



INSIGHTS

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An inside look at the programs and services of Knowles Centre Inc.

Countdown to camp begins!

Winnipeg finally is thawing after a long, cold winter. Few people may be as excited as the boys and girls at Knowles Centre.

Beginning June 30, the first group of children from the Group Care Treatment Program hope to depart for a week at the agency's camp at Big Whiteshell Lake – if Knowles Centre can raise the extra funds needed to make this a reality.

Providing a camp experience for the children in the Group Care Treatment Program is expensive. It costs almost twice as much to send a child to camp as it does to provide treatment in the city.

“Camp has been the focus of our 2008 fundraising efforts. The program is not funded by the government so we must look to our friends in the community to help the kids,” says Maureen Britton, Community Relations Coordinator. “Although the camp lasts only one week, the memories last a lifetime.”

For many clients who come to Knowles Centre from the inner city, it is a week of firsts ... the first time they will paddle a canoe, fish, hike in the woods, swim in a lake, and more. For our clients who come from remote northern communities, camp is a welcome return to nature and a more familiar way of living.

“Camp is more than a break from the day-to-day life in the city; it is an important part of a client's treatment,” says Brian Johnson, Recreation Coordinator for the boys' on-site treatment unit.

Clients are challenged to become more adaptable, to take on new activities, and to support one another in different – and sometimes trying – situations. These are unique experiences that open a child with emotional and behavioural difficulties for positive change that just can't be duplicated in the city.

“Unfortunately, clients at Knowles Centre in 2007 were left with disappointing memories. A devastating windstorm in June that year caused such destruction to the camp facility that the program had to be completely cancelled,” recalls Brian. “That makes anticipation of this year's program greater and even more important that we raise the money needed.”



Knowles Centre's camp at Big Whiteshell Lake is a place where lasting memories are made.



Camp helps children build their self-esteem and reminds them that everyone has something worthwhile to contribute.



Recreation Coordinator Brian Johnson (pictured above) says the children at Knowles Centre are already looking forward to attending camp this summer.

A Message from our Chief Executive Officer



There have been many positive developments since my last column in the winter newsletter, which I would like to share with you:

Our various programs have been consistently full, and when spaces have become available, they have been promptly filled.

Our new Treatment Foster Care Program continues to grow steadily, filling a need in the community.

An Independent Living Program proposal is now ready for consideration and implementation.

Our Utilization Review Committee reviewed both active files and discharged files in our various programs and found the files to be in good condition.

Our senior management team completed 14 chapters of self-study as part of the re-accreditation process with the Council on Accreditation. The information needed to be completed by March 31 in order to be ready for the visit by the on-site inspectors in June.

Our Principal at John G. Stewart School, Kevin Mackay, reported that many students had 90% attendance or better in February. The school was at or near maximum attendance most days during the month. The school will soon be testing students to see if there has been an increase in their academic achievement scores.

In closing, I want to compliment the staff at Knowles Centre and John G. Stewart School for the above stated accomplishments, which I attribute to their efforts.

Best wishes,

Michael Burdz, Ph. D., C. Psych.

A day at Respect House, a day of adventure



During this time we still had one young man in the house for a short while. Now an adult, he often calls and laughs with staff about how weird it was for him. "It was like having five sisters," he says. "Sometimes fun, and sometimes not so much!"

With six girls at Respect House, times have become even more interesting! One

Respect House is one of four treatment units for the children in the Group Care Treatment Program. It is located off Knowles Centre grounds in the nearby community. Youth Care Worker Cynthia Brown and Supervisor Juana Schoch provide a glimpse into life with the girls.

Some people ask what it is like to work in an all-girls' unit. The first thing that comes to mind is 'adventure'.

Respect House began as a co-ed unit, with younger boys and older girls. It was challenging at the best of times, but even more memorable during the transition to the girls-only unit that it is today.

of the biggest challenges is the "emotional tossed salad" served at any time. Between dealing with bouts of 'raging hormones' and the woes of 'I just broke up with my boyfriend and I can't go on', staff often feel like they don't know where to start. But, it is all in a day's work and we don't take it personally. Most important, we know we make a difference in the girls' lives.

It is rewarding to see the girls help one another, as well. Although they come from a variety of backgrounds and each have issues to work through, the girls constantly learn from each other – with some bumps along the way. *Cont'd on page 3...*

Drum beat and a song helping clients find their own gifts and purpose in life

Knowles Centre clients took part in drumming and singing workshops led by Carl Swan, a member of the Red Shadow Singers, and Troy Fontaine, Biimautaziwin Cultural Coordinator, in February and March.



Biimautaziwin Coordinator Troy Fontaine beats a traditional drum.

"The effort on the part of the kids was amazing," says Troy. "They focused on the lessons that Carl offered, and even more, they found the courage to drum and sing aloud and learn something about themselves."

"Drumming and singing is central to the Aboriginal way of life and a part of all ceremonies," says Carl. "For the Anishnabe people, the drum is a living and spiritual thing, created by woman and loaned to man so that he too can give life through song."

Like the rhythm of a mother's heart, the Anishnabe believe the sound of an Aboriginal drum creates a remembrance of the time before birth when each person receives his or her special gifts from the Creator. Through accompanying song, singers call on the spirits to help them rediscover these gifts and

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Every morning there is a race among the girls to use the bathroom first, as it could be a long wait for those who are second in line. (It's hard to believe that we used to think three bathrooms would be enough!)

Daily trials like these, however, help to foster the values for which Respect House was named: patience, responsibility, safety, participation, education, courage, and community living skills.

Good times are important, too. Currently we are developing a fitness room in a section of the basement. The other half of the space is well used for karaoke competitions and exciting video game challenges.

Staff also offer a wide variety of activities such as swimming, camping, cooking and baking, cultural activities, movies, and YMCA. Even helping the girls with their hair and make-up or taking a long drive together provides an important chance to chat and understand each girl better.

Day in and day out, staff have a lasting impact on the lives of these young women. We are always grateful when a

former client drops us a line to share how her experience at Respect House has made a difference in her life. Knowing we helped makes it easy to forgive the harried days gone by.



Supervisor Juana Schoch (left) and Youth Care Worker Cynthia Brown find adventure in their work with the girls at Knowles Centre.

reveal how they can use them to bring happiness to themselves and others.

Following tradition, only the boys beat on the large drum, while the girls played hand drums at the workshops held at Knowles Centre. As well, all participants learned an Ojibway song honoring the beaver, composed by Carl Swan and Dave Courchene Jr. from The Turtle Lodge in Sagkeeng.

The beaver represents wisdom, according to the Aboriginal seven sacred teachings. The beaver was given strong, sharp teeth that it uses to help build its community. If it didn't use its teeth, they would grow so long the beaver wouldn't be able to open its mouth and would become ill and eventually die. The same can be said for human beings who don't

use their gifts they were given.

"Having the wisdom to understand who you are and what gifts you have to offer determines the quality of your own life,"

Troy explains. "People who live with purpose and meaning find peace and happiness within themselves. Those who don't use their gifts often turn to external sources like drugs or alcohol instead."



Drumming and singing is central to the Aboriginal way of life, says Carl Swan.

Carl says he received his spiritual name Singing Black Bear, which recognized his gift for drumming and singing, at the age of seven. Today at age 24, Carl performs and inspires other young people in communities throughout Manitoba with the Red Shadow Singers or on his own. Both he and Troy hope that he can help lead clients at Knowles Centre in drumming and singing workshops and ceremonies monthly.

Kiwanis score with donation for floor hockey equipment



Like most other Canadian kids, our clients really enjoy hockey – watching, and especially playing the game. With the generous support of the **Kiwanis Club of St. Boniface/St. Vital**, Knowles Centre purchased floor hockey equipment for indoor play when the temperatures were too cold even for our hockey enthusiasts. Sports continue to be a favourite pastime for the boys and girls at Knowles Centre. In addition to the many health benefits, sports help clients to develop self-confidence and teamwork skills.

Arnaud Church delivers Easter to kids

Once again, the Arnaud Mennonite Church, located in the Interlake region, donated Easter baskets for the children living in the Group Care Treatment Program. Members of the congregation put together chocolate, treats and toys in beautifully decorated baskets. The baskets are especially welcomed by children who are living away from their families.



Dreams Take Flight

A 13-year-old boy and an 11-year-old girl from Knowles Centre took park in the one-day trip to Disneyworld with *Dreams Take Flight* on April 9. From the moment they stepped on the plane at 3 a.m. until arriving back in Winnipeg near midnight, both children had the adventure of their lives.

A Christmas to remember—with thanks to our generous donors

Holiday decorations have long been stowed away but memories of Christmas 2007 will last much longer for boys and girls at Knowles Centre thanks to the gifts made by supporters throughout the year.

After an early morning visit from Santa on December 21, several clients from the Group Care and Day Treatment programs visited the Speedworld Indoor Kart Track. Although many clients had never driven a go-cart, the competition was tough.

“In the end, all the clients were winners,” says Recreation Coordinator Brian Johnson. “Everyone followed the rules and raced fairly; that made for a great afternoon.”



Five other clients spent the day relaxing at **MC College** where they were treated to manicures donated by the

school’s aesthetician students. The young ladies continued the afternoon sipping hot drinks and sharing laughs at a local café.

“It was a day to remember for these girls,” says Brian. “They had a chance to be pampered and feel special like the beautiful people that they are.”

Group Care clients and staff later reunited for a delicious Christmas dinner prepared by the caring kitchen staff at Knowles Centre. They were joined by parents and other family members.

Something for everyone

Clients in the Sexual Abuse Treatment Program each received a gift card so they could pick a gift especially for themselves. “Dealing with the impacts of sexual abuse can be very difficult.



The small gifts provide a way for our clients to take time for themselves,” says SATP Coordinator Heather Chandler. “It is a way we can advocate the importance of self care.”

Knowles Centre also recognized the important contributions treatment foster care parents are making to the lives of the children in their care by hosting a Christmas party for the group. Lots of good food, fun and prizes helped the families get to know one another and marked the successful completion of the program’s first year.

Staff News

Lauren Hershfield, MSW, was appointed Clinical Coordinator in January. In her new position, Lauren will screen referrals to the Group Care and Day Treatment programs, act as liaison with the United Way concerning our Sexual Abuse Treatment program, chair clinical team meetings, and join the management team. In addition, she will continue to carry a case load of Group Care clients. Lauren joined Knowles Centre in November 2004 as a Clinical Therapist.

Karen Friesen, BSN, MTS, MSW, moved into the Group Care/Day Treatment Therapist position. Previously, Karen served clients from the Group Care Program only. Karen has been with Knowles Centre since December 2006.

Knowles Centre welcomed **Pamela Bell**, BSW, CYC Dipl., in January as the full-time Group Care Therapist. Pamela comes from Métis Child & Family Services. Pamela has served children and families for 10 years, including working as a case manager, counselor and as a member of a mobile crisis team.

Dr. Bailey Rayter, C. Psych., has been contracted to provide individual consultation to the therapists beginning in March 2008. He will be available on-site one afternoon each week.

In this role, Dr. Rayter will offer guidance to therapists to enhance their general skills as well as give direction to those who may be facing challenges with specific client cases.

Dr. Rayter brings 30 years experience in clinical issues involving children, adolescents and families to the position, including providing consultation to the Winnipeg CFS and group homes.

Maintenance worker **Ryan Haworth** left Knowles Centre in January. During his year at the agency, Ryan worked hard to keep buildings and grounds in good order.

Welcome to **Ding (Elfren) Raquin** who joined Knowles Centre as a Maintenance Worker in February. He brings extensive experience in all aspects of building maintenance to his new position.

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Comments, suggestions and inquiries are welcome.

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