

January 2011

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Upcoming Events

February 1, 2011
1:30 - 2:00 pm
Spirit of Volunteerism Awards Program Launch Webinar

ASIST Training for SW Ontario
April 2 - 3, 2011
In London for London, Sarnia, and Windsor DCs

National Volunteer Week
April 10 - 16, 2011

DCO Visioning Day
May 2 and 3, 2011
Niagara Region

Working effectively with Challenging Callers
4 Wednesdays in May starting May 4, 2011

2011 Spirit of Volunteerism - Nominations Encouraged

The 2011 Spirit of Volunteerism nomination process has a new component this year - a webinar launch event! This new addition to the program, developed by the Volunteer Management Committee, will provide those centre staff responsible for the selection of nominees and the preparation of their nominations with an opportunity to refresh their understanding of program guidelines and the rating guide.

Committee member, Jenn Tedford, calls this a 'cheerleading event'. "We want the centres to have an opportunity to discuss the process with the committee, ask questions, and rejuvenate everyone's enthusiasm for this very worthy recognition process", she says.

During the webinar, the results of a survey completed by the member centres will be shared with the membership, as well as some changes in the nomination/selection criteria.

Leadership and staff of all DCO member centres are encouraged to nominate for the 2011 Spirit of Volunteerism Awards. In its 4th year, this provincial program recognizes the significant contribution of volunteers to the provision of distress and crisis line services throughout the province.

Each year, a member centre can nominate up to three candidates (2 adults and 1 young adult volunteer) for their exemplary volunteer service and allows us to acknowledge our often 'unsung' heroes.

All nominees are profiled in a special edition of the e-News+Views published during National Volunteer Week - April 10th to April 16th and celebrated during the awards ceremony in mid-September 2011.

To read about the wonderful nominees and recipients from past years, go to the [DCO website](#) and tab to the news section.

Nomination deadline: 8 pm., Wednesday, March 23rd, 2011.

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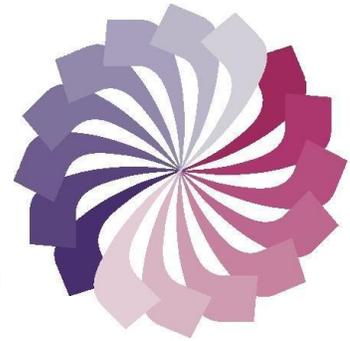


New content each month on www.learningforums.ca Get a password through your volunteer coordinator.

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DCO Visioning and Strategic Planning

In 2008 the board, staff and membership of Distress Centres Ontario engaged in a multi-month process to set its vision and priorities for the upcoming three to five years. The process produced a vision that all agreed on and provided the board and staff of DCO with 'a road map' for the programs and products it should develop for the membership.



The priorities were set as:

1. Significantly increase awareness of Distress Centre access points and of the value of DCO amongst key groups that need our services or can help us strategically in realizing our social objectives
2. Strengthen and expand training, education and information - sharing opportunities for DCO and association member staff and volunteers
3. Establish integrated help lines province-wide and use new technologies to increase the number of service access points for Ontarians
4. Launch a Distress Centre Accreditation Process in order to accredit all members centres by 2011
5. Continue to expand the resource capacity of the Distress Centre network; with the emphasis on strengthening financial support, organizational development and human resources
6. Increase and solidify the membership of Distress Centres Ontario and the support provided to that membership

During the following years, the membership has participated in moving many of the priorities forward and has been updated on our mutual progress during the various membership networking events. The board has maintained an eye on the directions of the association through an integrated operating plan review each year.

During 2011 we hope to engage all the membership in re-defining the vision for the association for the following three to five years and to re-establish the priorities that will guide the association and its membership towards their shared vision.

During the months of February and March the board will review the engagement process. Then the membership will have the opportunity to provide input and comment on the services and programs via telephone interviews and surveys. Subsequently, with the benefit of further environmental scanning, the membership will meet and have an opportunity to discuss the future.

Please stay tuned for specific details on the process, however we hope everyone can book the dates for the in-person discussion dates in their

calendars. (Exact time and location in the Niagara area will be confirmed later)

SAVE THE DATE! MAY 2nd and MAY 3rd, 2011

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How Sarnia coped with December's state of emergency

Mid-December saw snowstorms so intense that south-western Ontario was thrown into a state of emergency. The Weather Network reported a "red alert" issued from Sarnia to London December 14, 15, and 16, due to heavy snowfall and zero visibility.

Highway 402, linking the two cities, was closed down due to countless accidents and pile-ups.

360 vehicles were reported stranded on the highway, and travellers had to wait in their cars to be rescued by police, military helicopters, and snowmobilers.

"People from all walks of life on their regular commute to work from London to Sarnia were caught on the highway," says **Donna Martin of Sarnia's Family Counselling Services**, "including the ED of a children's services agency, doctors, psychiatrists, and an addictions counsellor."

Martin relayed the tale of the addiction counsellor who was caught in the blizzard and directed to leave the highway as officials were trying to shut it down; due to the low visibility, she was completely disoriented and not sure where she would end up. She drove into the community of Watford, somewhere between Sarnia and London and just south of Highway 402, found an open variety store and asked if she could sleep there for the night. She remembered that she knew a couple in the town and walked through the snow to find them. She was welcomed with open arms and stayed in the couple's home for two nights and three days as the storm continued.

Many people trapped in Watford and the local community pulled together and brought food, water, sleeping bags, and other provisions for the stranded motorists. At least one local church and the Watford Community Centre opened its doors to strangers trapped by the weather.

Communities were greatly impacted by the storm and a lot of businesses and agencies had to shut down, including local hospitals where staff couldn't make it in, and Sarnia's Family Counselling Centre that shut down completely.

"It was important to have the continuity of services available to those who needed them during the emergency," says Martin.



A view of Hwy 402 during December's extreme weather.

Thanks to technology and a solid back-up plan, the Family Counselling Centre, though closed, was able to maintain their community services via the Professional Answering Service that transferred hotline calls to volunteers who took distress line calls from their homes, and iCarol, the web-based database program that proved indispensable during the crisis.

Though the call volumes to the distress line did not change, the calls that Sarnia volunteers took were from people concerned for those trapped in their cars on the highway.

The iCarol system allowed Ms Martin to monitor distress line calls and volunteers were able to access call reports and make outbound calls to maintain the centre's Tel-Check program, which makes 85 calls a day to local seniors and the disabled, to remind them to take their medication, lock their doors, and shut off appliances, while checking up on them and making sure they are alright.

"Sarnia's committed volunteers were more than happy to work from home and continue with their community services," Ms Martin says, "we just buck up and come together in whatever way we can, emergency or not."

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Fundraising in the On-Line Environment

Most Distress Centres in our association have a link on their web-pages for on-line donations. Whether it is a generic link to a donations portal or a special designed link corresponding to an activity fundraiser, we know that the use of this form of fundraising is increasing.



We also know how important fundraising is to the sustainability of our membership's organizations. Some of you receive over 50% of your operating funds from this source.

Recently, the Learning Centre at the Network for Good website offered up their perspective on the issue with an article they titled "7 Principles for Building Better Relationships Online".

An excerpt from that article offers these helpful hints:

1. Be Interesting. Create great content. Think of new ways to tell your great stories, like using video instead of a written testimony. Try to inject humour if it's appropriate. Engage your supporters and create conversations. This should not be a one-way street.

2. Be Interested. Interested in your supporters. Make sure their online experience is easy and built for them. Personalize and segment your communications. Don't send an email about volunteering for an event to a

donor who lives in another state. Let them know you care about them and their lives.

3. **Be Generous.** Focus on what you give your supporters, not on what they give you. Give them the chance to do extraordinary good through your organization. Give them credit for the good that happens. Give them memorable stories about the difference they made.

4. **Be Honest.** Share both your successes and your failures. Make sure your financial records are easily accessible as well. Transparency should not just be a buzz word.

5. **Be Clear.** People need to know what to do when they get to your site. Make it easy for them to sign up for a newsletter or donate or contact you. Provide actual contact information and not just a contact form. Have a person outside the organization test your site to see if it's as easy to use as you think it is.

6. **Be Brave.** Try something new - whether it's a new fundraising campaign or experimenting with mobile giving. Be innovative. Don't be afraid to fail or put yourself out there.

7. **Be Grateful.** Say "Thank you." A lot. Call, write and email your donors. Find your champions and show them extreme love.

As in our personal or one-to-one fundraising efforts, donors need to feel appreciated and a valued part of our organizations.

Adapted from an article by Jocelyn Harmon and Katya Andersen; Jan 11, 2011; Network for Good, Learning Centre, A Fundraising Guide for the Overworked Nonprofit.

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How to Work More Effectively with Challenging Callers Encore

Mark your calendars! DCO Learning Forums is pleased to offer another opportunity to participate in the exceptional four-week training sessions delivered by webinar last

November. **Gilles Brideau**, Bilingual Program Consultant from the Sudbury offices of the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, will repeat his presentation of *How to Work More Effectively with Challenging Callers - Using Motivational Interviewing Techniques*, Wednesday evenings beginning May 4th - 25th 2011.

Participants from the fall session found Gilles to be an excellent speaker; found the information very relevant to the work they do on the crisis/distress lines; stated they loved the format and found it convenient to attend from home using their telephone and internet connection.

In early April watch for notices for registration in the Learning Forums newsletter *Learning in Partnership*, in the DCO's e-News +Views, and/or in your Outlook email.



LEARNING FORUMS
FROM DISTRESS CENTRES ONTARIO

In the meantime, mark your calendars and plan to participate so that you don't miss out on this valuable professional development opportunity!

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