

# IMPACT

M2W2 NEWSLETTER • FALL 2022

## M2W2

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## NOLA: SUPPORT FOR STARTING OVER

**W**hen you start over with nothing, the little things can add up. Obtaining a phone, opening a bank account, and acquiring identification cards can occupy a lot of mental energy – enough to pull focus away from the big stuff: Staying sober. Staying out of prison.

Brandy (not her real name) was transferred to Fraser Valley Institution for Women (FVI) from another province. While she had spent time in the provincial corrections system, this was her first time in federal prison. She was there for three and a half years. Nearing parole, Brandy began treatment for substance use disorder.

“I had lost two people in my life that meant a lot to me, and that’s what set me off. I was stuck in addiction for years, not wanting to deal with the grief.”

Brandy knew it was time to make changes. “Anyone who’s been in the justice system knows how to coast and tell them what they want to hear,” she said. “I told my parole officer that I really want to change. I want to be honest with myself.”

She asked for help getting her identification and bank accounts set up. Her PO referred her to No One Leaves Alone (NOLA). That’s when she met Allyson Johnson, a Program Leader at M2W2.

“I tried to open a bank account,” Brandy said, “but they didn’t accept my CSC [Correctional Service Canada] card as

*It gives you a better feeling about yourself when someone else believes in you...*

an ID. Allyson drove me to get photos [for a suitable ID] and helped pay for the photos.”

Allyson also helped Brandy get clothing and a phone, which Brandy said was especially important. “I am taking my sobriety very seriously, and I wanted to have a working phone to have easy access to my support system or if I want to get out of a situation.”



Brandy said that if it wasn't for NOLA's support, she would be worrying about meeting her basic needs. "That stress isn't good when you are trying to work through your sobriety."

## **PRACTICAL SUPPORT AND A SAFE SPACE**

In addition to practical support, Brandy also found emotional support through NOLA. As Allyson and Brandy spent time together, they built a relationship.

"It felt good," she said. "Allyson connected with me, and she understood. It was easy to talk to her. It gives you a better feeling about yourself when someone else believes in you and wants to help you get where you want to go."

And where is it that Brandy wants to go? Back home to her family.

In August, Brandy transferred back to her home province, where she'll complete her parole at a halfway house. She's already applied for housing, so when her statutory release date comes, she'll have somewhere to live.

She plans to finish her Grade 12 and take a carpentry course. She's looking forward to spending more time with her kids and mother. "My mom's getting old and I want to make her proud," she said.

She also wants to pursue creative endeavours: art, tattooing, and native bead work.

## **GOING FORWARD... WITH A POSITIVE FRAME OF MIND**

"NOLA has really helped me a lot," Brandy said. "There have been times when I've gotten out and wanted to make that change, but I didn't have the resources."

According to Brandy, taking part in NOLA helps her stay positive. "I've never succeeded on my own. The help I've received from Allyson has helped me succeed. It has taken stress away and allowed me to focus on my sobriety."

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## **A SNAPSHOT OF LARRY ANTLER**

by Gerrit and Connie deJong

**T**his summer, Larry Antler passed away at the age of 71. We have known him as an M2 friend for 17 years, and we were saddened to hear of his passing. The Saturday prior, we were privileged to take him out for lunch at McDonald's where he ate a hamburger and a sundae. We were shocked to see Larry looking so emaciated. He must have had a premonition of the end of his life for he had made a will and left money for others in need at his halfway house.

One of his dreams was to visit the grave of his daughter who passed away at the age of 16. When she died, he was not allowed out to attend her funeral. This was painful for Larry. He never had the chance to say a final farewell and felt that he had no real closure.

As his friends, we felt his pain and desire to visit that gravesite. And we imagine ourselves being in that same spot where Larry was. We were his only friends. Larry did not have contact with any of his children or family members for years and years. Forsaken and all alone.

We first met Larry in 2005 through the M2 program, and we developed a friendship over the years. Larry made us feel very comfortable and he had a good sense of humour. This always made for an easy visit. We looked forward to our coffee nights together where we mutually shared something of each other's journey.

These visits are indeed highlights in both our lives as these were also times of encouraging one another. He impacted us when he made a good, determined decision to stop smoking. As a result, he felt better. This makes us realize that our lives impact each other in more ways than we often know.

He appreciated our visits very much as we were the only contacts he had with the outside world. Larry lived with his hopes and dreams, as we all do. But he also realized that life is short.

Larry often reflected on his past life – on what was and what could have been. But incarceration was his reality. His short-term goal was

moving to a minimum-security institution. In 2021, he was instead granted day parole on humanitarian considerations.

This is just a snapshot of Larry's life. He was a person who sought to find meaning and purpose. He was a fellow human being. Thus, Larry was always on our prayer list. It was our privilege to walk with him through this stage of his life and to share with him the gospel, our only hope in life and death. We all need to find Jesus Christ, our Creator. We need to connect with Him and walk with Him by faith in our everyday life.

We are not the Holy Spirit, so we can't make that change happen for others. But we are agents of God's Kingdom, and we can share hope and point people in the right direction. God works through us in His way and in His time. All we need to do is be faithful and true in our calling.

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## NEW NAME. SAME VALUES.

**A**t the annual meeting at the end of September, our membership voted to change the name of our organization from M-2/W-2 Association - Restorative Christian Ministries to M2W2.

While the hyphens and forward slash are gone, our core mission and values remain. Our purpose is to answer God's call in Matthew 25:35-36 and build trust-filled relationships that bring value, restoration, and hope to every person. We are excited about our new name, and we hope you are too!

Earlier this year, the Board of Directors asked Executive Director Raymond Robyn to form a committee to review the name. "In this process," he said, "I realized the importance of having a name that's recognized by donors, volunteers, churches, nonprofits, and government. To our friends we are known as M2W2, so we felt that we didn't need to make a major change."

According to Raymond, the new name is another step in the evolution of our organization. "We are building on the vision of those who came before us."

Over our 56 years, we've had four different names, and this new one is part of an ongoing effort to remain relevant and stay connected with those we serve: people in prison, on parole, and reintegrating into the community.

While shorter and sleeker, the name M2W2 also links to the past; from here we can continue to build on the legacy of those who have gone before us and reach people in prison and on parole with life-changing support and mentorship.

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## THE EARLY DAYS

A LETTER FROM CO-FOUNDER ALICE CHAMBERS

**M**2W2 owes its beginning to Dick Simmons, an American pastor. While Dick was living in New York City, he was influenced by David Wilkerson and his book *The Cross and the Switchblade*, which describes his ministry among the youth of that great city.

After Dick and his family moved to Seattle, and sometime later, he heard about a young man in prison who had been



rejected by his family. In his loneliness, the young man was reaching out for someone to visit him. Touched by this need, Dick started to visit this young man. As a result of Dick sharing his faith, and the love he showed him, the

young man's life was changed. From this experience Dick had a vision to develop a prison visitation ministry.

By the late 1960s, it had spread across 11 states. Seeing the success of this ministry, Dick began to wonder about the possibility of introducing it to Canada. He made inquiries

and was told to contact Les Pritchard, a minister in New Westminster, BC. He phoned Les, shared his vision, and asked Les to arrange a meeting with him and several other local pastors.

One day in 1966, my husband, Cal Chambers, the pastor of First Presbyterian Church, received a phone call from Les, who informed him of his conversation with Dick. Subsequently a meeting took place in our home. Those present were Dick, Les, Cal, and, I believe, Major Cole of the Salvation Army. The pastors were very impressed by Dick's presentation. After a number of visits from Dick with other interested people, the program took shape here in the Vancouver area. It was called Job Therapy. Later it changed to M2 (Man to Man).

The first office was in a corner of the basement of First Presbyterian Church. For many years, Cal was involved with people who were struggling with alcoholism. Mel Cox was one of those people. Mel found sobriety after God changed his life and was a member of our congregation. He became the first secretary for Job Therapy. There was no budget in place yet to pay him, but at the time he was on unemployment insurance, so that took care of his salary until there were funds to support him.

As the work grew, the office moved to a small, rented house in downtown New Westminster. A Board formed, and Cal was chosen to be the Chair. The first volunteers were from the congregations of the first pastors that had met with Dick Simmons. About 10 to 11 men

came from each church, and they went in groups to visit people incarcerated at Haney Correctional Institution in Maple Ridge and at Oakalla in Burnaby. They met in groups and had discussions on various topics that came up. As time went on, some volunteers spoke in different churches, challenging the members to get involved as volunteers and to support the ministry financially.

Mel Cox had a close friend named Ted Halliday, and he and his wife, Dorothy, were very supportive of the ministry and would visit Mel at his office frequently. One day Mel told Dorothy that he felt women in prison might also be lonely and would welcome a visit. Dorothy had just sold her business and was feeling at loose ends. She had been challenged by what Mel had said, so she spoke to her friend, Lea Ash, and suggested that they both get involved.

Lea responded enthusiastically, and soon they were visiting women incarcerated at Oakalla and Twin Maples Farm for Women, a minimum-security facility located between Mission and Maple Ridge. It was at this time that M2 was changed to M2/W2 (Man to Man/Woman to Woman).

It has been my privilege to have witnessed the growth of M2W2. It started from such humble beginnings to become what it is today, located in such fine facilities and running so many meaningful programs. M2W2 has changed thousands of lives for the better. May the Lord continue to bless it and all those who serve in the ministry each day.



The first M2W2 volunteers visited people incarcerated at prisons including Oakalla in Burnaby, pictured here. Oakalla operated from 1912 to 1991. (Photos by Colin Stevens / Heritage Burnaby Archives)

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### LET'S END IMPRISONMENT, ONE PERSON AT A TIME

At M2W2 our vision is to end imprisonment, one person at a time. We pursue this vision by providing prison mentorship, community reintegration support, and opportunities for work experience. Learn more at [m2w2.com](http://m2w2.com)

### DONATE TO M2W2. MAKE A LASTING IMPACT.

Help us equip volunteers and expand our reach! Your gift will make an incredible impact!