



# Annual Report

September 1, 2010 - August 31, 2011

## MCS Mission Statement:

*“Providing leadership to empower our communities by advocating and promoting integration and inclusion of our Low German ethnicities serving the broader community partnering with other agencies, businesses and churches responding to the needs of all.”*

## Executive Director’s Report

When human need is met with the appropriate resources, Jesus is there. (Matthew 25:31-45). We have spent another year working at “faithfully linking resources with need”. We are blessed that in Ontario, faith communities, agencies and governments can partner to help those that can’t help themselves. We can work together to empower people so that more of them can help themselves and in turn help others.

This has been a momentous year for MCS in a number of ways and we are on the threshold of more significant opportunities. For 30 years Mennonite Central Committee Ontario (MCCO) provided services in Aylmer. For the last 3 years MCCO “walked” with MCS to assure viability and a smooth transition to full local MCS ownership. This last year MCS received its status as a charitable organization with the Canada Revenue Agency. This means that MCS can now give donation receipts for tax purposes and MCCO and MCS were able to complete the transitions agreed to 3 years ago.

After amalgamation between Aylmer and Area Inter-Mennonite Community Council and MCC to form MCS, it was time to do a thorough look at how to best deliver services. Henry Hildebrand, in his review of MCS, suggested a new direction. Donna Lunn is a fantastic consultant who has walked with the staff and board to lead in a strategic study and in its implementation. She was also able to procure some funding that made this study possible. Change is never easy and never complete, but is necessary for growth to occur. The board and staff have worked hard at re-organizing to more effectively respond to the community and staff needs.

One of the changes is the creation of ‘departments’ (Client Services, Store, FESPA, Radio and Support Services ) with a manager in charge of each department. This will enable the Executive Director to spend more time to be out of the office and build the crucial links to existing and new community partners. It also increases the capacity of staff and allows for easier succession planning.



## MCS Board of Directors 2010-2011

Representative	Church	Position
Abe Harder	EMMC	Chair
Bill Loewen	OCC	Director
Cornelius Knelsen	RFM	Director
Frank Martens	OCC	Director
John Unger	SMC	Director
John Wall	EMMC	Director
Lily Hiebert Rempel	MCCO	Representative
Margie Sawatzky	EMC	Director
Peter Penner	SMC	Director
Peter Wiens	RFM	Vice-Chair
Tina Giesbrecht	EMC	Director
Trudy Hiebert	SMC	Secretary/Treasurer

*\*\*(alphabetical by first name)*

## Annual Auction for Relief: Quick Facts

- \* Highest sales at food booths went to the Fish Fry organized by EMMC Aylmer raising \$2,332
- \* Total food both sales: \$12,850
- \* Total Net Income: \$32,272

### Other exciting initiatives occurring are:

- A new website will be publicly available soon
- The radio will be able to ‘podcast’ and do live streaming
- A socio-economic impact study of MCS in relation to the wider community is beginning now and it will be very interesting to see the results
- We have provided funding for the partnership between the library and MCS to continue
- The Settlement Stories Quilt Tour will be available by late spring

## De Brigj CHPD 105.9FM

CHPD De Brigj is happy to report that overall advertisements went up by 9%. We contracted pre-recorded advertisements from 76 businesses and farms and well over 250 one-time advertisements (not pre-recorded) during the year.

In January we completed the Audio Project consisting of 3-5 minute segments on the topics of Peace, Justice and Mutual Aid. This was made possible through a one-time grant received from Mennonite Savings & Credit Union during the previous year. Ontario Trillium Foundation also granted funding for the purchase of new equipment. The Elgin County Library continued with their program, *Check It In - Check It Out* throughout the year.

Programs produced on-site:

- Daily Bible readings
- *Tüs em Heim* (In the Home)
- *Kjinjastund* (Children's Hour) –Thursday & Saturday
- Advertisements, announcements & sponsorships
- *Dit 'n Daut* (This 'n That)
- *Waut Passiet* (What's Happening)

New partnerships developed this year:

- Children's program, *Kjinjastund*, shared with Rio Mensaje, Paraguay station
- Women's program, *Tüs em Heim*, sent to Casa Siemens, Mexico station
- Family & Children's Services of Elgin County, partnered with De Brigj to run series of *Tips for Parents*
- News segment, *Waut Passiet*, forwarded to partners at radio stations, settlement agencies and interested individuals for a total of 53 recipients

Local groups continued to share their talent (i.e. Island Harmony, John Banman, Barb Peters and Annie Klippenstein) for which we are grateful. The *Music by Request* on Wednesday night was one of the most listened to portions. The 12 on-going Canadian and international partnerships were an important connection because of the transient nature of the Low German population around the globe.

## Annual Mennoniten Treffen

Interest from the community prompted the MCS board and staff to invite Al Friesen from Enrich Ministries as guest speaker for Mennoniten Treffen 2010.

On September 26, 2010 Al spoke to 600 people. The evening sessions (September 26 - October 2) attracted approximately 250 men, women and youth per night. Topics of discussion included parenting strategies for families with children of all ages. We were excited that 270 youth with parents attended the session targeting teenagers. Various local singers were also invited to perform at each session such as the Heide Brothers, The Country Wolves, The Froese Family and the choir from Mount Salem Christian School. Al Friesen was able to provide counselling to 30 individuals during the week outside of the public sessions.

Proceeds from the event were allocated to the Volunteer Driver Program. The committee was thankful for the opportunities this event provided.

## Aylmer Community Thrift Store

Store staff are thankful for material wealth in our country. This past year, the store has been blessed with many quality donations from the community that allow us to cater to the many different kinds of people who come to shop. We are happy to report an overall increase of sales. We broke a record of highest weekly sales when we sold over \$5,000 worth of goods in one week. This is an indication that the store is well supported in the community. Out of our blessings we were able to forward \$28,811.49 to Mennonite Central Committee Ontario.

The store appeals to many types of people: those that cannot afford new items, those looking for a bargain, antique shoppers, those consciously deciding to shop used, and people who order blankets that volunteers sew. Individuals and families with young children (sometimes up to 12 children in one family) were given gift certificates to purchase items free of charge. This year we issued 21 certificates helping 63 individuals. It was a blessing to be able to give back globally through MCC and to assist needy families locally.

We had many volunteers that came on a weekly basis to sew, sort, price, clean and operate the cash register. Without their commitment and the donations from the community we would not have been able to operate the store.



## Volunteer Driver Program

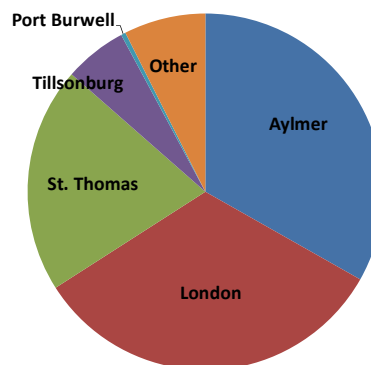
Throughout the year 15 volunteers were available to drive clients to appointments at medical and social services offices. Often drivers also served as translators. In total:

- 521 trips were logged to various locations
- 2,223 hours were spent with individuals and families attending various types of appointments
- 27,536 kilometres were driven during this fiscal year

Of the clients needing translators and/or drivers:

- 44% were on income support through Ontario Disability Support Program
- 16% were on income support through Ontario Works
- 40% were gainfully employed or home-makers

Trips by Destination



## Determined to Succeed

A recent newcomer to Canada came into the Employment Office and made it known that he would like to attend skills training to get his AZ and Heavy Equipment License. While he was working in the field, he was laid off when work slowed because he was not licensed. So, we began the sometimes complicated process for him to be able to attend training. He could barely speak English and could not read or write, having only come to Canada in November of 2010. Even though I could communicate with him in Low German, everyone else he had to deal with could not. He was not deterred by this, nor was he deterred by the fact that he would need to attend formal classes involving reading and writing to get his AZ beginners. He was determined to use whatever services necessary to succeed. Employment Services supported him through the entire process and he did very well. He earned his license, is now working full time, and was very pleased with our employment services and supports. *~~submitted by Employment Services staff*

### Employment Services

Clients accessed Employment Services for a variety of reasons. Many explored options of returning to school with 15 clients being referred to educational upgrading and skills training this year. Some of these successfully completed their training while others are still attending class. Staff saw a definite increase in the number of Low German clients and they are increasingly working with a counselor on a continuous basis.

There was a huge increase in the number of clients who had resumes developed. Clients increasingly understand the purpose of a resume when applying for a job. The goal set out by the MTCU is 75 closed Service Units per year and we are addressing ways to achieve this with things such as job fairs, apprenticeship info sessions, and more advertising on our Low German radio station.

- 31% of the 204 open files have Low German background
- 300 resumes were developed averaging one per day from the Low German community
- 50% of the 15,986 clients accessing services during this fiscal year have a Low German background

### Family Education & Support Project Aylmer

The FESPA 2010-2011 year brought challenges and rewards. One of the biggest challenges was staff changes. The rewards were real as we were able to observe the mothers and children advance in their learning and also express their appreciation and thanks for the programs.

- 54 women attended the FESPA School learning English as a Second Language and life skills
- 60 children attended the School Readiness program
- 20 new women registered for our Mam&Bebi program
- The family support worker assisted with 252 appointments
- 13 volunteers gave 183 hours of their time to our FESPA School

One of the ESL teachers wrote in her report, "It was very rewarding when, about half-way through the book, suddenly the suspense got to be too much for the women to wait another week to find out what happened next, so I discarded my lesson plan and we spent the rest of the school day reading!"

### Visitation/Out-Reach

The overall objectives of this program include visitation, settlement and outreach:

- Connect with newcomers who are finding it difficult to adapt to and relate to Canadian society
- Connect newcomers with spiritual resources, especially those who find it difficult to feel at home in a Canadian church
- Listen to and encourage clients who need to express feelings and frustrations
- Receive referrals from other staff to assist at medical appointments outside of the office so that clients are able to cope better on their own
- Receive referrals from churches and families to visit individuals either in their homes, at the office or in a neutral place
- Identify clients that are not coping well independently and do not know how to navigate social systems in their new country; some families are isolated even after much time has elapsed from their initial entry into Canada

How goals were accomplished:

- Drove clients to and interpreted at medical and legal appointments, banks, post offices, shopping centres and the Corner Cupboard
- Spent time with clients to increase their sense of self-worth
- Welcomed people to a community where they have chosen to make their home



*Making new friends and learning English in the FESPA pre-school room.*



## Settlement/Documentation Program

**Citizenship:** 26% of the activities consisted of assisting clients to obtain Canadian Citizenship status, assisting with correspondence from Citizenship and Immigration Canada and answering questions about eligibility.

**Immigration:** 25% of activities involved assisting clients in obtaining Permanent Resident status and/or maintain temporary status (e.g. Visitor Records, Work Permits).

**OHIP/Finances/Family Benefits:** 14 % of activities involved assisting clients to obtain health coverage, Canada Child Tax Benefits, and manage correspondence from Canada Revenue Agency and other financial institutions.

The remaining 35% included a variety of services such as housing, employment, schooling, Social Insurance Numbers, etc.

The vast majority of clients accessing services were families where at least one of the members has a direct claim to Citizenship by birth to a Canadian parent. Therefore, one or more members in the family needed to apply for Permanent Resident status under the family class option and maintain their temporary status.

Bill-C37, the act that amended the Citizenship Act, continued to affect clients who would have needed to retain their citizenship prior to their 28<sup>th</sup> birthday. Those who fall into this category inquired about the changes to make sure they understood the legislation. Clients who failed to retain their citizenship prior to their 28<sup>th</sup> birthday are exploring options to resume citizenship.

An interesting current trend for second and subsequent generation Canadians is to come to Canada for the birth of their children and then return to a foreign country. Others are using the immigration process to sponsor these minors.

## I am Canadian

Trina is a woman in her early 60's whose Canadian-born father and American mother decided to move to Mexico in the 1920's. As an adult she and her husband decided to return to Canada to join their own grown children who had immigrated some years ago. Health concerns and a lack of financial stability also contributed to their decision. She travelled to Canada on a Mexican passport with the understanding that upon arrival in Canada, as a Canadian, she would have full access to services. Unfortunately, like many clients, the process of applying and receiving Proof of Canadian Citizenship proved to be an arduous one. Having grown up on a farm receiving minimal schooling, Trina does not read or write well in any language, never mind in English, so accessing services of any kind in Ontario was difficult. Added to that, without her Citizenship Card, she did not qualify for a Canadian Passport, OHIP nor a SIN card. Finally, after a little over two years of waiting, Trina received her Citizenship card in the mail. She was *overjoyed* that she at last had the proof she needed. ~-submitted by Settlement Staff

## Funding Sources

- ◆ Member churches: EMC, EMMC, OCC, SMC, RFM
- ◆ United Way
- ◆ Ministry of Training, Colleges & Universities
- ◆ Immigrant Settlement Adaptation Program
- ◆ Newcomer Settlement Program
- ◆ Donations from individuals
- ◆ Advertisers/Sponsorships
- ◆ MCS Fundraising Events
- ◆ Ontario Trillium Foundation
- ◆ Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program
- ◆ Ministry of Community & Social Services
- ◆ Community Action Program for Children

## Financial Information at a Glance

