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University

1200 calls since September

Harbinger — just being human is what's important



Last summer the York Clinic went through a name change. The result was "Harbinger Community Services" or just simply Harbinger, as it's more commonly called.

The word itself means "forerunner" or "announce the approach of" and that, in a sense, is what this community service is all about.

By supplying free counselling, information and referral services in the areas of birth control, unplanned pregnancy (including abortion) and venereal disease, the people at Harbinger have announced the arrival of an attitude which not only accepts such matters without embarrassment but promotes talking honestly about them and gives counselling and further information to people requesting it.

The people requesting Harbinger service number some 1200 since September. They have either phoned or dropped in to the Harbinger offices on the second floor of Vanier Residence. Not all are students. Many are referred to Harbinger by personal friends or by other agencies — the Addiction Research Foundation, Rochdale, and the Community Homophile Association of Toronto (CHAT) to mention just a few.

And not all want information or counselling in the areas of sexuality. Some are seeking help in the areas of legal aid, housing, welfare, drug use and health services.

All of which adds up to a lot of hours for the 13 volunteer staff members, only two of whom are full-time. Most of the staff are students and Harbinger is an entirely student-run operation.

"I don't think professional credentials are necessary for this type of work," says former York student and full-time co-ordinator Billy Johnson. "What is important is empathy . . . just being human. Of course, on the information level we have to have our facts straight and know how to use these facts. If we can't help someone ourselves we put him in touch with someone who can."

Contact with doctors

With this in mind, Harbinger has set up a referral system with dozens of social, legal and medical agencies throughout Metro. They keep in close contact with over 80 doctors, whom they see as "purveyors of services". As Harbinger volunteer Ted Casey puts it, "We're careful whom we refer people to. If we get bad feedback about a certain doctor, we make certain not to refer people to him again."

Harbinger also has resource people in Psych Services and Health Services. Their work doesn't conflict with these other campus services, rather they complement each other and refer people to each other as the need arises.

Enquiries about birth control, venereal disease and unplanned pregnancy far outnumber any other calls.

People wanting information on birth control are introduced to the Harbinger "toy box" which includes a model of the female anatomy, and samples of different types of birth control. The effectiveness of different methods and public attitudes towards them are all discussed. This discussion is also included in counselling for unplanned pregnancies.

"Our position on abortion is not one of advocacy," says Ted Casey. "If a girl or a couple come to us for advice on an unplanned pregnancy we talk about the options open — one of those options is abortion. We feel abortion is a right and we do do abortion referrals, but we don't lay it on anyone. It's a personal decision. We supply the information about the alternatives, but the choice is entirely theirs."

Reports that VD is second in incidence only to the common cold have not been exaggerated in the least, say the people at Harbinger. The number of VD cases on campus is very high.

Just over a month ago the York Homophile Association approached Harbinger with the aim of setting up counselling for people confused about their sexuality, supplying information on homosexuality, the legal aspects of it, prevalent myths and so forth.

The result was an agreement to share the Harbinger offices and to set up time, 11 a.m. — 1 p.m., Monday to Friday, when people could phone the York Homophile Association through Harbinger (667-3632) for specific information about homosexuality. The anonymity of the phone call seems attractive — they've received between 30 and 40 calls already.

The major stumbling block right now for Harbinger is one of funding. The university supplies the four Harbinger offices and office furniture free of charge. If government community funding does come through, Harbinger plans to remain open during the summer months and possibly develop a community resource bank in the Jane-Finch area.



Not to be missed next week is the Preservation Hall Jazz Band of New Orleans — they'll be giving a performance Monday in Burton Auditorium. The musicians in this band helped create New Orleans jazz, the beginning of all

jazz. And according to the critics, they've lost none of the vitality or spirit that made jazz the uninhibited symbol of the 20's. Tickets are still on sale at the Burton Box Office. Call 667-2370 for ticket information.

Part-time York studies may indicate new approach to learning

The enrolment crisis at Canadian universities and government tightening of purse-strings has brought concern and dismay, anger and confusion, to academics and administrators alike.

The spectre of rising costs and a shrinking budget has made the atmosphere on many campuses gloomy and tense.

But it is also forcing the institutions to re-examine their programs and the way they are offering them. The first, tentative steps are being taken toward a re-evaluation of higher education and learning in general.

Two threads are emerging. In an affluent society, with high unemployment, youth is less prepared to stay full-time on the academic treadmill through the consecutive steps of elementary, secondary, and university or college education. Secondly, education and re-education will increasingly become a life-long process in advanced technological society.

York has begun to respond.

Arts drop-in year

In January, the Faculty of Arts introduced a drop-in year to allow first-year students to take three full courses during the winter term and two in the summer. Ninety-three students enrolled in the pilot project.

According to Derek Shanks, assistant to Arts Dean John Saywell, the quality of students is "very good, and there is a different mix than in a traditional first-year class".

The year of study has been revised at most faculties in recent years so a student may do four to six courses for a full-course load rather than the traditional, and compulsory, five.

And perhaps most significantly the Faculties of Arts and Glendon College will open the door for the first time next September to part-time students who want to study in the regular day session of the university.

For a set fee per course, (not definitely fixed but roughly \$130) a student may enrol in one to three courses while holding a job, raising a family, or following other pursuits outside the university not possible if he was carrying a full-course load.

The Faculty of Arts has no age restrictions, and expects up to 1,000 course registrations on a part-time basis.

At Glendon, students must be 23 to be eligible for part-time studies in the College program, and director of Academic Services Joss d'Oliveira projects 100 additional course enrolments from the new option.

The Faculty of Fine Arts will require a student to petition during registration week next September if he wishes to study part-time, with the request to be reviewed by departmental chairmen.

And the Faculty of Science will continue its policy adopted in 1969 that allows students up to five years to complete the equivalent of a three-year degree, and up to six years for an honours BSc. degree.

Science credit system

There are no maximum or minimum requirements in Science's credit system, so that a student also has the option to attempt more than a normal course load.

Academic Administrative Officer Doug Palmateer cited the case of one student who did an honours degree in three years, "but he was a brilliant student, and an exception". He said there are normally about 60 students doing a reduced course load, and the same number doing accelerated programs out of an undergraduate population of roughly 1,000 students.

So flexibility is being built in to the "system" at York, as the university reviews its programs and the needs of students.

Part-time studies is, of course, not new at York, as anyone caught in the weekday 6:30 p.m. traffic jams can attest.

Atkinson College has grown in 12 years to the largest university faculty in Canada devoted exclusively to part-time undergraduate teaching.

Last September 7,776 students enrolled in almost 11,000 courses at Atkinson, for the autumn-winter term, and the College expects 6,000 course enrolments in the coming summer term.

Atkinson expanding

It has continued to expand despite the full-time enrolment slump across the country as increasing numbers of people come back to upgrade professional qualifications, complete unfinished studies, or simply continue the learning process after they enter the working world.

But Atkinson offers only evening courses in the autumn-winter term, when the rest of the university is in session. In the summer, it offers both day and evening programs.

Associate Dean Henry Best said in an interview Tuesday he sees no major conflict between Atkinson and other faculties offering part-time study.

"We're obviously interested in any part-time thing going on at York," he said, "because eventually it could create problems, but we're also very sympathetic to any new initiative being tried."

"When the drop-in year was established we worked very closely with the Faculty of Arts. Their students will be studying at Atkinson in the summer, particularly in Natural Science courses."

He said that "only if someone gets into direct competition (with us) could it be unwise for the university", and he does not expect that to happen.

"There are all kinds of initiatives being tried, and there may be some change (in enrolment patterns) in terms of our younger students, but our core will remain, for the foreseeable future, unchanged."

Ineligible for loans

The major snag for students wanting to enter or switch to part-time studies, taking less than four courses a year, is that they are ineligible for student loans or grants.

And if a student switches to part-time studies after one or two years at university, he must begin paying back any loans six months after he stops studying full-time.

There is speculation these regulations will be revised when the Ontario budget is brought down in April. One Queen's Park spokesman said this week the "hang-up is in Ottawa. They make the rules; we just administer the money."

Then he added: "I wouldn't bet the regulations will change, but I wouldn't bet they'll stay the same either."

Profound.

For further information on any of the part-time degree programs mentioned above, call the York Enquiry Service (YES) at 667-2211.