



KNOWLES CENTRE INC.

Helping Youth Find Their Path: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow



INSIGHTS

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

100 years of history depicted in mural



If a picture is worth a thousand words, then the 47' x 18' mural painted in recognition of the agency's centennial truly speaks volumes.

The mural features a portrait of founder Wilfred Knowles as well as images of former buildings and activities enjoyed by current and past clients. The mural was designed and painted by Winnipeg artist Tom Andrlich.

An event was held on Sept. 26 to officially unveil the mural. Family Services Minister Gord Mackintosh joined the festivities and proclaimed the day as Knowles Centre Day in Manitoba. "Knowles Centre's specialized residential and day treatment services have provided many Manitoba children and families in crisis with a new foundation upon which to rebuild their lives and

achieve their full potential," said Minister Mackintosh.

Mrs. Joy Smith, MP for Kildonan-St. Paul, added, "In 1907 it would have been easy for Wilfred Knowles to walk past a homeless boy on the streets. But he did not. He opened his home and was rewarded knowing he made a difference in the life of another human being. Today, the spirit of Mr. Knowles continues to embrace young people and their families facing overwhelming challenges. It is my honour to recognize and thank Knowles Centre on its 100th anniversary for helping to heal the hearts, minds and souls of your clients and guiding them along a path to a better future."

Following the unveiling, guests enjoyed a traditional Aboriginal Feast of elk stew, pickerel, bannock and wild rice in honor of Wilfred Knowles.

Lessons from the street shared with clients

Without a positive role model and a sense of direction, James Lathlin headed down a path that almost killed him as a youth. He hoped by sharing his story he could prevent clients at Knowles Centre from making similar mistakes.

James visited Knowles Centre in November to speak with a small group of girls. "They really listened to James," said Supervisor Dawn Danylchuk. "He came from the same background as many of our clients and was straight forward about how he got pulled into a troubling way of life. More importantly, he showed them that he got out before it was too late."

James openly spoke about being raised by an alcoholic mother and shoplifting to feed himself and his young sister. He says this gave way to breaking and entering, stealing cars, drug dealing, and gang life. It literally came to a crashing end one night in a stolen car. "I was able to walk away, but my friend didn't," he said.

See Lessons Shared on page 4



James Lathlin hopes his message helps keep others from a troubled life.

A Message from our Chief Executive Officer



The past months have been a busy time at Knowles Centre.

As part of our centennial celebrations, we hosted a mural unveiling and a traditional Aboriginal feast, and celebrated our anniversary at a gala dinner. You can read more about these events within this newsletter.

Our school principal, Kevin Mackay, reports that school is very busy with a large number of students attending daily (attendance is up 11% this year).

Nineteen foster families completed a 10-week training program as part of our Treatment Foster Care program. Overall, TFC has exceeded our expectations. Our goal was to have 12 licensed beds and 12 clients in these beds within the first year. We will exceed both goals before the end of 2007.

Knowles Centre is pursuing additional expansion opportunities. At present, we are developing an independent living program to meet the needs of older adolescents.

The senior management team also is working toward re-accreditation with the Council on Accreditation, which requires us to complete 14 chapters of self-study prior to the onsite inspection.

Although we are expanding and diversifying to meet the needs of the next century, we remain steadfast in our commitment to providing quality services and adhering to best practice standards.

In closing, I would like to thank our many donors, whose generosity allows us to enhance our services to some of the most disadvantaged children and adolescents in Manitoba. On behalf of Knowles Centre, I would like to extend season greetings, and wishes for a happy new year, blessed with good health and happiness to all.

Best wishes,

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

A different kind role model for girls

Lisa Muswagon joined the presentation with James Lathlin. In contrast to his street-wise attitude, Lisa's quiet and composed manner belied her troubled past, but still resonated with her teenaged audience.

Today, Lisa is a successful Aboriginal model, single mom and president of her own company. She candidly spoke about a darker time in her life when a rebellious nature led her into trouble despite a strong family foundation. "By the time I was 14 years old, I was involved in gang activities," she confided. "I thought it was cool."

She described how her life spiraled down a path filled with drugs, alcohol and a bad choice of friends until, as a young adult, Lisa was twice sent to the Remand Centre following violent domestic disputes. "I was embarrassed to be there," she told her audience. "But I finally realized that I had fallen into a trap of negative thinking and had to take responsibility for myself."

With the support of her family, she was able to turn her life around. She refocused her priorities on playing and performing on the hand drum, expanding her modeling career and helping other young Aboriginal girls take part in modeling workshops.

For the girls at Knowles Centre, Lisa is more than a fashion model, she is a role model. "No matter how much staff talk about the dangers of drugs, alcohol or street life, we cannot have the same impact as someone like Lisa," says Supervisor Dawn Danylchuk. "She speaks from experience ... and the girls listen."



An evening of good food and shared memories

Knowles Centre capped its centennial year with a gala dinner on Oct. 12. Over 100 guests – including former clients, current and past staff, foster families, and friends – shared an evening of good food, shared memories, and rekindled acquaintances.

A variety of speakers represented the diverse history of the agency. Board President Wayne Benson paid tribute to the community members who have served the agency from a chief justice to a house painter. Former Supt. Rev. Bill Dixon (1959 – 1964) offered a prayer, and asked for divine help for clients who face struggles to heal and find peace.

Former students John McBryan (1959 – 1964) and Bill Polonuk (1941 – 1943) spoke of fun times, but also of strict routines and the loneliness of living away from family. Mr. Polonuk summed up his appreciation of the staff with a touching tribute: "They are all gone now – the teachers, the nurses, even the shoemaker. I feel God is caring for them as they cared for us. For I am of their making and I will not forget them."

Sir Walter Lindal (1928 to 1934), the oldest known former student, gave the keynote address. He spoke of his entrepreneurial beginnings nurtured at Knowles School and his business successes that followed. Mr. Lindal is Chairman Emeritus of Lindal Cedar Homes based in Seattle, Washington.

The Hon. Peter Bjornson, Minister of Education, Bonnie Mitchelson, MLA for River East, and Jeff Browaty, City Councillor for North Kildonan also brought greetings.

Special thanks to gala sponsors **Canada Safeway, Blooms 'n Balloons, City Councillor Browaty and Sir Walter Lindal** for their generous support.

Messages and stories from others touched by Knowles Centre were included in the 100th Anniversary Book of Memories distributed at the gala.

Complimentary copies may be picked up at Knowles Centre, 2065 Henderson Highway, Winnipeg, or call (204) 339-1951 to request a copy by mail.

With our heartfelt thanks ...

The holiday season brings with it an opportunity to exchange warm wishes and share good fortune. We often do this by exchanging cards, small gifts, or a few extra kind words. This year, many friends of Knowles Centre have made a most unselfish gift to the young people receiving services from our agency, most of whom they will never meet.

Their generous donations and gifts-in-kind to Knowles Centre help provide important recreation, camping and cultural programs and other activities for the children and youth and their families overcoming challenges in their lives.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, the staff, and especially the clients at Knowles Centre, we offer the following individuals and organizations our sincere appreciation.

Joyce (Besse) Anderson
Arctic Glacier Inc.
Ronald A. Belanger
Belgian Veteran's Association Branch # 107
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Bev Wiebe
Gerri Wiebe
Windsor Park United Church
Winnipeg Blue Bombers Football Club
The Winnipeg Foundation
Winnipeg Goldeyes Baseball Club
Walter Witowski
Brad Wolfe
John Woodward
World of Water (Henderson Hwy)
Frank Yeo and Patti Sudermann Yeo
Edith Young
Gerry Zacharias
Many anonymous donors

Treatment Foster Care Program marks first anniversary

Knowles Centre's Treatment Foster Care Program celebrated its first anniversary in November. In total, 19 foster families completed the 30-hour training program over a ten-week period; 10 of these families already have been licensed to provide care and the others are continuing toward licensing.

This means that 12 children and youth ranging in age from one to 16 years of age have been placed with caring foster families while they are receiving professional services from Knowles Centre.



At the start of the Treatment Foster Care Program, a target was set to have 12 children placed in welcoming foster homes. Knowles Centre is pleased that the program has achieved this goal before the end of year. Over the next 12 months, a goal has been set to place an additional 12 children in foster care.

The process has meant many phone inquiries, screening interviews, and home studies for the staff, however, they are confident and pleased they have attracted some of the most caring and committed people to the program.



Lessons Shared from page 1

Ironically, James credited time in jail with saving his life. "My own family didn't even want to see me," he admitted. "I began reflecting and writing about my life in a journal. I focused on what I did wrong and what I wanted for my future."

Released after two years, James earned his high school diploma and started working as a dishwasher. "I went from making thousands of dollars selling drugs to minimum wage, but I only had to re-read my own notes to know I was doing the right thing."

Today, James is turning his writings into a book with financial support from the US-based Tupac Foundation. He also works with Manitoba Public Insurance to warn high-risk youth on the dangers of stealing cars and gives motivational talks on the dangers of crime and gang life.

Echoing the guidance the girls receive from the caring staff at Knowles Centre, James told his audience, "If you are committed to making a better life for yourself, it will happen. I guarantee you."

Knowles Centre gratefully acknowledges James Lathlin and Lisa Muswagon for donating their time to Knowles Centre.



A Christmas wish

Donations of new or very gently used men's & ladies' ice skates or roller blades in all sizes would be greatly appreciated. Call 339-1951 for more information.

Staff News

Karen Cinq-Mars, BA, BSW, joined the Treatment Foster Care Program as a Clinical Case Manager on a part-time basis for a one-year term in November. Karen brings direct experience in treatment foster care, including past contract work at Knowles Centre doing initial screenings and a home study.

Stephanie Howard, MSW, left Knowles Centre in November for a new position with the Immigrant Women's Counseling Service. Stephanie served as a clinical therapist with the Group Care and Day Treatment Programs for 1-1/2 years. She wishes all her former coworkers well.

Tina Case left Knowles Centre in October to pursue new career opportunities. Tina ably greeted callers and visitors to Knowles Centre as our receptionist for the past year.

Knowles Centre welcomed **Marge Richards** in November as the new friendly voice on the phone and front desk as our new receptionist. She is pleased to be working with many wonderful new co-workers.

Special thanks to **Hilary Britton** who balanced the job of temporary receptionist with her university studies until the position was filled on a permanent basis.



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Insights is published by:

Knowles Centre Inc.
2065 Henderson Highway
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada
R2G 1P7

Phone: (204) 339-1951
Fax: (204) 334-4173
Email: info@knowlescentre.ca
Web: www.knowlescentre.ca

Comments, suggestions and inquiries are welcome.

