



Planned Lifetime
Networks - WWO

A CONNECTOR'S STORY

Spring 2006

Joshua Scorgie is a Community Connector for PLN. He and his wife have 2 small children and he is employed as a truck driver. Joshua has a deep commitment to people and community so he responded enthusiastically to our newspaper ad for Connectors. I asked him why he decided to work with us. This is his response.

Throughout my life people and relationships have been very important. Different people with different backgrounds and interests have allowed me to appreciate and enjoy the unique humanity in us all. We all bring our own flavour to life. The richness of a person's life can be seen by the quality of relationships around them. Friendships are a way that we find out how special we are. Friends are mirrors that show us our uniqueness and value. They relay a truth to us that we can't find out without them. Everyone has only one life to live so when we share time with someone we are giving them that part of our lives. Friends by sharing time with us are saying that we are worth this gift of time. I am excited to be a Community Connector because I can be a part of creating this opportunity in someone else's life.

This process has created an opportunity to really think about my experiences with relationships. Sometimes in our lives we meet people that just click, friendships happen and that's great. We often expect relationships to happen like this and think that working at friendships devalue them. But in fact working at them with patience and effort shows that we care about our friends and our friendship.

To build quality relationships takes time. Over time you share experiences, exchange thoughts and deepest feelings. Its that time, that trust and effort to do all that communication that makes you stand back and say, "Wow, I've got a great friend." Relationships built slowly, with thought, patience and care reap a harvest of true and deep friendship.

GoodLife Meeting Schedule

Good Life meetings have begun! Meetings are alternating between Waterloo and Kitchener. All Waterloo meetings are at 54 Euclid (runs off Erb Street)

All Kitchener meetings are at 35 Old Carriage Drive (across from the Pioneer Park Zehrs)

April meeting is April 5, 7-9pm Waterloo

May meeting is May 3, 7-9pm Kitchener

June meeting is June 7, 7-9pm Waterloo

Please call 746-1188 for more information

Good Life Meetings are a place for parents to come together to discuss concerns, share ideas, celebrate accomplishments and to work together on the steps towards a Good Life for our children. Sometimes we use the Good Life book as a place to start discussion. Sometimes the topic develops according to the needs of the parents at that night's meeting.

An Unexpected Journey to Community

I needed to move to the only place that my daughter could get specialized schooling. I was worried about living in a post industrial city in deep decline where I had no connections and was so far from home. But I saw no other chance that my daughter might have the opportunity to learn regardless of her challenges.

My kids had diverse needs so we required the space of a big house. The only neighbourhood I could afford was in the old downtown area. The real estate agent told me it was a mixed area of big, mostly decrepit, genteel houses that block by block were being converted into cheap apartments. Many people considered it a rough and gritty place to live, not a safe place to raise kids. But I had no other choice.

The house I bought was 120 years old but had been well kept up. I could make do with the house but I had to make a ramp to the front door. One of the jobs that I had as a woman in the trades was as a carpenter's helper and I had ended up with fair to middling carpenter skills. I worked out a simple design that would leave the heritage aspect of the house intact and proceeded to buy the wood. I stacked it on the covered front porch and started on building the form for the concrete at the landing.

A neighbour from across the road stopped by when I was working. He asked what I was doing. When I told him about building a ramp, he immediately offered to help. I leaned on the porch railing sizing him up. Here was an older man with a strong Quebec accent who obviously from his calluses was a man of his hands.

Now I had had very mixed experiences working with men who did not expect any woman to have carpenter skills and many didn't take kindly to following a woman's lead. I really needed this ramp and I knew the design was probably going to work, so I was more than a little leery of just saying yes. I would rather work alone than deal with the hassle and potential of serious problems working with someone I didn't know. I talked about how I intended to proceed hoping to get a feel from his reaction about his openness to working with me on my plan. But as the conversation stretched on, I knew I had to make a quick decision without knowing what kind of guy he was.

Taking a deep breath, I said Yes, I would be glad of his help. He told me his name was Conrad, grabbed a few of his tools from his house and we started in.

Before long, another man sauntered up the sidewalk and asked what we were doing. Conrad looked over at me and I started in on an explanation. Then a man pushing another man in a wheelchair stopped and the conversation continued. Come to find out they were brothers, very old members of a feared motorcycle gang. They had a number of salty observations to make on the wheelchair accessibility of the city and this old neighbourhood in particular.

They became regulars as we worked. Every time we got the tools out, they would show up to talk. As a matter of fact, other men would show up clutching a hammer or drill to offer to help as well. Now this was not a big job and things were going smoothly, so there was limited space for more hands. But that didn't seem to stop anyone from coming.

I remember one bright Saturday morning, standing up to get a few more bolts from the box, I looked over at the sidewalk. Every available inch of my porch, the walk in front of my house, my small yard and driveway was covered in people who spilled out onto the street and stood around talking to each other. One neighbour said it had been years since he had talked to some of the people. Some had tools in their hands and were gesturing with them to make a point, but no one other than Conrad and I was actually working on the ramp.

I had a laugh to myself but then it struck me. If I had not needed this ramp, no one would have been gathered here at all. I suddenly saw that the gift that my family had brought to this community was our need; it was our need that created this gathering of people to visit and connect with each other.

In that flash I also saw the other part that was necessary, my part. I had to have been willing to say yes, to open up to the unknown gift and potential for risk. Our need, the generosity of Conrad and my willingness to accept that generosity just as it came to me were all essential parts of an interaction that resulted in new relationships and enduring positive changes in this community.

Who Needs a Personal Network?

Having a personal support network can be the difference between living on the edges of society and being a welcome, participating and contributing citizen.

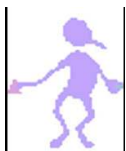
Over the past year four more families have started building circles of friends to support their loved one with a disability. This brings our total number of networks to 7!

Building support networks fosters the development of real, mutually beneficial, friendships with a member of the community. They take time and patience to build, but yield a lifetime of support, encouragement, and peace of mind.

To find out how to start a network of your own- contact us at 746-1188



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Personal Support Networks have proven to be effective if:

You are elderly parents who are wondering who will replace your continuous dedication to the quality of life of your son or daughter with a disability;

You are seeking more active involvement by your other children, aunts, uncles, or cousins in your relative's life;
You are wondering how to let go;

Your son or daughter is moving into the community from an institution or from the family home;

You could use more help and advocacy in areas of housing, employment, and recreation;

You would like to see your son or daughter with more friends and acquaintances;

Members of your family have passed away, become ill or moved out of town.



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PLANNED LIFETIME NETWORKS

PLN was incorporated in 2000 by families who strongly believed in the four core values of:

Family Leadership (families are experts, PLN is accountable to families)

Safety and Security Through Relationships (the number and quality of relationships is directly related to a safe and secure future PLN facilitates development of relationships between individuals with a disability and their community. Mutual friendship not charity!),

Self Sufficiency (independence from government funding for our operational expenses makes us effective and accountable),

Contribution (every person with a disability has gifts to share and important contributions to make to their community. All are full citizens)

We are not disability specific although most individuals have an intellectual disability of some sort or another, often combined with a mental illness or physical disability.

Planned Lifetime Networks

Membership Form 2006

Name: _____

Address: _____ City: _____

Province: _____ Postal Code: _____

Phone Number: _____ E-Mail: _____

Name of person with disability: _____ Age: _____

City: _____ Province: _____ Postal Code: _____

Annual Associate _____ (\$60)

Enclosed is my cheque for \$ _____ Today's Date: _____

(make cheque payable to Lifetime Networks Ottawa)

LNO is a family driven organization. We depend on your involvement. Please identify any skills or experience you may have that you would be willing to share with us:

