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JUDY COOK: A LIFE REMEMBERED

that service many of her friends and colleagues from across Canada and the United States paid tribute to both her commitment to social justice and her personal friendship. In a joint message, the MFLOHC staff members said they had been "so very proud to work with you in the health and safety movement."

Judy believed that a movement, similar to the American civil rights movement she participated in during her youth in the United States, was needed to prevent occupational injuries and disease. It was needed because she believed that the problems facing workers were not simply technical problems, but were, in the end, social and political issues.

The solutions to these problems could only be reached as workers gained in knowledge and input over workplace decisions. This was more than rhetoric: Judy made sure that workers who showed up at the front door of the MFLOHC were treated according to these principles. These were also the principles that guided her approach to the Centre's staff.

Margaret Day, the Manitoba Government Employees' Union health and safety officer, has been a member of the MFLOHC's Board of Directors for the past 12 years. "Judy was Manitoba's health and safety ambassador. She was always available to help workers. And she was always encouraging workers to come to visit the Centre. And when they did, she always took the time to make sure they got a tour of the Centre and saw the resources there and knew who was available to help them."

Day was also impressed by Judy commitment to helping workers solve their problems. "If a worker approached her at a conference

with a workplace story, she would not simply listen and offer sympathy. She would look for a solution. She wanted to do something."

COMMITMENT TO EQUALITY

Born in a suburb of St. Louis, Missouri, Judy came of age in the US of the 1960s. She participated in the American civil rights movement and campaigns for housing reform and tenants' rights in Boston. She took from her involvement in the social movements of the 1960s a deep commitment to democracy and equality, and to acting on those beliefs in the here and now.

On coming to Canada in the 1970s she became active in both community health organizations and the labour movement. Prior to becoming the director of the MFLOHC in 1985, she worked as the director of volunteer services with Klinik Community Health Centre in Winnipeg. She was one of the organizers of the Canadian Union of Public Employees local that represented Klinik workers. While her work at the MFLOHC allowed her to combine a number of her primary interests, she participated in many other community organizations. She served on the boards of Legal Aid Manitoba and the Community Unemployed Help Centre, and took on a leadership role in the Manitoba Association of Community Health. It was her initiative that led to the exhibit of Stolen Dreams, photographs of working children from around the world, at the Manitoba Museum of Man Nature in 1998.

Under her direction, the MFLOHC moved location and expanded greatly the range of serv-

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In the early 1980s, frustrated by poor access to information and to specialized medical advice regarding work-related health problems, Manitoba workers began to raise funds to establish a health centre that would be focussed on and responsible to workers. Among the people who helped establish the MFL Occupational Health Centre (MFLOHC) in 1983 was a community health worker named Judy Cook. Two years after the Centre opened Judy became the MFLOHC's executive director. It was a position that she filled with distinction and dedication until her untimely death on December 31, 1998.

Judy died at University Hospital in London, Ontario, where she had been waiting for a heart transplant since late September. Her son Adam and his father Emmett Hannibal spent much of the fall in London at her side. In addition, many of the people who had been touched by her friendship and compassion visited her in London or kept in touch by letter, fax and email.

Over 400 people attended a service held in her memory on January 17 in Winnipeg. At

JUDY COOK: A LIFE REMEMBERED

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ices it provided. But as important as this expansion has been, her real accomplishment was holding fast to the Centre's fundamental mission.

Judy not only organized conferences on how to build healthy organizations – she worked to make sure that the MFLOHC itself was a healthy workplace. The MFLOHC's administrative assistant Mona Phillips worked with Judy for 13 years. She recalls how "Judy was committed to equality in the workplace. The doctors, nurses, administrators were all treated as equals with different areas of responsibility." Phillips also remembers the concern that Judy demonstrated when her father was ill.

STANDARDS

Judy ensured that the Centre's work met the highest standards. Occupational hygienist Kit Galvin said that this was of benefit for both the clients and the staff. Galvin said "She created an atmosphere where we were demanding of ourselves. It was an atmosphere in which you wanted to produce a quality service." She spurred people to be creative and to have the confidence to take new approaches.

Another one of her strengths was the way she encouraged staff members to expand their skills. Both Phillips and Galvin commented on this. Galvin said "She really supported our involvement in professional organizations, attending conferences, and obtaining certifications." This, she believed, would further benefit the workers of Manitoba.

BEYOND BORDERS

Judy was very active in international organizations, and sat on the Board of the Association of Occupational and Environmental Clinics. AOEC executive director Katherine Kirkland said Judy was a valuable Board member who respected everyone's opinions but never lost sight of the organization's goal "to prevent occupational and environmental health problems in workers, their families, and their communities." Kirkland added, "She was not only an effective Board member but fun to be with. There was the occasional aside at various meetings that was devastatingly accurate and I'd try desperately to keep a straight face."

Margaret Keith, the director of the Windsor Occupational Health Information Service,

and Jim Brophy, the director of the Windsor Occupational Health Clinic for Ontario Workers, viewed Judy as a mentor in the field of health and safety in Canada. Keith said, "Jim and I often found ourselves confiding in Judy, asking her for ideas on handling sticky situations, sometimes debating or disagreeing, but always feeling that ease of communication that makes such open and honest discussions possible." She said she hoped to continue to draw on the strengths that Judy nurtured in those she came into contact with.

Harry Mesman was the Manitoba Federation of Labour's occupational health and safety

officer for most of the past decade. He recalled Judy's commitment to protecting workers. "Judy always brought you back to earth, to the fact that there were actual people whose health was at risk. She was not dogmatic or self-righteous, but she was genuinely distressed by the damage inflicted on workers and the need to make a difference. And she worked so hard." Mesman said that even when she was supposed to be on reduced hours she showed up for meetings that she was not required to attend. "Words like dedication and concern are clichés, but they apply in Judy's case. She was inspirational."

NEW OHC HEALTH EDUCATOR

The MFL Occupational Health Centre's new health educator brings to her job a strong background in community education work. Before coming to work for the OHC, Karen Hamilton worked as the coordinator of the Winnipeg Christmas Lite Campaign.

Christmas Lite attempts to create jobs in the inner city by ensuring that goods purchased for Christmas hampers are purchased from inner city and cooperative producers.

A social worker by training, Hamilton is the former executive director of SalvAide, a Canadian based international development agency supporting community development in El Salvador. "SalvAide assisted communities in developing a stronger economic base and leadership skills. We also focused on such issues as training for women."

Hamilton started at the OHC in February, taking over from Lynn Bueckert who has taken a position in British Columbia.

Hamilton said she is excited about coming to work for the OHC. "Community education has been a large part of each job I have held, and is the part that I really love. The current education projects at the Centre are very exciting. They focus on people who have had limited access to health and safety information. I am looking forward to working with those groups."

The two projects Hamilton will be working on in coming months are the immigrant workers needs assessment and a project that



*MFL OHC health educator
Karen Hamilton*

reaches out to rural and Northern workers.

As health educator, Hamilton will work with the OHC's health professionals to plan and deliver the Centre's education programs, ensuring that the Centre's information and resources are accessible to anyone.

The OHC's acting executive director Bev Cann said, "we are very pleased to have someone with Karen's background and skills as an educator and in community development. Her previous work has provided her with a clear understanding of the underlying determinants of health. Her strong skills in communication, education and plain writing will contribute to the Centre's education and outreach capabilities."

Farm work and children

The family farm is one of the oldest institutions in North America. It is both a home and a workplace. Once they are old enough, there is an expectation that family members will take on some of the tasks involved in maintaining a farm.

The chores performed by children on farms can allow a child to develop a strong sense of self-worth and responsibility. However, farm work can also be very hazardous. A slight error in estimating a child's abilities or the risks involved in a task can have a tragic outcome.

Each year in Canada as many as 15 children have died in farm accidents and another 350 to 400 are seriously injured. In response to this growing issue parents, farm safety specialists, and health care providers all saw the need for a set of guidelines for children working on farms.

The guidelines are being released to the public this spring. Glen Blahey of the Manitoba Department of Labour, was one of the nine advisors from Canada and the United States who worked with the US-based National Children's Center for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety to develop the guidelines.

The final product is being called the North American Guidelines for Children's Agricultural Tasks.

Each of the 75 guidelines includes:

- a description of the work task
- concerns and potential injuries associated with the task
- recommendations for safety precautions and types of personal protective equipment
- recommended age, based on the mental and physical abilities needed to conduct the task
- level of adult supervision required
- training needed
- scientific references

Blahey says that the guidelines will eventually be available on the internet, and will also be distributed through a variety of government and service organizations in rural Manitoba. Blahey said he hoped that physicians in rural Manitoba will obtain copies, consider them, and share them with families.

The guidelines are not meant to serve as regulations. "You cannot use these guidelines without also having an intimate understanding of the child who is doing the task in question."

New Books at the Centre

Office ergonomics, edited by Martin Cherniack. — *Occupational Medicine State of the Art Reviews*, volume 14 #1, Jan. 1999. This journal reviews the current state of information on particular topics in occupational medicine. This issue reviews office ergonomics.

Preventing injuries to hotel and restaurant workers: focus report, 1998. The report outlines common accidents and how they occur, advice on preventing accidents, preventing exposure to HIV/AIDS/Hepatitis B and C, and overview of a health and safety program. You can obtain a free copy from the WCB of BC by phoning (604)276-3068.

Problems with Cold Work: proceedings from an international symposium held in Stockholm, Sweden, Nov. 16-20, 1997: *Arbete Och Hals*: 1998, no. 18

COUNT ME IN!

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I will assist the Occupational Health Centre to continue to publish the Focus newsletter and purchase up-to-date information for the library in the following manner:

a direct donation today of \$ _____

a payroll deduction sent directly to the MFL Occupational Health Centre

I authorize the MFL Occupational Health Centre to withdraw \$ _____ from my account on a monthly basis. I am enclosing a sample cheque with the word void written across it, indicating my account number and branch address.

a contribution through the United Way specifically designating the MFL Occupational Health Centre

Please return this form (Don't forget your voided cheque) to:
MFL Occupational Health Centre
102-275 Broadway
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3C 4M6

SPRING SESSIONS

You are invited to the MFL Occupational Health Centre Spring 1999 weekly sessions at 275 Broadway. Topics relating to occupational and environmental health will be presented by invited guests and staff of the Centre. The one hour sessions are held on Tuesdays from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.

Phone: 949-0811 • Fax 956-0848 • email mflohc@mflohc.mb.ca

April 27	Hazardous Waste Awareness & Regulations in Manitoba	Don Labossiere, Hazardous Waste Program, Manitoba Environment
May 4	Developing a Framework for Treatment of Chronic Pain & Successful Return to Work	Dr. Gregory Chernish, Director - Centre for Pain & Stress Management, Senior Advisor- Seven Oaks Chronic Pain Program
May 11	Manitoba Restaurant Safety Program and the Restaurant Industry	Shaun Haas, Manitoba Restaurant Safety Program
May 18	Forklift Equipment Legislation & Safety	Mark Geiger, Safety & Health Officer, Workplace Safety & Health Branch, Manitoba Labour
May 25	No Session	
June 1	Dangerous Goods/Emergency Response	Gary Trask, Environment Officer, Manitoba Environment - Dangerous Goods
June 8	Back Injuries: An Ergonomic Approach	Ben Zavitz, Ergonomist, Safety Health & Environmental Affairs Dept., Boeing Canada Technology - Wpg. Division
June 15	Ergonomic Program at Red River College	Bonnie Mazerolle, Occupational Health Nurse, Ergonomic Resource Phyllis Arron, Occupational Health Nurse, Ergonomic Committee Co-chair Chris Moffat, Interior Designer, Ergonomic Committee Co-chair

The MFL Occupational Health Centre was established in 1982 by the Manitoba Federation of Labour to help Manitoba workers deal with job-related health issues and to assist those in many sectors of our society who strive for safer work environments. The Centre is funded by Manitoba Health and is a member of the Manitoba Association of Community Health and the Association of Occupational and Environmental Clinics.

The Centre's Medical Diagnostic Services attempt to ascertain whether a specific health problem is work-related and does not take the place of a family doctor. A multidisciplinary team assists workplace health and safety committees with workplace hazard evaluations and hazard control measures.

Our Resource Centre provides the public with a wide range of health and safety information, and we conduct education programs upon request. The Centre is open weekdays 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and to 8 p.m. on Wednesdays.