

Justice update...

Public safety is one of the uppermost concerns in the minds of Manitobans and there are a number of initiatives created to address this issue. This installment of “And Furthermore” checks in with two diverse programs falling under the umbrella of Manitoba Justice. The first aims to prevent crime by providing support to at-risk youth and helping them to make better choices. The second provides municipal first responders – the front-line workers facing danger every day – with the tools and training necessary to detect drug labs in our communities.

A BEACON OF HOPE FOR MANITOBA YOUTH

The Fall 2006 issue of *The Leader* featured a special report on Justice, including an overview of provincial programs and funds. One of those funds is called ‘Lighthouses.’ This fund, part of the Neighbourhoods Alive! Strategy, was recently expanded.

UPDATE

Attorney General **Dave Chomiak** announced nine new Lighthouses sites on October 6, 2006, bringing to 47 the number of Lighthouses created since the government took office in 1999.

“Lighthouses locations have been a beacon of hope and a positive force in many communities in Manitoba,” said Chomiak. “We saw a record 100,000 visits by youth to Lighthouses sites over the past year, and I’m pleased to announce we are expanding the improved recreational opportunities Lighthouses make possible to even more locations.”

Lighthouses provides funding that helps support schools, friendship centres and other community facilities in offering a variety of recreational, educational or social after-hour activities organized by and for youth.

A recent independent study by Kaplan and Associates focused on putting a human face on the impact of the program by looking at the experiences of seven youths using two Lighthouses locations. The case studies found that before attending Lighthouses programs, many of the young people did not have affordable access to positive recreational activities, had rocky home lives and risk factors for potential criminal involvement, and had been involved in some illegal activities. They and their parents confirmed that positive changes followed their involvement in the programs.

“For the youth and families featured in this report, the program made a very real

and important difference in their lives,” the study concluded.

The nine new sites are:

- Abbalak Thunderswift Memorial School, Little Grand Rapids;
- La Barriere Crossings School, St. Norbert;
- NEEDS Inc. (Needs Centre for War Affected Families), Winnipeg;
- Ralph Brown Community Centre, Winnipeg;
- École Selkirk Junior High, Selkirk;
- Pauingassi First Nation, Pauingassi;
- Polson School, Winnipeg;
- Opaskwayak Cree Nation, The Pas; and
- Wellington School, Winnipeg.

Lighthouses sites are supported with \$1,000 in provincial funding per month, covering up to 50% of the cost of running a program. Programs must have other partners to provide funding or ‘in kind’ contributions, such as the use of a facility or equipment.

TRAINING KEY TO CRYSTAL METH STRATEGY

Our coverage of the crystal meth issue began one year ago with our Winter 2006 story entitled “Crystal Meth: What’s Manitoba Doing?” We then summarized the Manitoba Meth Strategy in the Spring 2006 issue, and provided a further update in the Summer 2006 issue.

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UPDATE

Attorney General **Dave Chomiak** and Healthy Living Minister **Kerri Irvin-Ross** announced on November 29 that Manitoba will expand its successful crystal meth training initiative to ensure front-line personnel in rural communities have the training and resources needed to detect labs and help those addicted to the drug.

The training allows front-line workers in municipalities to detect labs, recognize the hazards associated with this deadly drug and protect themselves when dealing with crystal meth. Nearly 600 first responders across Manitoba have received training on meth use and production since the training initiative was introduced last spring.

Chomiak said the program will be expanded to ensure more Manitoba municipalities are able to access a pioneering web-based training program offered by the Canadian Police Knowledge Network, a not-for-profit corporation that provides e-learning for police.

The minister said Manitoba Justice will secure additional training kits and ask municipalities to identify one or two front-line workers to receive training and co-ordinate information sharing within their communities. Manitoba Justice will provide additional course kits at no cost to municipalities.

The course offers detailed information on the characteristics of crystal meth, including symptoms and effects of use, methods of production, detection of labs and associated hazards.

Manitoba was the first province to make comprehensive training on crystal meth available to such a broad range of first responders, including police and provincial and municipal agencies. Front-line personnel can take the interactive training course from any Internet-connected computer.

“A comprehensive training initiative is a key component of Manitoba’s strategy to tackle crystal meth,” said Irvin-Ross. ♻