

Stella Burry Community Services of St. John's, Nfld. wins national "Universal City" Award

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Toronto, Ontario – St. John's, Newfoundland is a "Universal City" thanks to a 30-year mission by Stella Burry Community Services (SBCS) to create a city that people "down on their luck" can live in with the security of a friend, a home and a job. For its years of dedication and city building, SBCS will receive the Canadian Urban Institute's (CUI) 2009 Universal City Award on June 5 at the Urban Leadership Awards (ULA) in Toronto.

"SBCS has listened to what the people in their community need and created meaningful and powerful ways for people to be active members of their city. Their work has made St. John's a better place for everyone who lives there, not just the people who participate in their programs," said CUI President and CEO Glen Murray.

The 100 staff at SBCS embrace the vision of founder Dr. Stella Burry who was a tireless advocate for social justice and community reforms in St. John's from the 1930s until her death in 1991. SBCS provides programs and services for adults and youth with mental health issues, limited or no work history, involvement with the justice system, low levels of literacy and those without support systems to live in the community. Each year their programs serve well over 500 people, ensuring that they can access safe affordable housing, counseling and treatment programs, and skill development opportunities and employment programs that will enable them to become employed.

About 500 elite members of Canada's who's who of city building will gather in Toronto on June 5 at the Royal York Hotel to honour Stella Burry Community Services (<http://www.stellaburry.ca/>) and 17 other groups and individuals (www.canurb.com/awards/ula/leadershipawards2009.php) across the country who are making Canadian cities exciting and dynamic places to live and work.

For Jocelyn Greene, Executive Director of Stella Burry Community Services, this award is recognition of the principles which provide the foundation for all of the organization's activities.

"We're so delighted and so honored by this award because it reinforces what we have long believed – when you help people address the barriers that prevent them from being full participants in the life of their city, it improves that city for everyone living there. Every day, we witness remarkable transformations in the lives of our participants when they get what they need to become included; when they get understanding and compassion; safe, affordable housing; and opportunities for employment," Green said.

"Our philosophy in the development of affordable housing has been about integration with the larger community. There is tremendous pride in the built heritage of St. John's. Our reconstruction of two heritage buildings in the city's centre has garnered incredible good will and also done much to reduce stigma. So we improve the neighborhoods we move into and people are proud to live in these buildings," said Green.

The Urban Leadership Awards (ULA) Program honours Canadian individuals, groups and organizations that have made significant contributions to improving the quality of life in Canada's cities and urban regions. The 2009 ULA's have been made possible by the generous support of a variety of corporate sponsors including Gold Sponsors Loblaw Properties Ltd., Scotiabank, TD Bank Financial Group, the Ontario Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure, Environics, the City of Toronto, GE Canada and the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE). Community Builder Sponsors include Toronto Hydro, Local 27 of the Union of Carpenters and Allied Workers, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and Great West Life, London Life and Canada Life Assurance Companies.

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The judges for this year's awards included Canadians who have dedicated their lives to public service and who have detailed knowledge of the local stories and triumphs of Canadians in their home communities. Under the chairmanship of the Hon. David Crombie, the committee included; Al Duerr, former Mayor of Calgary; Newfoundland's Dr. Linda Inkpen; Dr. Antonia Maioni, Director of the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada; John Kim Bell, founder of the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation; Ms. Mitzie Hunter, a Vice President at Goodwill Industries; and, Dr. Nola Kate Seymoar, President and CEO, International Centre for Sustainable Cities, based in British Columbia.

The Canadian Urban Institute (CUI) is a non-profit organization dedicated to enhancing the quality of life in urban areas across Canada and throughout the world.

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Some facts about Stella Burry Community Services

RESIDENTIAL PROGRAMS:

Naomi Centre is an emergency shelter for young women 16-30 in need of safe supportive temporary housing ranging from a few days up to 4 months where they can receive counseling during their stay.

Carew Lodge offers 14 self-contained units with shared kitchen supported with community development workers who provide tenants with education and employment needs and advocacy.

Emmanuel House provides a residential recovery program for adults with social and emotional problems including victims of abuse, mental health issues, addictions and those who have been in conflict with the law.

Community Support Program provides comprehensive support to adults with complex mental health issues who are living in the community successfully.

EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION PROGRAMS include:

HOPEworks is the embodiment of the *Walking with People* philosophy of SBCS and includes 48 weeks of preparation for the work place with group counseling, supportive placement in non-profit organization and private sector work placement.

New Beginnings ABE is a formal education program that provides Adult Basic Education to assist participants to obtain basic levels of education and literacy.

New Beginnings provides training in technical areas with individual counseling, including professional training in wood working/carpentry, food services, home maintenance and repairs and includes career counseling.

CanDo! Employment Now is a skills discovery program for adults with multiple barriers to employment. It provides opportunities for paid work in short term, supported individual and group employment placements within the community.

Social Enterprise Initiatives support the work experience of participants in the food services program with work experience at the Hungry Heart Cafe. SBCS also operates the Trades Helper program which provides training and employment for those entering the construction/carpentry field.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

SBCS now has a real estate portfolio that includes 17 properties. The organization owns and/or manages 85 rental units of affordable housing in St. John's.