



Effective, just and humane

RESPONSES

to the causes and consequences of crime.

WHAT'S INSIDE THIS ISSUE?

The John Howard Society of Nova Scotia is filled with gratitude as we circulate another issue of *Responses*. As a general rule, reflection is an important part of learning and meaningful progress. We have tried to do some reflecting with this issue, to consider areas *of* and *for* development, opportunities and challenges while acknowledging that on various levels we are encountering change. As we observe and experience changes in society, within our organization, and among our clients we are reminded that it is important to reflect on the past, but focus on the future and the potential it offers.

Included in this issue are the expected updates from our Board and regional offices; we note that we are saying thanks and farewell to a long-time dedicated and outstanding member of our Society—Executive Director John Peach. We are also able to share a piece from a client of the Halifax Regional Office, who overviews his experience with applying to the Parole Board of Canada (PBC) for a record suspension. For the Volunteer Spotlight, we highlight someone who got involved with JHSNS as a student placement and decided to remain with the organization as a volunteer. And, for our feature story our summer student has chosen to highlight (or perhaps “encourage” is more fitting) the incorporation of special considerations during court processes.

Please enjoy the read.



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Thank you, John!



With our current Executive Director now retired, the Board is engaged in a process to hire a new Executive Director. We look forward to working with a passionate and strategic leader to steward our organization as we embark on new challenges in the coming months and years.

"The John Howard Society North East Region has had a great summer!"

We were fortunate to receive funding for our Employment Search Support Program from the Community Health Boards in Pictou, Antigonish and Guysborough Counties. Thank you for your support!

Due to the growth in referrals and programs at our office, we hope to recruit more volunteers over the Fall.

Anyone interested in volunteering can visit our website to fill out an application form (www.ns.johnhoward.ca). Or, you can contact our office at (902) 396-1999 and we would be happy to answer any of your questions about volunteering.

A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

I am honored to take on the role of President of The John Howard Society of Nova Scotia. Our organization has a proud history of assisting people who have come into conflict with the law, with the goal of achieving a safe and just society.

We celebrated our 67th year as a Society at our Annual General Meeting in June, where we paid tribute to our staff – the employees, students on practicum placements and volunteers who are the lifeblood of our organization. The past year has presented challenges as demand for our programs and services continues to grow, but our staff has addressed those challenges with great skill and dedication.

We welcomed eight new members to the Board of Directors – an impressive group of individuals from diverse backgrounds who will contribute their skills and enthusiasm as we begin this fall to develop a new strategic vision for the Society. We bade a fond farewell to Cheryl Fraser who served as President in 2016 and to Oscar Miller who was a Board member for eight years.

We were all saddened to learn that our Executive Director John Peach has decided to retire this fall. John likes to say that he agreed to accept the position for six months – ten years ago! He took on the leadership role when the organization was going through a 'rough patch' and his exceptional administrative skills and commitment over the years have resulted in a Society that is vibrant and strong. We cannot thank him enough. We acknowledge that he has earned his retirement, but he will be greatly missed.

Kit Waters, JHSNS President

OFFICE UPDATE: NORTH EASTERN REGION (WESTVILLE, NS)

Since the Fall 2016 expansion of the Nova Scotia Adult Restorative Justice Program to include adults, our referrals have increased by 315%. This has been a very rewarding experience for us. Restorative Justice improves access to justice for victims, offenders and community. It is an opportunity for all three groups to come together to discuss the incident(s), learn from each other and support each other in repairing the harm that was caused. In the end, all benefit from the process: the offender has an opportunity to take responsibility and to connect with community, the victim has an opportunity to voice their needs and the impact on them, and the community can demonstrate the impact of the incident on the community, but also offer support to victim and offender.

We have also had great success with our Employment Search Support Program (ESSP). Every client of our office is offered assistance with completing a resume, cover letter and tips and tools for gaining employment. The funding we received from local Community Health Boards allowed us to add certification training to ESSP at no cost to our clients. Our clients are so thankful for this support; one client called us many times to express his gratitude. When we first met him, he was very down as he'd lost his job and his wife was very ill. Thanks to the CHB funding, we were able to offer him a Fork Lift Operator course, through which he earned three licenses. After this he was on cloud nine; his whole face and comportment had changed from sad with no hope to smiling and filled with promise.

The garden program at Northeast Nova Scotia Correctional Facility also expanded this year. JHS volunteers and staff are enjoying spending time in the garden with the men, who appreciate the opportunity to be in the fresh air with something valuable to do.

Susan Hughes, Director

OFFICE UPDATE: CENTRAL REGION (TRURO, NS)

On Nov. 21, 2016 Justice Minister Diana Whalen announced the expansion of the Nova Scotia Restorative Justice Program. We are the first province in Canada to have a province-wide restorative justice program for both youth and adults. While our office has been offering RJ to adults for years as part of the precursory pilot program, we acknowledge this important benchmark for NS and Canada.

We have a new member of our Restorative Justice team at JHS–Central Region. Welcome, Sarah Rogers, as our Administrative Support & Caseworker!

Most recently, we've been preparing to move to our new office. By October we'll be at 1019 Prince St, Unit A in Truro.

Christina King, Director

Sarah also provided an Employment Search Support update:

Thanks to funding from Truro and Area Community Health Board, to date we have put 20 people through certifications with Safety First-SFC Ltd. Some received gift cards towards work lunches, others backpacks with stationary supplies; all accepted help with sprucing up their resumes and cover letters; some also used our amenities to apply for jobs. The funds have also helped us give aid towards work apparel (ex: gift cards to help buy work boots), interview/work clothes, or other work-related needs (ex: help with lunches until first paycheck is received). We've had successful job placement with this project and will continue to offer the support (including certifications courses) to the community with remaining funds.

OFFICE UPDATE: HALIFAX REGION (LOWER SACKVILLE, NS)

During late spring/early summer HRO wrapped up our fourth Employment Readiness Program project with Employment Nova Scotia. Two terms were delivered to almost 30 un/underemployed adult men in HRM with a criminal record as a barrier to employment. We also completed multiple Community Work Team projects, where we organize clients into groups to work through their community service hours for other NGOs. Projects included our three Adopt-A-Highway sites. In partnership with Central Nova Scotia Correctional Facility and Alderney Gate Public Library, and funded by Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia, we developed and implemented the Page Turners Book Club for inmates at CNSCF. This volunteer-driven program started in August and groups have enjoyed great discussions!

Regular programs and services continue but of note: referrals for our Community Assessments and Parole Supervision (CAPS) and Community Maintenance Program (CMP) contracts with CSC were high through the summer and continue to strengthen our partnership with local CSC offices. With the help of a dedicated volunteer we have been redeveloping our Healthy Relations Program. Inspired by regular inquiries about the program from clients and other agencies, the upgrade will provide a more robust curriculum delivered over multiple weekly sessions.

Finally, there are personnel changes to report. In the spring our two social work students finished their placements; one has since graduated and was hired as staff (welcome Daniela!), the other continues her studies but has remained as a volunteer (thank you, Natasha!). We've had our dedicated part time AM&EI Facilitator take parental leave (congratulations Sasha!), part time Community Program Support advance to full time at Central Regional Office (congratulations Sarah!), and we were fortunate to get funding from provincial and federal summer student programs to hire Jenn April to August. All continues to go well, and the dedication of staff and volunteers is to be commended!

Adrienne MacDonald, Director

Restorative Justice is a way of thinking about crime and conflict. It challenges us to consider how we view ourselves as a society, how we respond to crime, and how to restore balance after a crime has been committed.



Restorative models focus on holding offenders accountable in a more meaningful way, repairing harms caused by the offence, reintegrating the offender into the community, and achieving a sense of healing for victim(s) and community.

"Our spring and summer activities have kept the office bustling!"



*HRO is proud to announce that it has finished its first cycle of **Page Turners Book Club!** Page Turners facilitates book clubs for male inmates, offering two different reading levels (basic and advanced) and weekly meetings. The first books chosen were *The Giver* by Lois Lowry and *The Golden Spruce* by John Vaillant.*

The second cycles began in September with two new novels and groups of inmates!

FROM OUR CLIENTS: GRATITUDE FOR RECORD SUSPENSION SUPPORT

The process to apply for a record suspension is 7-10 steps (depending on the applicant's history) of collecting various forms of documentation and information about past offences and personal development since living a crime-free life. The application process can take anywhere from six months to two years (or more), and typically costs at least \$750 by the time the application package is collected and submitted.

A client of JHSNS's Record Suspension Application Service who worked on his application with our Halifax Regional Office for 14 months shared this note via email:

"I would like to acknowledge the support that I received from The John Howard Society. They have made a difference in my life by helping me get my record suspension application filled out. Their expertise has made the process easier for me. They worked with me diligently; from getting fingerprints done and requesting

court information from different provinces to submitting the application. Without their help, it would have been a very challenging task for me. They made sure everything was done correctly so my application took six months exactly [to review and make a decision] from the day that the Parole Board of Canada received my application. They told me that it would take anywhere from six months to two years. I was a little bit worried about the possibility of waiting two years. However, in July, I received good news from the Parole Board of Canada that they had granted me a record suspension. I was very excited about it and it was a huge relief for me as it has been a barrier. Finding employment was an obstacle as some jobs and school programs require you to be bondable. I would like to take this opportunity to thank The John Howard Society staff who worked with me to obtain my record suspension".

-John, HRO client

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: NATASHA HARRISON

Natasha has been volunteering with JHSNS – Halifax Regional Office since December 2016. She is a Bachelor of Social Work student at Vancouver Island University and initially got involved with us to complete her first practicum placement. After finishing 350 hours with JHS—and getting involved with a number of different projects for both the Halifax office and general Society— she decided to remain involved as a volunteer. We asked Natasha a few questions about her time with us:

What is your interest in working within the criminal justice/corrections field?

I believe that with the proper support systems in place, anyone can change. Unfortunately, more often than not, ex-offenders are released into the community without enough support and are expected to "reintegrate" into a society that makes reintegration exceptionally difficult.

My interest in criminal justice is advocating for those who don't have a voice. I want to validate the efforts people make to change the direction of their lives, and be one of the supports that can help them succeed.

Considering that you've gotten involved with so many JHSNS projects, which initiative(s) have you enjoyed the most?

I've enjoyed working with the projects and initiatives that aim to equip people with skills to help them succeed. The Employment Readiness Program offers training and certifications to ex-offenders to assist in their ability to find a job. To offenders who may not have previous work experience, this can be life changing. Right now John Howard is looking at starting a gardening program at CNSCF. I enjoyed researching this initiative and seeing how the program can give

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offenders skills that are transferable upon release (landscaping, etc.), and also provide emotional/mental/spiritual therapy to inmates while incarcerated.

Reflecting on your time with JHSNS, is there anything else you'd like to share?

The John Howard Society works hard to meet a need that society doesn't acknowledge as necessary. I've been fortunate to work with JHS and be a small part of meeting this need. Although there are too few people doing this work, the staff at JHS are wonderful and work tirelessly. Volunteering with them is a privilege that I hope more people will become acquainted with!

From the staff at HRO:

Thank you Natasha for your hard work and commitment to continue to help JHS further its mission!

FEATURE STORY: JUDGEMENT DAY

In Canada we pride ourselves on being a compassionate, accepting, multi-cultural nation whose values align with what is written in our Charter of Rights and Freedoms: in essence, to be inclusive, celebrate diversity and foster equality. However, this belief system is regularly undermined by social and systemic judgments based on race, gender and socioeconomic status. These notions—at times subconscious and other times conscious—are dangerous and by nature directly oppose our stated Canadian values. Without considering the factors that have led someone to their current condition or situation, we circumvent *their* truth.

At this year's Nova Scotia Criminal Justice Association (NSCJA, June 2017) conference, speakers from various fields discussed the importance of specific considerations when sentencing offenders. Representatives from Nova Scotia's specialized courts (ex: Mental Health Court, the pilot Domestic Violence Court) and other facets of our criminal justice system outlined and encouraged customized, human-centred approaches for working with criminal cases. These models allow criminal justice system actors to consider the context in which crimes are committed (community, culture, socio-demographic, individual history, etc) in order to make informed decisions about what is an appropriate response to the committed offence(s) rather than simply employing a "one size fits all" response to crime. This human-centred approach is believed more likely to reduce recidivism rates by promoting positive change.

The conference reinforced the underpinnings of what our nation, our legal system, and we (as individuals of society) can and should be striving for when presented with difference (read as diversity, dissimilarity, variation from the norm) is encountered. Whether differences are cultural, economic, health or education based, appropriate (understood to mean fitting, relevant, effective) sentencing and rehabilitation goals can only be achieved with deeper consideration of the situational and experiential histories that contribute to one's perceived available choices at the time and their

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*Natasha's projects have included (but are not limited to) the **Employment Readiness Program** - helping with case management, supporting clients to develop resumes/cover letters, job search and submit applications; the **Community Workplace Program** - connecting with clients and networking with other organizations to develop relationships for placements; **Resource Development** - creating a Frequently Asked Questions guide for visitors to Atlantic federal correctional facilities and brochures that outline how clients can go about getting proper identification or where to find local food banks or a charitable meal.*

GARDENING AT WORK?

With our interests in prison gardening programs, JHSNS sent representatives to a horticulture therapy workshop in August called The Versatility of Gardening for Recreation and Therapy.



Attendees learned about the benefits of implementing a horticulture therapy program in various settings and with diverse demographics.



THE JOHN HOWARD SOCIETY OF
NOVA SCOTIA

SINCE 1950

JHSNS is a provincial organization comprised of and governed by people whose goal is to understand and respond to problems of crime and the criminal justice system. We are a member of the John Howard Society of Canada.

JHSNS has three offices, each serving a different catchment area: **North Eastern Regional Office** serves Pictou, Antigonish and Guysborough Counties; **Central Regional Office** serves Colchester and East Hants Counties; and **Halifax Regional Office** primarily serves the urban area of Halifax Regional Municipality.

Learn more on our website:

<http://www.ns.johnhoward.ca>

Become a Member!

As a member, you are part owner of JHSNS. Membership includes:

- The opportunity to represent your community within the Society and/or as a Board member;
- The opportunity to elect individuals to the Society's Board of Directors;
- An invitation to the Annual General Meeting, a copy of the Annual General Report, and a copy of the Audited Financial Statement; and
- Invitations to learning events held throughout the year

For more information, or to apply, go to:

<http://ns.johnhoward.ca/about>

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subsequent decision for action. This begins to get at the contributing factors of a person's offending.

By employing human-centred examinations and developing a more meaningful understanding of someone's criminal behaviour, a more accurate picture of their area(s) of deficit can be drawn to determine what treatments or interventions are most appropriate for affecting change.

- **Jennifer Haigh, JHSNS Summer Student**



Representatives from all three regional offices attended the Nova Scotia Criminal Justice Association conference in June.

The event fostered a necessary and enlightening dialogue that provided insight into the need for specific criteria and considerations when sentencing offenders; humans are a diverse species, and so too are offenders. In order to make decisions about appropriate responses to a case/offence, our criminal justice system should utilize deeper and individualized assessment that will develop a more adequate understanding of the conditions that contributed to the offence in the first place.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: JHSNS

CENTRAL REGIONAL OFFICE (CRO) HAS MOVED! As of October, **our new address is 1019 Prince St, Unit A, Truro NS, B2N 1H7.**

OUR NORTH EASTERN REGIONAL OFFICE NEEDS VOLUNTEERS. Interested applicants in Pictou, Antigonish and Guysborough counties can visit our website to fill out an application form (www.ns.johnhoward.ca/volunteer). Or, you can contact our office at **(902) 396-1999** with any questions about volunteering.

ANNOUNCEMENT: Community Partners

7TH STEP SOCIETY IS LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEERS IN PICTOU AREA to help run a group in Northeastern Nova Scotia Correctional Facility. If interested, contact Mark Knox at **(902) 422-0456** or info@knoxlaw.ca. 7th Step is a program designed to help recidivist offenders change their behavior and attitudes through a basic self help philosophy.

If you would like to be added to or removed from the newsletter's emailing list, please contact jhsns@ns.johnhoward.ca.