

# shalem Digest

TOPICS OF INTEREST TO FRIENDS OF SHALEM MENTAL HEALTH NETWORK

## WrapAround - A Way To Care

BY REV. DAVID BISH

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Most pastors and congregations are not equipped with the skills or the resources to reach out effectively and make a difference in the lives of people with complex needs. The resulting feelings of impotence can eat away at a church's longing to be that compassionate presence reflecting the love of Christ in the community in which it is situated. WrapAround helps a congregation build bridges of mutual support between organizations and those families and individuals who need it.

Sally\* read about WrapAround in the local newspaper. Having exhausted all other avenues of support she called the WrapAround office, currently located in the Staff Associates office at Stoney Creek United Church. The WrapAround co-ordinator did an immediate intake and arranged for a trained facilitator to meet with Sally. Sally, who is terminally ill, has custody of

her grandson Carl, who is challenged with multiple issues. He is twelve years old with a functioning capacity of age six; he has diabetes, and is diagnosed with Oppositional Defiant Disorder. Sally's twenty year old daughter Meg (the child's aunt) is the primary caregiver. Meg has a grade eleven education, and would love to finish high school.

Sarah, the facilitator, meets with the family and begins a process of outlining their strengths as a family unit. With only a disability pension to live on, money is scarce. The refrigerator died recently, and with no money to replace it the family has been staying away from any food that requires refrigeration. The role of a facilitator is to implement the WrapAround planning process with a family in need, and build a team that wraps services and supports around them.

After tapping into the family's strengths and support systems, Sarah leads the family through a discovery of the life domain areas that will need to be addressed. Finances, budgeting, education, proper diet, emotional support, and ongoing medical needs along with the corresponding transportation requirements, top the list. Helping Carl enrol in a local Cub Pac group involves him with peer stimulation and adult supervision; it also allows Sally and Meg some time for themselves. A used fridge is donated by a local congregation, and another community group assists the family with transportation to medical

appointments. A mentor is also arranged for Sally, who is finding that life can be a burden too heavy to carry on her own.

After several meetings and a whole lot of networking, progress is being made on the specific goals previously outlined in each of the life domain areas. These goals will be reassessed and new ones set as time goes on. Within eight to twelve months this family will be in better shape to deal more independently with the challenges that life has thrown them.

This family is representative of the many families or individuals with complex needs that place overwhelming demands on the pastoral care efforts of any congregation. Since our congregation in Stoney Creek has embraced WrapAround we no longer feel overwhelmed by the complexity of need that comes to our door for help. We no longer feel the frustration of limited resources that restrict a congregation's ability to provide unconditional and effective pastoral care.

### HOW WILL WRAPAROUND HELP YOUR CHURCH?

WrapAround allows the community to view a congregation as a caring and compassionate presence acting on the basis of unconditional love. The WrapAround process can act as a catalyst to enhance a congregation's integrity in ministry by extending an effective healing ministry into the broader community that often views the church as insular and irrelevant to



people's day-to-day needs. WrapAround is a compelling model for Christ-like service that attracts willing volunteers of all ages. Using a highly effective structure and process it equips these volunteers with skills and supports, giving them the confidence they need to minister to families dealing with serious issues. By building partnerships with multiple community resource providers, a congregation is able to tailor its pastoral care ministry to people whose complexity of need could otherwise overwhelm a church's personnel and material resources. WrapAround, therefore, allows a congregation to expand its resource base for ministry without overtaxing its membership.

*WrapAround is a compelling model for Christ-like service that attracts willing volunteers of all ages.*

Eugene Peterson's paraphrase of our Lord's mission statement in Luke 4:18 & 19 has Jesus saying, "God's Spirit is on me; he has chosen me to preach the message of good news to the poor, sent me to announce pardon to prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to set the burdened and battered free, to announce, 'This is God's year to act!'" For congregations to live out this vision for ministry is to be truly Christ-like. God asks of us nothing less. WrapAround encourages the kind of "frontline volunteering" (or as I would rather refer to it—servanthood) among our members and within the community at large, which enables this vision to be lived out in real terms.

### HOW DOES A CONGREGATION BEGIN?

Any congregation can get started by linking up with a local WrapAround. If none

exist, it could choose to host a WrapAround Initiative information evening in its community. This session would outline the WrapAround process and assess the need for an Initiative in the area. If a need is discerned and the congregation is willing to pursue an Initiative, the church's leadership could sponsor facilitator information and training sessions. A community steering team would need to be established to guide the WrapAround Initiative. The church might offer its building on an ongoing basis for meetings and training sessions, and even assign some of its ministry staff-time to develop and support this work. Financial support for the Initiative is always helpful but not obligatory.

Developing a flexible resource team provides opportunities of service for volunteers for whom the facilitator role is not their bag. Carpenters, plumbers, those who can help with transportation and child care, or those able to set up a clothing share, can all help to determine the success of a WrapAround. Fund raising is

always a challenge, but also the source of good fellowship and personal satisfaction, knowing that one is helping to sustain the project.

At the end of the day the words of our Lord ring loud

and clear: "I was hungry and you gave me food, or helped me find employment; I was thirsty and you gave me a drink, sustained me when my soul was parched; I was a stranger and you welcomed me, took me in when the system left me to fend for myself; I was naked and you clothed me, helped me to rediscover my dignity; I was sick and in prison and you gave me the support and guidance I needed to get back on my feet (Matthew 25:35 & 36)."

WrapAround is one of a number of directions currently being considered by Shalem's Board for potentially supporting your congregation's pastoral care and outreach ministries. It was my pleasure to speak about WrapAround to Shalem's board and staff this past fall. If you see a fit between WrapAround and your congrega-

tion, why not contact Shalem's Executive Director, Mark Vander Vennen (markvv@shalemnetwork.org), to let Shalem know. May God bless you as you consider this incredible venture in Christian service.

For further information on WrapAround go to: <http://www.vroonvdb.com/calliope.html>; or <http://www.paperboat.com/info.html>.

\* Names and other identifying characteristics have been changed.



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in both Canada and the United States. Raised in Toronto,

David attended Ryerson University (Bus. Administration-Marketing). He holds an M.Div from Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky, and a M.Th from Emmanuel College, U. of Toronto. David is married to Mary who is the minister at Grace United Church in Caledonia. Together they have three children and three grandchildren. Rev. Bish is a member of the steering team for the Hamilton WrapAround Initiative, and the Stoney Creek WrapAround.

