

## Regional News Ontario Region

### Beaver Creek Inmate Volunteer Program

*By P. Bridgeo,  
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Institution Inmate Volunteer  
Program*



**Left to right: Peter White, Warden, BCI; Paul Bridgeo, Institutional Volunteer Co-ordinator; Mitch Beube, Family Youth and Child Services of Muskoka; inmates Larry Gdanski and Claude Gaudreault**

Since May 2001 the Beaver Creek Inmate Volunteer Program has assisted over 20 non-profit and charitable agencies in the Muskoka area, providing items such as a complete set of kitchen cabinets for a youth drop-in centre, and benches and nesting boxes for local wildlife sanctuaries. Well over 100 volunteer inmates have invested a total of 5,000 hours back into the community.

The program works in conjunction with a citizen liaison committee, created as a forum for discussion between the community and the institutions, a place for voicing concerns and fostering discussions among Correctional Service of Canada staff and the institution's neighbours – representatives from the Lions Club, community policing; local chamber of commerce; wardens; institutional volunteer coordinators; inmate volunteer coordinators.

Since February 2004, the program has been responsible for refurbishing children's bicycles for Family Youth and Child Services of Muskoka. The bikes have come to us from numerous groups including the local Ontario Provincial Police, staff and community donations, and the children themselves. As with any project we undertake, the organization provides the funding for required materials. In this case we started with \$500 and have provided 30 bikes to the agency. Approximately 340 volunteer hours have been invested. Continued funding has recently been received and the opportunity to give back to the community, specifically to children in need, has been warmly embraced by all those involved in this project. ■