

# THE CAVEAT REPORT

NEWS FROM CAVEAT CANADA FOR OUR FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS

October 2000

## Matty Baranovski: After the Memorial Service

### The Courage and Strength of Matty's Friends & Family

by Judy Kennedy, Principal  
Northview Heights Secondary School



Matty Baranovski

The burial has occurred. Shiva is over and so is the school Memorial Service. Students are back in regular attendance at classes and most of the extra counsellors, brought in to help, have left. But the pain is still there. In Matty's four semestered classes the empty desk is a constant reminder. No one will sit in it and no one can face removing it and moving the other desks forward. Every day his friends and teachers walk past his locker, now with a small memorial plaque affixed to the top, or gaze out into the courtyard at the freshly-planted magnolia tree donated in his memory.

The Backpack Patch campaign has started to raise money in his name for anti-violence programmes. Hundreds of thank-you cards have also been sent to those who supported us at school. But Matty's sixteenth birthday date is about to occur. Emotions rise to the surface as this day arrives. Matty's mother is surrounded by his

friends, who refuse to leave her alone on such a difficult day.

The pain goes on and on. You cannot lose someone you love, especially through senseless violence, and be able to work through the hurt and horror in a short time.

Every week there is at least one article — and often several — in the paper or on the airwaves about or comparing Matty's murder to a new incident involving violence. Each time his picture or name is used, emotions are rekindled.

Those of us closest to Matty — his family, his friends, his classmates, his teachers — struggle every day to keep going despite feeling a huge weight pressing down on us.

Thoughts of what he might have become, and what he would be doing if he were with us slam to the front of our consciousness and we are overcome again with pain, anger, and confusion.

The second crime that occurred, in my opinion, in the aftermath of Matty's death, was the unfair linking of Matty's attack in a park on a weekend to Matty's school and to all teenagers in general.

Matty's death raised the teen violence question all over again, and for many weeks after his death the teens who went to school with him were criticized and maligned as being collectively dangerous. No one wanted to hear statistics that teen violence was actually on the decline, nor did they want to print the real story of how wonderfully

Matty's friends, his family, his teachers, his school and his community were responding to collectively support one another.

Not one of the persons eventually arrested went to Matty's school, nor were they known to him, yet all of the students in Matty's school were seen as dangerous suspects. From this incident, it seemed all teens were blamed publicly in the media, accused of violent behaviour and disrespect for human life.

I have worked with teens for over thirty years, all day, every day. The teenage years are a time in their lives when their growth, emotions and identity are rapidly changing, but for 99% of them it is not a time when they forget their values, ignore their

**"You cannot lose someone you love, especially through senseless violence, and be able to work through the hurt and horror in a short time"**

conscience and — surprise, surprise — walk away from their religious teachings and beliefs. Yes, there are teenagers with religious beliefs!

When I remember back to last November, one of my first memories is how my students — those supposedly dangerous teenagers — opened their hearts to Mr. and Mrs.

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## Join us: Music & Cocktails with Michael Burgess!

### Les Misérables star to sing November 3 at the Royal York in Toronto

by Sandra Jones, Director of Development

Circle November 3rd on your calendar and come along with other CAVEAT supporters to enjoy an evening of entertainment by Michael Burgess, esteemed stage performer, who has appeared in *Les Misérables* and countless other wonderful musical productions.

This is our first-ever Toronto event, and we're not only thrilled

by this opportunity to break into 'the big city', but have secured the best location and one of the best performers that Toronto has to offer for CAVEAT's debut. The venue is the luxurious Imperial Room at the Royal York Hotel.

The evening kicks off with cocktails and hors d'œuvres at 7:00 p.m., with Michael's performance beginning at 8:00 p.m.

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## Burgess touched by A Love That Kills

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A champagne intermission is scheduled and after the second half of his concert, our star performer will stay and mingle with everyone over dessert, coffee and tea.

Proceeds will assist in developing a training manual titled *Tools of Awareness*. This manual will be used in conjunction with the award-winning **National Film Board** video *A Love That Kills*, which chronicles the life of **Monica Drake**, daughter of CAVEAT speaker Dawna Speers. Monica was murdered by her ex-boyfriend at the age of 19.

*A Love That Kills* and *Tools of Awareness* will assist young people in the prevention and reduction of relationship violence and peer harassment.

Michael Burgess is very supportive of this initiative; he has seen the video and agrees it is a very powerful documentary.

**Only a limited number of tickets will be sold to this exclusive event.**

You can order using VISA, MasterCard or cheque by phoning the CAVEAT offices at (905) 632-1733 or our toll free line at 1-800-6 CAVEAT. Tickets are \$100.00 each (\$50.00 charitable receipt).

We are proud to be co-hosting this fundraiser in co-operation with the Ontario Psychological Association.

# Our Work Continues...

## Executive Director's Report

by Dorothy Leonard

I am pleased to report that our President, **Priscilla de Villiers**, is back with us after her leave of absence. Priscilla is feverishly working on our upcoming Provincial Conference. We are right on course with our youth violence initiatives as you will read in our Director of Programmes report on page three.

This summer has been very hectic but has proved promising for our future. We were honoured that the **Royal Bank** supported our youth initiatives by organizing a barbeque, spear-headed by **Darlene Kosmack**. In spite of the intermittent rain, with canopies in place for customers and staff, the youth group **DREAM** entertained us with their songs. Some of the songs were about young people standing up against violence. We were all very proud of our youth and moved by their commitment to end violence.

June 11, 2000 was the annual day commemorating victims of crime. Attendees at

the Toronto ceremony included Ontario Attorney General **Jim Flaherty**, **Debbie Mahaffy**, and keynote speaker **Priscilla de Villiers**.

Over the summer, we have worked internally to update our database and our website.

Please visit us at [www.caveat.org](http://www.caveat.org) and send us your feedback.

In addition to working on our roundtable sessions, we have been busily planning our upcoming fundraising event, **Michael Burgess in Concert** (see page one).

We are grateful to **Judy Kennedy** and **Suzanne Smith** for their contributions to our newsletter. I'm sure you'll agree that their stories are inspiring, knowing that both have been deeply affected by violence and yet are reaching for the positive to make our society a better place.

Thank you for your support; we really need it and count on it. If you have not renewed your membership, please do so now. We look forward to meeting you with **Michael Burgess** in Toronto, on **November 3rd** at the Royal York. I know it will be a wonderful evening. Thank you!



Dorothy Leonard speaking at the Royal Bank in Burlington, with Garry Bader, Royal Bank Sales & Marketing Manager for the Halton Area looking on.

## VISION: Action Today for a Safer Tomorrow

### Report from Programmes

by Johanne Cyr-Wright, Director of Programmes

One of CAVEAT's mandates for the year 2000 has been to focus on youth safety in our schools and our communities. Since its inception, CAVEAT has developed many youth violence prevention initiatives to address concerns about violence prevention and victimization.

In light of recent tragic events and increasing public concern about violence in our schools, CAVEAT, in partnership with other organizations interested in seeking solutions to youth safety, has met over the past six months in a series of roundtable discussions to examine youth victimization through violent crime.

The groups have identified and voiced recommendations where action is required to ensure that Ontario schools and communities are free of violence, and to promote a safe atmosphere.

In partnership with Ontario's Office For Victims of Crime, we completed phase three of our *Youth Safety Strategies* roundtable discussions in September.

CAVEAT has had enormous success in bringing together disparate groups such as community policing, youth officers, school liaison police officers, public health, educators, parents, crowns, school administrators, probation, parole, and social workers, and of course students.

The compilation of recommendations resulting from these discussions will be taken to our *VISION: Action Today for a Safer Tomorrow* conference at Toronto in November. Decision- and policy-makers invited to VISION will fine-tune and augment the recommendations arising from the roundtables, and will generate a report

that will be distributed to stakeholders (justice, police services, school boards, etc.) who are expected to campaign for implementation of the recommendations.



Johanne Cyr-Wright facilitating at the Youth Safety Strategies Roundtable

# Latest Happenings from CAVEAT BC

by Cheryl Smith, CAVEAT B.C.

## Absence Makes the Heart Grow Fonder

Our founder and chairperson, **Chris Simmonds**, has taken a leave of absence. We thank Chris for all his efforts over the past six years and anticipate his return to CAVEAT BC when he feels the time and circumstances are right. In the interim, **Ben Doyle** has accepted the responsibility of chairperson. This will be discussed at B.C.'s annual general meeting and is subject to change.



Chris Simmonds

## Youth Taking Action

**Dave Haskins** and I attended the B.C. Crime Prevention Association's 22nd Annual Training Symposium held at the Sheraton Guildford on September 21-23, 2000.

The event was well attended by law enforcement officers, educators, youth workers, and community-service organizations. The workshops dealt with current issues and covered a broad spectrum of concerns.

A full-day workshop was dedicated to *Youth Taking Action*, which emphasized the importance of involving youth directly in the structure, content, and goals of youth programmes. The Attorney General's office has dedicated specific funding for the development of youth programmes, including the establishment of seven regional youth co-ordinator teams throughout BC. These teams will assist communities directly by setting-up effective youth programmes.

Another session dealt with child pornography and internet safety. Ways to protect yourself and family from the dangers of the internet were discussed.

A plenary session entitled *Stop Teaching Our Kids to Kill*, with speaker **Lt. Col. David Grossman** (US Army Ret., Professor Psychology and Military Science, Director Killology Research Group), dealt with violence in entertainment. The information provided during this session was clearly an eye-opener for the large number of participants on hand, and included information on the psychological processes of learned behaviour in young children, and the harmful effects of visual violence, particularly with children aged 18 months to 6 years. Mr. Grossman related his experiences with training elite forces, and assessed the quality of today's video games as comparable to the 'simulated training' modules used in preparing soldiers to kill. Mr. Grossman has been directly involved in the aftermath of several recent high school massacres in the US and continues to study the nature of escalating violence in our society.

To access more detailed information on this subject, log on to [www.killology.com](http://www.killology.com) or look for Mr. Grossman's 1999 book *Stop Teaching Our Kids to Kill: A Call to Action Against TV, Movie and Video Game Violence*, available from Random House, Crown Books Division.

As I sat in the workshops put on by BCCPA, I found myself feeling somewhat relieved as I looked around the room and saw so many others working towards safety, peace and justice within our society. It is not an easy path that we have chosen, but it is clearly apparent that every effort by every person adds up to an enormous amount of energy towards positive changes for the future.

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## Wife Killers are not "normal guys"

*The following paragraphs are taken from a speech that will be given to police officers by **Suzanne Smith**. This is an example of how victims can, and do, turn their pain and sorrow into a positive energy, working to make our society a safer place. The entire text will be available on our website in December, after the speech has been given.*

My name is Suzanne Smith. Donna is my sister. Donna was brutally murdered by her husband Tony who then committed suicide. This is Donna's story, which is one of betrayal by an abusive husband and a justice system that failed to protect her. Donna and Tony's story is a compilation of facts and personal research that I have conducted during the last year of Donna's life and the five years since her murder. It is my hope that, through our family's tragedy and mistakes, potential spousal killers can be identified before further abuse escalate into murder. It is my hope that the justice system will evolve to recognize, establish control, and ultimately stop potential domestic murders.

Telling Donna's story is intended to assist in recognizing the signs and traits leading up to domestic homicide. Donna and Tony's life story demonstrates beyond any doubt that domestic homicide is predictable and therefore is preventable. Certain identifiable behaviour can foreshadow extreme violence. The information introduced here establishes that wife killers are a specific category of murderers. Wife

killers are not "normal guys except for the fact that they beat and threaten to kill their wives". However, abusers look normal; they aren't glaring madmen or twitchy neurotics. We cannot tell a perpetrator by looking at him. We also cannot comprehend why they seem so vulnerable and obsessed, by the loss of an intimate partner they themselves have driven away or how that vulnerability turns into a rage to destroy her.

What we are aware of is that abusers have borderline personalities. Abusers all use the same language, have the same specific and identifiable characteristics and behaviour, as if they attended a school and completed a course on how to be abusive. Domestic violence is a combination of escalating threats, control, insults, morbid jealousy, and inability to accept responsibility for one's own faults, blind rage, and obsessive possessiveness.

We are beginning to learn that intimate abuse is not just about hits and punches. It is about psychologically and physically trying to control their victims' use of time and space in order to isolate them from all social connection, both past and present. It is an all-out attempt to annihilate their wives' self esteem and to enslave them psychologically. It is performed repeatedly in order to maintain and to inflate the damaged self-identity of the abuser. The passion to have absolute and unrestricted control over a living being is the transformation of impotence into omnipotence.

# Students, Staff, Community are "heroes"

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Baranovski, to their extended families, and to one another. These students come from countries all over the world, but one commonality was incredibly clear. Each one of their cultures had instilled in them a belief in God, or a concept of a higher authority, and a clear life-mandate of caring for others as we care for ourselves. They knew how to reach out in love, state their faith, and call upon it to help themselves and Matty's parents.

Thousands of cards and messages were spoken or written and virtually all of them referred to prayer, hope, faith, love, support, heaven and Matty as one of God's new angels.

Community messages were virtually the same. Everyone needed to hold on to his or her beliefs to survive. Students, staff and community held hands across cultures and across age differences, reaching out to Matty's family in a way I have never before seen, and it still continues today almost a year later.

Matty was an only child, but his friends have become Mr. & Mrs. Baranovski's new children. Understandably, his parents have struggled the most, but they would not be as strong as they are today were it not for the students of Northview Heights and the surrounding community. The pain is still with us. Time makes it easier to talk about, but for many it will never fade far from consciousness. We all grew up so suddenly

last November 15th to one of life's realities — that there are a few people among us for whom violence is an accepted way of life with no conscience attached.

The greater lesson for all of us was that there are so many more of us who make respect, and love our way of life. This is shown through our actions, and is rooted in our faith, whatever culture we are from.

Northview students and staff, the community around us, and the Toronto District School Board are heroes in my eyes. They have supported Matty's family, and in turn this family has found the strength not only to go on but also to support other families in crisis.

Violence still, unfortunately, sells more papers and/or commands more attention than good news. But maybe the next time you read something that slams an entire age group, especially teenagers, I hope you will remember the incredible bravery and spirit of Matty's friends, parents and community. They/we have faced more in our lives than most will or should have to face. The struggle is ongoing, as is the care for one-another, especially among the students.

As long as I live, I will thank God for the privilege of working with the wonderful young people of Northview Heights.

Like them, I will use what we have learned about support to help others in need.



Judy Kennedy (left) presents CAVEAT Executive-Director Dorothy Leonard with some of the proceeds raised by sales of the Backpack Patch.

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## Shameless Plea

If you're an Ontario resident, you'll probably be receiving a \$200 tax rebate in the next few weeks. Allow us to suggest a good way of keeping that money from burning a hole in your pocket: **send it to us!**



**HELP US CONTINUE TO BE A STRONG VOICE**

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Anyone who makes an annual donation to CAVEAT is automatically accorded Membership status.  
Tax receipts will be issued for gifts over \$25.00

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