



LINENS & DISPOSAL SERVICES

A “Broadview Bulletin” Newsletter

*Gateway Linens & Disposal Services (GL&DS) serves as an employment retraining program of The Salvation Army. We are so appreciative of our “customers,” who we genuinely refer to as our **partners**, without whom this program would not exist. One of our key commitments is to do our best to communicate with you consistently via this “Broadview Bulletin” newsletter, to provide a glimpse into what is happening because what we do, and our relationship with you, is about far more than cleaning your linens or disposing of your garbage. We also exist to partner with you in being a **transforming influence** in people’s lives and contributing to a more socially aware, compassionate and connected community.*

March 2017

SPRING IS ALMOST HERE...?????

At the time of writing this, we are just a few days away from the official start of spring!! There is snow on the ground and parts of the GTHA experienced a heavy dose of new snowfall just the other day. The City of Toronto extended an Extreme Cold Weather Alert for another day. **Spring?** Really? On a related note, one of this writer’s daughters called last night from Victoria, where she is on business, and she appeared to be seriously “rubbing it in” as she raved about the beautiful daffodils and forsythia in glorious, colourful bloom. Consideration was given to disowning said daughter! (Ok, not really.)

On a most serious note, while it can be cathartic, and maybe even fun, to talk about the wintry weather, most of us can do so from the comfort of our warm, comfortable homes and offices. For many of those who we serve in a program like GL&DS, such comfort is not a reality. Many of those who we serve know firsthand the perilous experience of being on the street, in the cold, without their own roof over their head, where simple survival is a daily goal. Many find their way to some relief through shelters, drops-ins and warming centres. **GL&DS is immensely grateful to those of you, and others, who help to offer that relief. We direct our thoughts and prayers, and practical support wherever possible, to those who try to persevere through the devastating experience of homelessness and its root causes.**



JUSTICE & RECONCILIATION

GL&DS is affiliated as a separate-site program component of the Gateway shelter, which in turn is a part of **The Salvation Army's Toronto Housing and Homeless Supports (THHS)**, which administers all of the organization's shelter operations and related programs in Toronto. THHS communicates through all of its entities a Missional Focus, with a different theme each month. For March, that Missional Focus is on **justice & reconciliation**. In the Bible, the book of Micah, attributed to an ancient prophet of that name, contains these words: *"...to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."* In these turbulent times there are far too many instances of individuals and groups for whom "justice" is an elusive concept, and where "reconciliation" is not just elusive but seemingly sidetracked by empty promises and inaction. While GL&DS maintains only a very small footprint in this world, in this community, we are intent on humbly helping to create a more "just" life's experience, and to help support where reconciliation is needed, for those individuals we have the privilege of serving through our employment retraining program. We hope to remain true to that intent, and we are grateful to those of you who help encourage, support and contribute to what we do.



NEWS & NOTES

The period through Christmas and New Year's was hectic as GL&DS was operational all through the holidays to keep our shelters and "out of the cold" drop-in centre partners serviced with fresh linens. Our program participants and staff team were outstanding in diligently maintaining production. *(And as a nice side benefit during these extra holiday hours, we enjoyed some good lunches together... pizza, subs and more!)*

One of our key staff positions is responsible for overseeing production on our laundry shop floor. **Alex MacLeod** started a six-month parental leave at the beginning of March and we wish him well as he enters into the awesome experience of full-time care of his infant daughter. During this period, GL&DS welcomes **Ian Knight**, who comes to us from a lengthy tenure as a frontline staff member at the Gateway shelter. Ian will be serving in this position until September.

GL&DS recently experienced two unforeseen issues that temporarily shut down production, both times on a Monday, which is about the worst possible day for an emergency! The first time involved a blockage in our main drain line, and the second was the failure of the pump for our hot water boiler system. Both resulted in minor flooding, and both required production shut-downs exceeding three hours. However, **through a combination of ingenuity, alternative planning and, most of all, the outstanding efforts of our program participants who stayed on the shop floor into the evening, all of our partners were serviced without interruption.**



PROGRAM PARTICIPATION UPDATE

For most of the past year, GL&DS has been able to report on the experience of stability in the program, with very little turnover in our participant group other than through normal program completion. However, “stability” has been challenged over the past six weeks or so, as a number of our participants have faced **significant challenges** in their personal journey toward independence and self-reliance.

In our September 2016 edition of the *Broadview Bulletin* the following statement was made: ***The path to “success” is rarely a smoothly paved straight line, and this may be especially evident with those who go through our program.*** Rarely have those words been injected with as much realism as has been the case over recent weeks. Addictions- and mental health-related challenges have arisen, resulting in extended absences and therefore considerable operational disruption. The GL&DS Case Manager in conjunction with the rest of the staff team, and frequently in consultation with other community supports, has worked diligently to provide support and to monitor ongoing developments.

One of the “extended absences” that has been most troubling is with the GL&DS program’s most “tenured” participant, who was a mere few weeks away from completing the full, maximum term in the program (48 weeks). If anyone is “destined” for success, it is this individual, who has in place specific, confirmed plans and arrangements for excellent housing, post-secondary schooling and affiliated career prospects, a newly-established financial foundation, and excellent supports through both GL&DS and the broader community (including family). And yet, an addictions relapse intervened and, after an aborted time in detox, he has disappeared, seemingly without a trace, causing all who are associated with GL&DS great worry. (As an aside, this also provides a stark reminder of the power of addictions.)

The experience described above also offers evidence for why we are passionately determined to walk alongside every person who expresses a desire to participate in the GL&DS program, and to do everything possible to encourage and concretely assist toward a better future. The cleaned laundry we produce for our partners and the garbage-junk we remove and dispose of are essential services, and we are proud of what we do, but we also recognize that these services are simply “vehicles” to a much larger goal: To help individuals achieve employability and poverty reduction.



GL&DS also needs to profoundly thank those who are on our **program waiting list** and who, at the same time, help provide **“relief”** time on our shop floor, to enable production to continue uninterrupted even through turbulent times. To fine people like Jean and Tom and Mark, and others who preceded them, and to others who will follow, GL&DS is very thankful.

Thank you for taking the time to read the latest “news” of Gateway Linens & Disposal Services. More importantly, as you provide support to those in need, or manage the “business” of a social service organization, or contribute to a more socially aware, compassionate and connected community...

THANK YOU for all you do!!

Finally, for now...

Enjoy the promise of spring to come... whenever that may be!