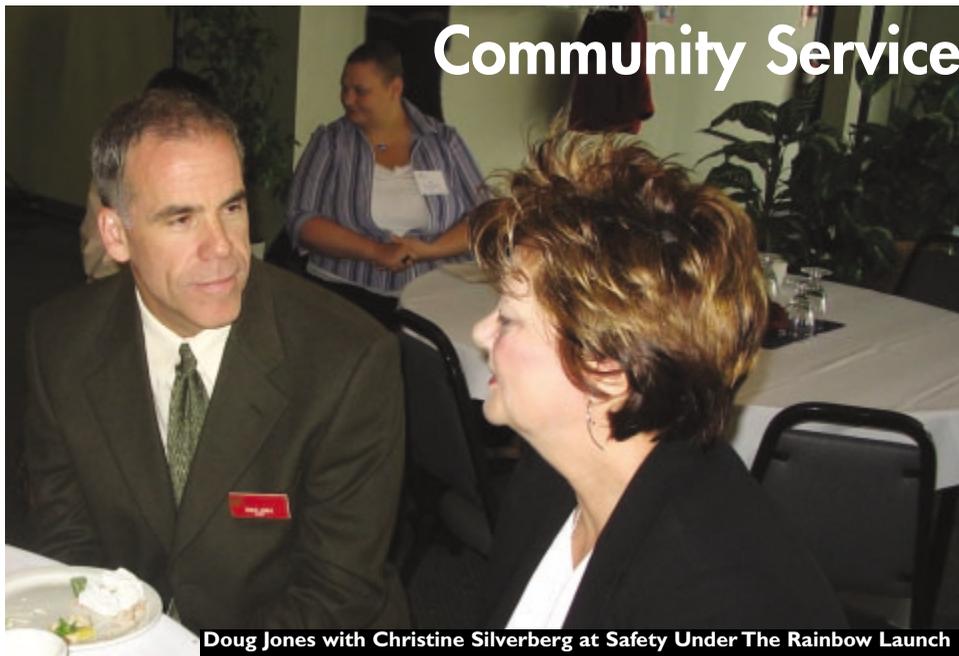


Community Service



Doug Jones with Christine Silverberg at Safety Under The Rainbow Launch

By Sean McLennan

Doug Jones is a name well known in gay and lesbian circles in Calgary: for the last seven or so years, he was our bridge to the Calgary Police Service in his role of Liaison to the GLBT Community. Doug retired from the police force last year, but far from disappearing from our midst onto a golf course somewhere, he's given himself a bit of makeover. The face is familiar, but his new "outfit" is the United Way.

As our Liaison, Doug had a significant impact on our relationship with the police and improved their ability to effectively respond to the unique needs of our community. For instance, he was instrumental in putting in place a mechanism by which individuals could report incidents without filing formal reports or identifying themselves. Crimes directed at gay and lesbians are typically under-reported because of continuing social-stigma concerns—an anonymous reporting system is critical to gain a better picture of the prevalence of homophobia-driven crime in the city.

Doug's unit—the Cultural Resources Unit (now the Diversity Resources Unit)—was responsible for all hate and bias crimes in the city and he simultaneously served as the Hate/Bias Crime Coordinator. Now, because of Doug, hate and bias crimes are tracked centrally in a special database and his influence is expanding beyond the city limits. Doug co-founded a provincial committee on hate and bias crimes that is attempting to standardize how they are dealt with in communities province-wide. To fully quantify the impact that Doug Jones has had on Calgary would be time consuming indeed and would cover areas as diverse as the training of new police recruits, bullying in schools, and same-sex domestic abuse.

Perhaps more significantly than any individual initiative, the cumulative impact of Doug and his colleagues' efforts on the force and in public outreach is simply confidence that, when we need it, gays and lesbians can count on support rather than homophobia from the city police. The value of that kind of security can't be understated or taken for granted in a world where as often as not homosexuals find themselves on the wrong side of the law, simply for existing.

Doug came up for retirement after twenty-five years of devoted service with the Calgary Police and left his Liaison position in the capable hands of Constable Tyler Stoutenburg (welcome Tyler!). Escaping the allure of a sedentary lifestyle, Doug found himself at the doors of United Way of Calgary and Area where he'd be able continue to make a difference in Calgary. He says he didn't realize how much his skills and contacts from the Cultural Resources Unit would translate—he's still out "on the beat" and connecting with people everyday. Two big, fundamental, lessons he took away from his career with the police are 1) SUPPORT IS NEEDED and 2) it IS possible to break the cycles that prevent the disadvantaged from improving their situations.

Since Doug joined United Way, he's recognized that there is a positive relationship between the Calgary GLBT Community and United Way as it is a very inclusive organisation which embraces diversity. You might have spotted Doug and his team at Pride this year, or at the ARGRA Canadian Rockies International Rodeo.

United Way itself is an interesting organization—originally founded as the "Community Chest" in 1940, it became known as United Way of Calgary and Area in 1990. Unlike most not-for-profits, United Way's mission is to invest in the community via other local agencies—to effectively tackle the root causes of chronic social problems and identify the most impactful projects and programs to support. This allows the organisation to better direct resources to where they are needed and to a wider diversity of groups that may be less successful at developing their own resource base. Simultaneously, this approach fosters a more stable network of independent support organizations and engages a broader demographic, which of course reinforces the community's ability to respond to

issues of varying scale. In 2005, United Way of Calgary and Area invested an astonishing \$40.8 million dollars in 250 programs and initiatives through 130 agencies.

Thanks to the contribution of people like Doug, an army of volunteers (about 15,000 in 2005) and donors (about 51,000 last year), United Way of Calgary and Area is the most successful—per capita—in Canada. However, although raising money is definitely an important component of United Way's mandate, participation is a more important goal. According to Doug, education is the biggest obstacle; once people better understand the issues in the community, they're very generous with their time and resources and more willing to take action. Consequently, much of United Way's activities focus on getting regular people out into the streets to experience things firsthand.

One unique program that accomplishes this is the "United Way Day of Caring", where a group of individuals—employees from a common workplace, community groups, etc.—spend a day completing a positive project on-site. This could be anything from a gardening project to serving meals to throwing a Halloween party—there are hundreds of worthwhile projects listed on their website just waiting to be taken on.

Doug Jones is committed to working in diverse communities during his tenure at United Way, the GLBT community included, so you can expect to run into him at some point or another. When you do, seriously consider supporting his efforts because both he and United Way have had an enormous impact on the quality of life for the downtrodden and discriminated-against in this city. Doug specifically wanted to thank the Calgary GLBT Community for making his job as Liaison fun and satisfying—somehow, I think it is we who are in his debt.

For more information on United Way of Calgary and Area and "United Way Days of Caring", please visit: calgaryunitedway.org, or call: (403) 231-6265

For more information on Sexuality and Gender Diversity at the Calgary Police Service, please visit: calgarypolice.ca

Sean McLennan is a native Calgarian with (nearly) a PhD in Linguistics and Cognitive Science from Indiana University, where he was heavily involved in GLBT education. He currently has a full time gig in software for mobile technology.

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