



SASW – Distinguished Service Award 2006
Peter Griffiths, MSW, RSW (Sask.)
Prince Albert, SK

Peter served for 30 years as the Director of Social Work at the Prince Albert Mental Health Centre from 1969 until his retirement in 1999. Following retirement, Peter maintained an active private counseling and consulting practice. Peter lived and breathed social work. His approach to work and community and the integration of the two, is the embodiment of social work practice.

Peter felt a calling to respond to others who were hurting, to those doing harm to themselves or to others, to those who were unrepresented and unheard in society. He deeply believed in and practiced self-help. Peter developed services and programs based on the premise that people possess the ability to help themselves if provided the information, support, encouragement and tools to do so. Throughout his thirty-year tour of duty with Mental Health Services, he developed numerous innovative programs that he personally invested himself into establishing and facilitating Programs such as Getting Up From Depression, Grief Support and Education, Choices for Men-Alternatives to Violence and Anger Education to mention a few.

In the early years of his career, Peter was a pioneer as a Social Worker in Mental Health-a field in which Social Work was not a familiar or established profession in Saskatchewan. Peter's career was launched during the period of "deinstitutionalization" of psychiatric patients from the large Mental Hospitals. He was involved in developing one of the first residential home programs in Saskatchewan for patients released from hospital and relocating to community.

Peter also cared deeply about people and community outside of his work at Mental Health. He was active in community organizations and service clubs over the years. He served in public office as a Public School Board Trustee for three terms in the 1970's and 1980's. He was active in community theatre for over 35 years. Peter was a lay Minister with the United Church and had involvement with the United Church of Canada at the Presbytery and Conference levels.

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Peter was probably most well renowned for the prolific newspaper articles he wrote to assist his readers with the challenges of coping with life. In total, Peter wrote close to 3000 columns from 1977 throughout his career, halting only a short while prior to his death on March 20, 2006 when his health no longer permitted him the strength and concentration to continue.

Peter was also a dedicated family man. He and Ruth were married in 1969 and have two adult children, Greg and Gwyn. Peter was very proud of his family, enjoyed traveling with them and spoke of his family as a source of support and nurturance.

Peter, in his 67 years, lived life to the fullest in all spheres. He accomplished many meaningful and important achievements. He made a difference! So, for his energy, innovation, dedication,

leadership, love for family, sense of community and longstanding service, I am so pleased that the SASW selected Peter to receive the 2006 Distinguished Service Award. It is gratifying to know the award is being received by Peter's family-his wife Ruth and children Greg and Gwyn-in recognition of Peter's considerable contributions to social work and the difference he has made in the lives of the people he has touched.

Submitted By: M. Elaine Billay, B.S.W., R.S.W.
Prince Albert Mental Health Center