

NEXT STEP NEWS

Over these last few months, we have found ourselves in a paradoxical time where everything has changed and yet nothing has changed. You've noticed our new look and new format but same old us reporting on our activities. You may also know that our two founders, Sr. Carol and Fr. Dave have passed away this spring. We miss them dearly and we can also hear them say 'Stay calm and carry on.' So, we carry on, supporting the guys as they find their way in the community, one of which is Hal whom you will be meeting shortly.

We continue to meet via Zoom and have been doing ever since the second wave hit in November. Everyone has adapted and our new members are slowly learning the technology too. It is not as personal as meeting together, but it is way better than suspending our meetings. The passes from the prison continue to be canceled although I still can meet with our participants, one on one, via WebEx. In the community, we have about 6 members coming to our meetings and 5 volunteers each week. We are excited to say that we saw our first new face from the prison in April!

As we journeyed through some significant upheaval, one of our volunteers has gone above and beyond. Fr. John Perry, in his steady and generous way, has guided us by offering, to those interested, several masses. In April, Fr. John did a special Holy Thursday service for us in <group>. He said, "Although it is a struggle to go to mass during the pandemic, it is always possible to find ways to serve one another. In John's gospel, the Eucharist is substituted by service." He added, "the prison is one thing, the community of Quixote House is another, but you can always find ways to be of service to each other. Being of service is different for everyone and I encourage you to do so with anonymity." We were truly inspired by these words, as we considered the impact of the pandemic.

Shortly after, we learned that Fr. Dave Creamer had passed away. Again, Fr. John kindly led us in a celebration of Fr. Dave's life during a Next Step meeting, giving us an opportunity to share our favorite Fr. Dave memories. And then the news of Sr. Carol's sudden passing fell upon us. Yet again, Fr. John graciously agreed to have a funeral mass in Sr. Carol's honor at Residence Despina. When we reflect on Fr. John's words on Holy Thursday, we can't help but think of our two friends who worked so selflessly and quietly for those on the margins of our community.

In these extended times of isolation, when many feel disconnected, we were all filled with gratitude to you Fr. John. Thank you for gathering us so we could laugh and grieve together, for giving us strength through your words of encouragement.

And our gratitude continues to flow! Melissa from the Wolseley Family Place presented on the topic of shame and guilt in January. You'd think our members would high tail it out of Zoom with such a topic! But no, they participated fully and asked if we could have her back again. Welcome, Melissa and thank you for accepting to come again to present topics we find helpful! In another meeting, Lenny presented a summary of the Jails to Jobs book. Every Thursday continues to offer something different for our members to consider and reflect upon.

And the gratitude flows some more! It was heartwarming to see so many of you with us to celebrate our 20th-anniversary book launch of Two Steps Forward. With this support and the gracious prayers and donations from you, we truly can carry on. Our appreciation goes to St. Peter's Parish who supported us in the month of March, an anonymous donor in April, St. Ignatius Parish in May, and St. Mary's Academy Mission Club in June. Together, we will maintain Sr. Carol and Fr. Dave's extraordinary legacy!

Summer blessings to you all, Kathleen
Next Step Coordinator

Hal is grateful for Next Step because he sees that he isn't the only one going through a transition back into the community. He will join us again once we can meet in person.

HAL'S Story ...

I was born on a dairy farm in Manitoba. Many good friends were in my life, and I rode horses. I quit school at 15 years old because the principal said I was better off if I did. Admittedly, I was a shit disturber anyways. So, I worked on my dad's farm until I was 23 years old. It was then that I lost Darryl and Kelly, Jeff and Lori, and Ivan who died all within months of each other. We were all in the same grade together, so I was grieving like crazy.

That is when I killed someone that I loved. I hadn't dealt with my emotions very well. I got a life sentence and was able to apply for parole in 10 years. After that, I worked with a trucking company for at least 10 years. I operated an excavator and other heavy equipment. I broke my parole conditions several times. At one point, I was quite influenced by my environment and agreed to go out for drinks one night. I ended up back at Stony Mountain for another 10 years for that breach.

I've been out for almost a year now. I lived in Manitou halfway house and now I'm living in my own apartment after getting full parole. I like it here and it is close to the halfway house where I have some good support. I just gotta keep my shit straight because I could go back for a long time.

There are also some challenging health issues I must deal with. I had more than one stroke and have lost my ability to remember things, especially if I feel stress. But I do want to work again. My parole officer also suggested to me to volunteer at Siloam Mission or someplace like that where I can spend my time usefully. I'm still figuring that out now.

I have two grandchildren, one was just born in January, and I love them to death. I get to visit them from time to time but it is hard during the pandemic. I get a lot of support from my two daughters along with their mom and her husband whom I have become friends again. They do lots of things for me, like bring groceries over.

I attended Next Step at the old place (convention Ross) a few years ago when I was applying for day parole. I was denied but have come since getting parole this time. I like the way the guys share everything. Like when they get into the workforce and tell you about their experiences. I don't feel like I'm the only guy going through the transition back to the community. Not only do I like hearing from the guys but the volunteers too. One volunteer talked about how he got a job. Unfortunately, I haven't attended <group> since January because I only have a flip phone and no data. We tried our best to make it work but it was just too awkward. I'm still in touch with Kathleen and she has been assisting with getting stuff for my place. I plan to come back as soon as Next Step meets in person again.

With heartfelt gratitude for supporting Next Step, Hal



**Excerpt from Closing remarks made by
Hank Dixon at Future Hope's 20th anniversary
celebratory Book Launch held June 1, 2021.**

"Stay the course" poem by Gerald Herron:

"I always find it interesting, when an injustice has been done, we all jump on the bandwagon, raising our voices, shake our fists, protests. Few stay the course."

Hank's Message:

There is this one theme that has traveled through all the years that I have been on the street, that I've worked with guys, that I've been involved with volunteers and organizations, and that is this simple, simple but powerful phrase that Gerry has at the end of his poem, and that is, **"Stay the course"**.

The power of "staying the course" for Future Hope is what we are celebrating tonight! Overtime time you end up impacting life after life after life after life and end up with a book full of stories of people's lives you've impacted. I do hope that Future Hope will continue to "stay the course" and that those involved in Future Hope will also "stay the course". Ultimately the greatest impact others have had on my life and my capacity to have an impact on other people's lives is being able to "stay the course" with them.

Hank Dixon, author of *A Lifer's Journey: Prison Chaplaincy from the Inside Out* being of *A Lifer's Journey: Prison....Inside Out*, released on June 18 at Amazon.ca.



Time is almost up!

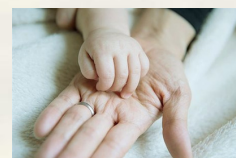
There are only **8 days** left in our
#GivingChallengeCA campaign.
Every dollar we raise enters us to win
\$20,000! Help us by donating now:

<https://www.futurehope.ca/great-canadian-giving-challenge>

Sharing a Mom's testimonial

It is with great difficulty that I write this testimonial and share my son's story, of witnessing at the age of 3, his father's suicide and the trauma caused by actually seeing the flash from a 22 firearm and then seeing his dad's body drop in our back yard. As a single mother with 2 children, ages three and five at the time of their father's suicide, I did not know what to do and all of my family and friends disappeared. People did not know how to deal with suicide as it happened 25 years ago – suicide was taboo, something we did not talk about. All I could feel was guilt, hurt, and sadness. At the funeral, I sat in the front pew by myself in a large catholic church, in a small town, and at full capacity – my family and his family sat behind me. My daughter was running around the casket with her cousin ... I was in a cloud of despair. After 15 minutes, a dear friend of mine, Carmen, from out of province, came to sit with me and held me tight.

[Read more ...](#)



Please gift to our community of Hope
Two Steps Forward... Journeys from Prison to Community
A minimum amount of \$20 per book – Thank you