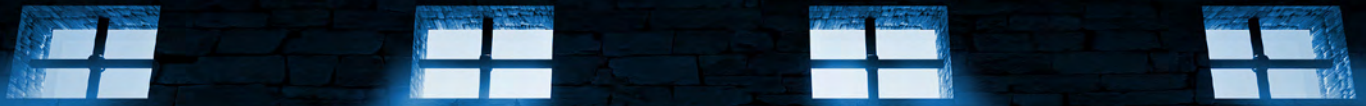


PeerLife

annual report 2014



Hope • Reintegration • Success

PeerLife
Transition
Services

PeerLife
Annual Report 2014

Introduction

It gives me great pleasure to contribute to the Annual Report of PeerLife Transition Services. Peerlife was created in 2012 through the collaborative efforts of the three St. Leonard's Societies of Hamilton, Peterborough and Windsor.* St. Leonard's has been a leader in designing and developing innovative programs for long-term offenders. We believe that correctional agencies should be, at the very least, lawful, safe, industrious and hopeful. Hope is a very functional force in mentoring, motivating and managing long-term offenders. The foundation of our service is the power of the individual Peer Support Worker to give hope, purpose and direction to the individual life sentenced offender.

The PeerLife service remains as rewarding as it is challenging in a political climate that has intensified the public's belief that people who commit murder should be locked away forever.

There are a thousand lifers in the Ontario Region. Given our limited resources, PeerLife reaches out to only 25% of the lifer population. We are currently developing small focused activities to address the needs of lifers in medium and maximum institutions.

As you read through the Report, you will understand the skills and commitment that John Rives and Rick Sauve bring to their work. These two men are not only a source of inspiration to the lifers inside our prisons but to all professionals who believe in humane and effective corrections.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the support and cooperation of the Correctional Service Canada and the Parole Board Canada.

Skip Graham
Executive Director
St. Leonard's House, Windsor

*House of Hope and Maison Decision House also contribute to the funding of PeerLife

Initiatives and Highlights for Peer Life Submitted by Rick Sauvé

This has been a fruitful year for the Peer Life Program with some new initiatives to reach into other prisons to address needs for prisoners as well as outreach through media presentations.

One of the first initiatives that we took on was to make contact with Millhaven Maximum Security Institution to set up an orientation program for lifers. The first hurdle was to gain access to the institution. Building on the reputation and legacy of LifeLine we were able to reestablish contacts and communication with the management. After considerable networking Peer Life worker Rick Sauvé and Jerry Dunk staff from St. Leonard's Peterborough went into the Maximum security prison to meet with the Lifers Group. We brought in materials about PeerLife and St. Leonard's for the group. A highlight for us was at the end when one of the group members said "you guys brought us hope, and there isn't much of that in here".

Peer Life will be presenting the orientation workshops at the Maximum every 2 or 3 months bringing in representatives from the sponsoring agencies to continue bringing some hope for the men inside. Asst. Warden of Intervention Steve Kolowtinski told us we can put our materials in the library for prisoners to access.

The second initiative that Peer Life has taken on is the development of the Break Away program. This program will be run as pilot at the Medium Security BCI institution. The program is for Lifers who have self-identified as being in or affiliated with gangs who want to break away from that lifestyle while in prison. Research has shown that 1 in 8 lifers entering prison have self-identified as being gang affiliated.

Currently there are no programs being run in the institutions that deal specifically with this problem. Rick Sauvé presented an overview of the program to the warden and senior staff and was given the go ahead to proceed. He just recently presented to the CIB board which includes the institutional parole officers to share the program outline and to have them help in the selection process of participants. Just received confirmation that the interview process will begin on April 21 with the goal of starting the pilot program soon after. We are quite excited about this initiative and are hopeful it may be expanded in the future to other sites.

St. Leonard's Society was represented by Rick Sauvé at the Senate Parliamentary hearings on Bill C-479. This Bill is one of many repressive Bills the Government has introduced. Rick's testimony was aired on CPAC parliamentary news channel.

Of other note Skip Graham and Rick Sauvé were included in the documentary State of Incarceration which aired on CBC's The Doc Zone. They talked about the cancellation of the LifeLine program and the need for these programs. The Doc Zone episode was filmed at St. Leonard's Windsor House.

Rick Sauve' was interviewed by Steven Fine of the Globe and Mail regarding the Life without parole legislation that the government recently introduced. PeerLife has a goal to speak up against repressive pieces of legislation and bring hope into the institutions.

Initiatives and Highlights for Peer Life – Submitted by John Rives

The third year of PeerLife is highlighted by stability in client service and two new initiatives. Thanks to our funding partners and to the cooperation of the Correctional Service of Canada, we have sustainability for our program on a year-to-year basis and Ontario Region wide security clearance till the autumn of 2016.

Direct service primarily through the time-tested method of the interview process continues at all three minimum security institutions - Beaver Creek Minimum Institution, Collins Bay Minimum Security Unit (CBIMSU, formerly Frontenac) and Joyceville Minimum Security Unit (JIMSU, formerly Pittsburgh). Despite the recent emphasis on security and supervision across the Correctional Service of Canada, access remains excellent at Collins Bay and Beaver Creek where we use the Visits and Correspondence (V&C) area for our client meetings and good at Joyceville despite the need to share an interview room with all other outside agencies and counselors. However, a standing memo provided by the institution provides flexibility for our worker and the use of the V&C visiting room has been offered on a pre-booking basis if an officer is available for supervision.

Looking at our statistics over the past year (see attached), the number of individual interviews is down slightly to 1459. Having established our long term contacts, the workers find that more time can be spent with each client with an emphasis on preparation for Parole Board of Canada (PBC) panel hearings and working through anticipated transitional issues from institution to community. The number parole hearings attended remained the same (39) as in the previous twelve months. Peer Leader Rick Sauve was involved in a greater number of case conferences with the client and management team at the Beaver Creek whereas John Rives continued to have more informal meetings with parole and institution staff at JIMSU and CBIMSU.

Community interaction by the Peer Leaders remained strong. As reported by Rick Sauve, he had the opportunity to testify at the Senate Parliamentary Hearings on Bill C-479 (parole reviews). He also made a major impact through the media through interviews with journalists and with his participation in the season premiere of the CBC documentary program The Doc Zone. John Rives continued his community relations work through the Board of Directors of the John Howard Society of Canada and by lecturing at University of Ontario.

John and Rick both had the opportunity to testify on behalf of clients applying for reductions in parole ineligibility at 15-Year Judicial Reviews. Although the legislation allowing for these "Faint Hope Clause" reviews has been abolished, there are still a number of clients who qualify as they were sentenced prior to the abolition. As part of the support for our clients, Peer Leaders bring a wealth of information both regarding the applicant and the realities of life on parole into the courtroom which greatly assists the jury in their deliberations. Always considered a form of expert witness, John Rives received formal recognition as such by Legal Aide in Ontario.

Recognizing the challenge for Lifers moving from institution to community after spending literally decades behind bars, PeerLife works to ease this transition by providing information and an example which we believe both prepares and empowers individuals to meet the demands of life on parole. During the past year, Rick had the opportunity to directly assist some Beaver Creek clients by providing transportation to halfway houses for conditional release. This important service is entirely dependent on funding and if additional resources were accessed, targeting them to the provision of guidance and plain talk while actually transitioning into the community would be money well spent.

On the institutional side, John and Rick have attended a relatively small number of Lifers Group meetings and special presentations. All three minimum institutions have established groups but we have observed that the activity level of each group is greatly influenced by the vitality of the leadership. Speaking to groups can be a very effective means of reaching-in to the Lifer population. Most of the clients we see at minimums are of long standing. Increasingly, this is not the case at medium security and especially at the maximum security units which house the all indeterminately sentenced men for the initial two-years of their incarceration. To meet specific needs of this broad client group, Rick is piloting two initiatives.

In tandem with Jerry Dunk of St. Leonard's Peterborough, a meeting was held at the Millhaven Maximum Unit as the inaugural orientation program for Lifers entering the system. More can be read about this in Rick's report. Making contact with Lifers when they first arrive has been a keynote of the services we have delivered in the past, our inability to do so over that past few years has had, we believe, a negative impact on Lifers' adaptation to their new reality.

Additionally in Rick's report, you can find more detail on the other new initiative of PeerLife. Currently there are no programs designed to specifically deal with gang affiliation among Lifers in prison. The need to remove themselves from such lifestyles has been self-identified by many of our clients (past and present). The Break Away program is intended to assist with this process. As of this writing, Beaver Creek Medium Institution (formerly Fenbrook) has confirmed that Rick may begin the interview process for candidates to participate in the pilot program later this spring.

During the next twelve months we believe these new initiatives will not only respond to the identified needs of our clients, but will also introduce them to the range of assistance we can provide to individuals. As paroled Lifers, Peer Leaders lend experience to those who follow even as these men come to grips with the challenges of incarceration and prepare for the possibility of a return to society beyond prison gates. Our goal is for Lifers and all prisoners, men and women, to receive this message of hope.

After all, as Tom French so aptly put it, "There is Life after Life".

Activity Report

SLS PeerLife Transition Services

April 2014-March 2015

	Case Conf	NPB Panel	Judicial Reviews	Inst. Groups	PubEduc & Media	Comm. Relations	Family Assist	Meetings	Client Contacts	Misc. including travel*
Rick Sauve (BCI/FMI groups)	31	23	2	4	12	2	2	49	832	9
John Rives (FI/PI)	3	16	1	3	3	16	0	48	627	1
Total	34	39	3	7	15	18	2	97	1459	10

NB: brackets indicate the three primary minimum institutions served

* all client transports

Individual Clients (not including group contacts):

Bath	25
BCI Min	102
CBI Min	67
JI Min (PI)	70
Inst. Total	264
Community	12
Total	276