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**Sharing CONNECTIONS**

**By News Canada**

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A model project seeks to spread its success

(NC)—Most Canadians know Lynn Johnston as an award-winning cartoonist of the popular comic strip For Better or For Worse. But to her neighbours in North Bay, Ontario, she is the guardian angel of a locally based youth drop-in centre program called CONNECTIONS.

After witnessing first-hand the profound changes that many young people in the program were experiencing, Johnston took the project under her wing in 1997, committing \$600,000 of her own money over a ten year period. "The thing that really made me dedicate this amount of time, effort and money to the group was something that occurred when I attended one of the graduations," recalls Johnston.

"I sat down at the table and didn't know anybody. All the kids were different: blonde, dark, Native – they were all so different. Yet they introduced each other to me as brothers and sisters, and told me they were family. That sold me."

The CONNECTIONS program helps high school students to actively pursue their dreams while steering them clear of possible trouble. The program has made a demonstrable impact on these young Northbayites, which has, in turn, endeared it to the community at large.

Program Director Janet Humble has watched the project grow from a small volunteer project in 1997 to a model crime prevention initiative that offers a holistic blend of services for students who have a hard time fitting in with mainstream high school culture. Some of these students have learning difficulties, some have problems at home, some are bullied, and others are simply shy and reclusive.

CONNECTIONS offers these young people an environment of acceptance where they feel valued and free to share their feelings, instead of isolated and vulnerable to other risks.

## Sharing CONNECTIONS

"When CONNECTIONS first started, it was a stay-in-school initiative put in place to respond to the enormous number of drop-outs we were having," recalls Humble. "We got kids involved by having them volunteer in the community. Through these volunteer activities, we were hooking them up with potential employers, teaching them about punctuality and other skills, and hoping that some of these skills would transfer over to school."

CONNECTIONS creates a sense of family – a sense of connection – through four key activities: volunteering, recreational/physical activity (golf, curling, horseback riding, and canoe trips) mentoring (students are matched with role models and college/university students who provide career guidance and help with school work) and Fast-Break to Learning (students receive a good breakfast at school, one morning per week, during which they discuss issues such as anger management and study skills).

"It's a way to get people through school, into careers, focused, and into a whole new community of peers," explains Johnston.

An obvious success in North Bay, organizers now plan to expand into neighbouring communities, to test whether the project is transportable.

For details on how Canadian towns and cities are working together to reduce and prevent crime, and how your community can get involved, visit

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### **Learning to Make Connections**

**By Paul "the soaring" Siegel**

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Marketing may be considered to be a means of making connections. What every marketer must do is learn with whom to connect and how to connect in order to best serve his prospects and expand his business.

The Internet is the best medium invented to–date for making connections. There are lots of other media. But none offer the fast, easy and private methods for establishing connections and building useful relationships.

Some powerful companies have not learned how to do this on the Net. Recently a few members of the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) have tried to hurt peer–to–peer music–sharing systems by signing on and offering spoofed CDs. These CDs have periods of empty space or ruined music. The idea is to drive people to "legitimate" outlets.

Now I ask You, Is this a way to make a connection with someone? Is this a way to gain customers? Is this a way to be helpful?

While RIAA members are stuck in the past, others who understand that the Internet is a learning medium, use services, such as BroadProspect, to learn how to make connections. Here is an excerpt from an email I received from them:

"BroadProspect (<http://www.BroadProspect.com>) is a place where professionals list their senior industry connections on an ANONYMOUS BASIS for FREE, and become an anonymous connection maker. Companies shop online for a specific industry relationship and communicate with the ANONYMOUS connection maker. When the connection maker is satisfied with the information, he/she can establish a client – or goodwill – relationship with the business entity."

This outfit understands that the Internet is not merely an information highway but a learning network. They have developed a method to enable business people, not merely to gather information, but to learn about other businesses they would like to partner or otherwise work with.

I have no business relationship with BroadProject. I write about it because I think it may be of use to some of you.

To be successful on the Net, look for ways to broaden your connections.

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