Sure, I'd be out in the weather, but would I see it? No. Would I hear it? No. I'd be too worried about where my next hit would come from. Now I enjoy life. I've learned to accept life's problems on life's terms."

From where I was to where I am now, it's a 360-degree turnaround.

*Trina
Resident, Crossroads Duplex*

The duplex is a focused expansion of Crossroads, begun in 1987 as a one-person outreach to the women working Edmonton's downtown drag. Key to successful exit, staff quickly realized, is safe, stable, supportive housing. "When things



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Filling a gap

Trina squarely fits the profile Crossroads Duplex aims to serve: individuals embarking on the complex task of exiting prostitution who are older than 18, and thus no longer able to access the supports available under such legislation as Alberta's Protection of Children Involved in Prostitution (PCHIP) Act. "Not to say kids don't need more housing," says Kourch Chan, who oversees housing for both youth and adults as Crossroads' program manager. "But the

highest need group now is people over 18. In many ways, all of the services focused on children and youth are withdrawn at that imaginary line."

I think, reflecting back on this program, we are a substitute family for many of the girls and women we've helped.

*Kourch Chan
Manager, Crossroads Program*

have fallen apart, not only has the person run out of financial resources, they've also used up all their social capital. Their relationships are severed. Their natural support network is strained or perhaps nonexistent," Chan observes. "It's one thing to say 'We're going to be here to help you to exit.' It's another to say 'We actually have a place where you can go.'"

Determined to act on that knowledge, ECCCC teamed with other agencies to open Crossroads House, a safe house for youth, in 1992. Two years later, that facility was joined by Crossroads Too, a haven for mothers and children. Crossroads Duplex extends similar holistic support to homeless adults, both women and transgendered.

The fact that adults represent an expanding area of need reflects not only our aging population but a systemic lack of resources for all ages, reflects Martin Garber-Conrad, ECCCC executive director. "All the people who don't get help when they're young carry those problems with them. Our dream in operating the duplex is to provide a place of healing for those who've been on the street a number of years and are now adults, rather than just saying 'You're too old to have any reason for hope.'"

Rescuing lives

Like Trina, nearly all of the 65 adults housed by Crossroads Duplex in its first two years live with multiple challenges that make prostitution all that much harder to discard. A full 85 per cent battle addictions, many are chronically ill, more than half have been in trouble with the law. Significant mental health concerns range from fetal alcohol syndrome to post-traumatic stress to depression.

Piled on, those challenges stack the odds against these residents. "Every time you layer on another risk, it becomes increasingly difficult to be employed, to find housing, to remain stable," says Helen Gardiner of Vista Evaluation and Research Services, who coordinated a multi-partner survey of Edmonton's homeless population in 2003.

"We have houses full of recovering addicts," Chan observes, "and some of these individuals are never going to have that white picket fence and nice job and 2.5 kids." Given that reality, it's remarkable that 58 per cent of the clients discharged after spending a month or more at the duplex had sworn off prostitution while 42 per cent moved to a stable environment. Six months later, 39 per cent were holding to their resolve. "For this particular population, those are good results," says Chan. What's more, clients are reaching that independent stage faster than anticipated, meaning the house can serve more adults than first thought.

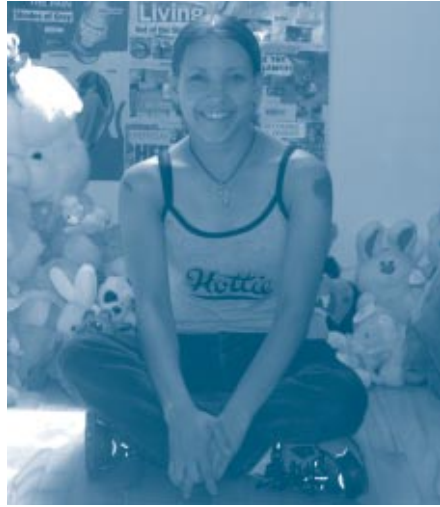
The numbers needing shelter, particularly transgendered folk who fit neither at men's nor women's shelters, prompted some thought of operating Crossroad Duplex as emergency housing. But focus groups made it clear that, to provide the safety and stability needed to exit prostitution, this home could not be a drop-in. "So that's how it operates—as a closed-door environment," says Chan. "Each person has got to do the

We're seeing a 59 per cent completion rate in treatment programs. For many of these individuals, this is the first time in their life they've graduated from anything. It's not necessarily their first time in treatment, but now they have the experience of completing. That's no small feat. And they can remember that they felt better while they were clean.

*Kourch Chan
Manager, Crossroads*

work to come in, and then once they're in, we shut the doors."

Screened and interviewed to ensure they're serious about this commitment, residents



receive a bedroom key upon entry and a front door key when they begin paying room and board. Each builds a personalized exit plan, aided by caseworkers, detox centres, career programs and numerous other resources.

I think this program's the best, and I would never take it for granted.

*Trina
Resident, Crossroads Duplex*

As that list suggests, this journey is about far more than four walls and a kitchen. It's about building the life skills and positive relationships needed to earn and keep a stable home. That takes trained and perceptive staff,

available round the clock to both listen and guide. "If you screw up, they call you on it," says Trina, who knows from experience. Equally important, she knows that when she signals pent-up fury by stomping into her room with a slam of the door, someone will soon follow to help her talk it out. "If staff were not here, we'd be bouncing everywhere," she says.

Every addictions program completed, every appointment kept, every family reconnection, every drug-free day adds to the evidence that the future can be better than the past, Chan notes. "We help people make transitions out of the negative coping strategies they've been using—in most instances drugs and alcohol—into more positive ways of coping and managing their lives and hopefully not ever having to go back to selling their bodies."

Some do return to prostitution after leaving Crossroads Duplex, but that's no surprise. Inevitably, recovery from life on the street is

If a gal comes to me and says 'I want off, I want to make a change,' Crossroads will be my number one recommendation, and usually the duplex fits best. It's clean, there's order, each program is specific to each gal. They have their own room, with a key, so they're not always worried somebody will steal their stuff. It's a great program—essential. It just needs a lot more beds.

*Shawna Hohendorff
Coordinator, Kindred House*

an ongoing tug of war between old habits and new skills. Often the process is cyclical, with periods of fierce battle for control followed by relapse. Many spend numerous cycles conquering addictions, and only then (if they survive) have the energy and clarity to deal with other issues such as mental health, learning disabilities and physical ailments. "It's like peeling an onion," Chan says. "Every time you go around the circle, you take a layer off and build a bit more internal capacity."

In this together

Crossroads Duplex is one of several Edmonton initiatives involved in an intriguing osmosis: a back-and-forth flow of insight and energy fueled by the shared mission of minimizing the harm of prostitution. "The great thing here is knowing who can do what the best," muses Kate Quinn of the Prostitution Awareness and Action Foundation of Edmonton (PAAFE), whose work intersects often with Crossroads.

Case in point: When preparing to pilot COARSE (Creating Options Aimed at Reducing Sexual Exploitation), which invites individuals charged with soliciting to avoid court by leaving the streets, PAAFE discovered that more than half its potential clients were homeless—or would be if they left prostitution and could no longer live in hotels and drug houses. Fortunately, Crossroads Duplex opened just as the diversion program began. When beds are available in the duplex, some clients diverted from jail have a chance to stabilize there

while exploring future options, says JoAnn McCartney, COARSE coordinator. Likewise, the duplex offers sexually exploited women coming out of jail a positive alternative to returning to the street, she adds. "The fact that there may be housing available gives my clients hope at a time when they are desperately seeking change but lack the structure to meet basic needs like shelter, food and safety."

Kindred House, a Jasper Avenue drop-in centre for women and transgendered individuals in prostitution, considers Crossroads Duplex "a direct line to hope" for those wanting to get off the street, says coordinator Shawna Hohendorff. "Our gals totally benefit from being at the duplex. For someone who's been living on the street, or in the women's shelter if they're lucky, there's a peace that happens there for them, and they usually come out with a better sense of themselves." The fact that Crossroads accepts repeat clients is essential, Hohendorff adds. "If they do slip up, they always have an opportunity to go back. And they've gained—they know what it feels like to be clean and drug-free for awhile."

When the duplex is full, it's hard to find another transitional bed for Kindred clients,

Transitional housing provides a secure, healthy living environment where the person or family can receive assistance, counselling and/or treatment and practice life skills, which have the potential to lead to independent living. There is greater potential for success if the person has stable living arrangements while counselling/treatment is undertaken.

*Interim Edmonton Community Plan on Homelessness 2003-2006
Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing*

Hohendorff says. The few facilities that exist serve a broader population, or take clients from their own programs first, or can't offer the level of support needed to put prostitution behind, or don't feel welcoming to transgendered individuals. Often, resolve ebbs away before a spot can be found.

A Kindred House client looking for the unique blend of training and counselling needed to counter sexual exploitation and addiction to the street prompted Distinctive Employment Counselling Services of Alberta (DECSA) to launch Transitions, a program that's now an essential resource to both Crossroads and COARSE.

Trina and other Crossroads residents in the 18-month Transitions program have the safety and encouragement they need to sort night from day, keep appointments and carry through on commitments, reflects DECSA's Nancy Burger. The program's one-on-one

counselling and training, in turn, boosts self-confidence and puts survivors in touch with other opportunities. "It's been a really good partnership," Burger says. "We're able to work together to get them the help they've needed all along but have never been at one place long enough to receive."

Close links with police and an expanded toolbox of laws also support this work, increasing the risk for "johns" and visibly reducing the number of pimps in Edmonton. It's more likely someone will take the brave step of testifying against a pimp if there's a safe and affordable place to stay once her name is tarred on the street, Chan observes. "The police very quickly figured out that there's a real benefit to collaboration. The issue is too big for any one particular sector to tackle and so interdisciplinary action is not only desirable, it's necessary."

Community asset

From inception, Crossroads Duplex has welcomed the support of diverse partners. Muttart Foundation provided money to buy the land. The Alberta Real Estate Association Foundation donated realtor fees. Department of National Defence supplied two Griesbach bungalows from its former base. EPCOR forgave charges for moving power lines as the houses trundled down city streets. Canada Mortgage and Housing

The PAAFE diversion program couldn't help women to the degree it does if it wasn't for a duplex for them to live in or a transitions program to refer them to. It's beautiful because we've been adding on resources for women that build on each other.

*Kate Quinn
Executive Director, PAAFE*

Corporation RRAP funding paid for renovations to link the bungalows into a duplex. Edmonton Housing Trust Fund and the Human Resources Development Canada homelessness initiative funded a newly built duplex on the adjacent lot. Volunteers from Holy Spirit Lutheran Church landscaped and fenced the yards.

The asset built by those many hands fills a key need identified in the Edmonton Community Plan on Homelessness: a need for transitional housing to serve multiply challenged populations. What's more, as the

Meeting community priorities

The work of Crossroads Duplex strongly supports the four focus activities highlighted by the Interim Edmonton Community Plan on Homelessness (2003-2006), developed by the Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing in consultation with numerous partners.

1. Promoting coordinated, comprehensive, community efforts aimed at reducing and preventing homelessness

As indicated in the narrative above, Crossroads regularly teams up with numerous other agencies that support women made homeless by prostitution. In addition to the projects noted here, a Rural Healing Retreat set to open this spring partners ECCCC with PAAFE and numerous concerned citizens and businesses in adding another important piece to the continuum of care.

following synopsis illustrates, the duplex approaches this important work in the spirit espoused by the Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing's interim plan on homelessness. As that plan points out, "the challenge within the next phase (2003-2006) will be the identification of solid, sustainable funding sources to assist with ongoing operations, and the provision of needed supports for the residents of these facilities."

The limited research available in this field suggests that the benefits gained by providing that level of support to homeless individuals outweigh the costs. "Homelessness has big-time costs not only to our health system, but also in use of social services and the criminal justice system," says University of Toronto human geographer Jim Dunn. He points to a study in which 80 per cent of multiply challenged homeless individuals who entered supportive housing in New York remained housed 4.5 years later, compared to just 18 per cent in non-subsidized housing. "None of the factors we normally associate with the ability to maintain housing were

influential. It didn't matter whether they were fighting addictions or single parents or abused as a child," he says. "The only thing that made a difference is that they had supportive housing. The authors concluded that housing is the cure for homelessness." That finding, he adds, is "so obvious it almost sounds ridiculous."

After two years in the duplex, Trina is ready to move on but must wait in line for the right space to open. "I know my weak points. I have to be in a supporting house, where somebody's always there, and where there are rules and regulations to follow," she says. "If I didn't have that, I could see myself falling backwards again."

She credits life at Crossroads Duplex for setting her compass true. "It's been great here. If I didn't have this, I'd be out there in a never-ending cycle. And I don't want that. I want a happy, normal life."

Cheryl Mahaffy
Words that Sing

2. Facilitating movement of the homeless population from the street to stable environments and greater self-sufficiency.

Early outcomes (see statistics) confirm that the 24-hour support provided in this holistic facility enables the healing that sets homeless people on a path toward stability in their own place.

3. Building sustainable partnerships to address homelessness at a community level.

Crossroads Duplex works closely with the following service delivery partners:

- **Edmonton Police Vice Unit** - referrals and follow-up regarding legal issues;
- **PAAFE** - referring residents to client support funds and bursaries, coordinating services for clients under COARSE legal diversion program, developing community resources;

4. Developing best practices and sharing lessons learned

Crossroads builds communitywide capacity by recording and disseminating best practices for housing this multi-barriered population. For example, Crossroads was named to both the Leadership Advisory Circle and the Resource Circle supporting COARSE and is participating in PAAFE's "Breaking Down Barriers" research, which is examining housing as a key barrier to exiting the streets.