

Social Services Committee Recognition of Mary Jane Murray Oct 12/16

Good morning Mr. Chair and members of Committee. It is my pleasure this morning to welcome a friend to Grey County Social Services Committee, Mary Jane Murray. Mary Jane has been a key partner for us and instrumental in the success of our Getting Ahead and Bridges out of Poverty Work. After many years of working in front line service delivery in Owen Sound and Grey County, Mary Jane has decided to retire.

Over the past 6 years there has been a targeted effort to engage the community at all levels in the Bridges out of Poverty philosophy. Grey County Social Services and the Adult Learning Centres of Grey-Bruce-Georgian have partnered to provide Getting Ahead workshops since 2010. We are proud that Grey County was the second county in Canada to work towards becoming an engaged community. A great deal of the success of this program can be attributed to Mary Jane.

Prior to Mary Jane's retirement, we have completed 17 Getting Ahead groups in 6 different communities in Grey County. We have 150 Graduates with a graduation rate of 89%. Mary Jane has facilitated 13 of the 17 groups and during this time she has also mentored 12 graduates who have taken on the exciting and challenging opportunity to act as a co-facilitator.

While Mary Jane adhered to the Getting Ahead manual faithfully she made the extra effort to introduce local activities to facilitate the investigation and resource building process. She found that the investigators experience different learning styles and encountered learning disabilities and/or low reading skills. To address these issues, she incorporated more hands-on methods of presenting the material including additional mental models, visual aids and videos.

Mary Jane was instrumental in organizing Social Services Committee delegations consisting of facilitators and graduates. These delegations served to highlight the value of the Getting Ahead workshops invested in and funded by Grey County.

As well, she planned the most heart-warming graduation parties. For those that have not been able to attend a graduation, these celebratory events provide a wonderful opportunity for graduates to share their accomplishments with family members, Grey County staff and municipal and provincial politicians.

Mary Jane continues to attend and support the Bridges Action Group and Community Voices Group, both affiliated with the work of the Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force and both who reflect and help to direct efforts to change policy that in the past hasn't been less supportive to persons of low income. Through Mary Jane's support, the members of these groups ensure that their real life lived experience helps to guide the work of the multiple partners at the larger networks.

We know that we are but one partner that has benefited over the years from Mary Jane's dedication to make a difference. I asked Tim Nicholls Harrison, her former employer as CEO Owen Sound & North Grey Union Public Library, for some comments to reflect the larger impact this lady has had to move the needle forward in our community. Here are some of his comments, and please note they are very similar to our own experience with Mary Jane:

Mary Jane excels in all areas of her work. Her facilitation skills have changed people's lives. The Getting Ahead workshops are a success because of her commitment and initiative. She is respected for her knowledge, skill, tact and effort. We were fortunate to have Mary Jane as a key part of our organization.

Mary Jane started with at the Adult Learning Centre in December of 2006. Her earlier careers in both childcare and in volunteer co-ordination and management gave her an extensive knowledge base and skillset. The learning centre was fortunate to be able to utilize her exemplary organizational and facilitation skills.

In May of 2009, the Adult Learning Centres: Grey-Bruce-Georgian sent Mary Jane Murray and Brittany Brenndorfer to attend the Bridges out of Poverty and Getting AHEAD training event in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Grey County Social Services expressed an interest in the Bridges work at the same time.

Mary Jane facilitated twelve of the first seventeen Getting Ahead groups that were offered. During this time, she supported 116 local adults in achieving their goal of graduating from the program. The Getting Ahead program is intense and exhausting. Day in and day out, Mary Jane offered the participants her very best as she helped them explore, analyze, understand and plan changes in their lives.

Mary Jane Murray worked tirelessly to make the Getting Ahead materials relevant for our local context. She researched and created many of the support documents that are used in Getting Ahead across Canada. Indeed, Phil Devol thanks Mary Jane in his updated Getting Ahead resources for Canada.

Mary Jane has contributed immensely to the work of the Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force and the sectors-based subgroup Bridges Action Group and the Community Voices subgroup. She has continued to support these groups in her retirement. We are pleased to have her participation in the Getting Ahead graduation ceremonies. Her values, views and voice remain a consistent and enthusiastic support for all of us.

Mary Jane Murray has truly changed lives and the citizens of Grey County have been very fortunate to have care, concern and commitment working on their behalf. We all have learned so much from her over the years.

Very kind words, and I am fortunate enough myself to cross paths with Mary Jane at other planning and network tables in Grey and Bruce Counties and I do hope we continue to see one another into your retirement.

Mary Jane you will be missed and we take this time to thank you for all of your hard work, passion and dedication!!! Well done, enjoy your retirement!