



Extend-A-Family
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Staff:

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Anne Marie Cole

Office Administrator:
Cate Downey

Coordinators:

Tamara Bailey
Selena Blake
Ruth Fernandes
Anne Murray
Sharon Power
Salvatore Rocchese
Kim Southern-Paulsen
Lee Steel
Jessica Van Wyk

Safe & Secure Future Network

Coordinators:

Sharon Power
Lee Steel

POSSIBILITIES



Extend-A-Family Dads' Group Monthly Meeting at the Main Office

A Place for Dads

The Extend-A-Family Dads' Group has been running for over seven years. At the heart of this Dads' group is a common understanding that unites the fathers in discovering endless possibilities. The primary focus of the group is to provide a forum, where fathers can gather, share their stories and support one another. The relaxed, welcoming, friendly gatherings provide a safe space, where dads can gather information, express their fears, joys, triumphs, sadness, happiness and, most of all, love for their child. A core group of fathers attend the regular monthly meetings.

It has been a real joy and pleasure to witness how eager and committed the dads are to be part of their children's lives and how they advocate naturally for them.

Here's what some of the fathers had to say about the group:

Anthony—*Listening to other dads brings inspiration and encouragement.*

Antonio—*Dads' group is an excellent way to make friends and share some good moments together.*

Gabe—*Friendship and support.*

Brian—*Honest and heartfelt exchange of information and experiences regarding children with disabilities.*

John—*It is really nice to meet with just dads to talk about what is going on in our lives. It's a different dynamic than I am used too ...I feel invested in everyone's situation now so I do want to keep attending!*

Chris—*I'm able to find solace amongst dads who can relate/empathize, support and laugh.*

If you'd like to join the Dads' Group then contact the main office for further information.
Salvatore Rocchese

"A thought, even a possibility, can shatter and transform us."

Friedrich Nietzsche

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If you would like to submit an article or photograph to an upcoming Extend-A-Family newsletter and website, please send it to your coordinator or the office, specifying that it is for the newsletter and website. All submissions to the newsletter must have a signed release form. If you would like to submit a photograph, you can send it to the same person; please recognize that we **must** have signed release forms from all people appearing in the photograph. All submissions will be subject to editing at the discretion of the Newsletter Committee. Additionally we cannot guarantee that your contribution will be used. Given all of that... **We would love to hear from you!**

New Year message from Anne Marie Cole, Executive Director

While on a recent trip I had a two hour layover at a large airport. As I wandered through the terminal I was struck by how many people sat in isolation “glued” to laptops, tablets, smartphones and hand-held games. Gone was the chatter of excited travellers sharing stories with strangers of past adventures and giving advice on everything from where to eat to how to treat sunburns. In its place were the sounds of one sided cell phone conversations, fingers busily texting and the clicking of keyboards. I admit I felt a little annoyed and sad at how technology has changed the way we communicate.

My faith was restored on the final flight of my journey which was on a smaller regional plane not equipped with internet capability, television monitors or even music. As I looked around, I saw people talking, laughing and even sharing stories of past adventures. When we landed I witnessed people, who two hours prior were strangers, exchanging contact information, a couple planning a golf game and two families arranging to meet for a day at the beach so their young daughters, who claimed to be each other's new best friend, could build sandcastles together.

I wish everyone good health and happiness in the coming year and encourage you to “unplug” from the fast paced world of technology long enough to spend quality time truly enjoying the company of friends and loved ones. Take time to meet new people, embrace nature, volunteer...the possibilities are endless. Who knows you might just find yourself building magnificent sandcastles on a beach with a new best friend!

From The Chair of the Board of Directors, Michele Schmidt

Everything I learned about possibilities, I learned from children. All life begins with possibilities and possibilities all begin and flourish with hope. Think back to those hectic days before a special event such as Christmas, Hanukah, Diwali or a birthday, when just to look at a child was to understand the nature of hope and possibilities.

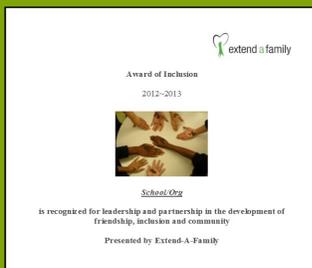
A child's hopes are never grounded in negatives; when did you last hear a four year old say “I would ask Santa for that but” or “I'd like that for my birthday but...” Children never cease to *repeatedly* express their hopes both material and emotional. When was the last time you heard “please, please, please, I really, really, really need it!”

The lesson I take from the mouth of babes is this: Always hope large, know whom to petition, be persistent in your requests, start with please (or perhaps please, please, please) and of course for those of us who celebrate Christmas don't forget the milk and cookies for whoever turns out to be Santa.

On behalf of the Board and on your behalf, a huge thank you for your continued commitment to Extend-A-Family and for making possibilities happen all year round.

Extend-A-Family Award of Inclusion

The Extend-A-Family Award of Inclusion is an annual award recognizing the outstanding work that identified schools and community organizations have done in the area of inclusion, friendship building and partnership.



Congratulations to the recipients of the 2012 – 2013 Inclusion Award:

Denlow Public School

Islington Community School

Regent Heights Public School

Extend-A-Family Award of Inclusion



From Left to Right: Delia Feijo, Mirjana Prikrl, Anne Marie Cole & Ian McCluskey

City of Toronto Camp, Islington Community School Receives Award of Inclusion

This past summer, the City of Toronto—Parks Forestry & Recreation Program at Islington Community School was presented with Extend-A-Family's Award of Inclusion.

Extend-A-Family Executive Director, Anne Marie Cole, presented Area Supervisor, Michael McCluskey, with the prestigious award. Delia Feijo and former Extend-A-Family Coordinator, Mirjana Prikrl, and coordinator Sharon Power and the entire camp were there to receive the award.

Islington Community School and Extend-A-Family have been working in partnership supporting children and youth inclusively at the camp as campers and volunteers for a number of years.

The dedication of staff such as Daniela Del Rosso, (Community Recreation Programmer), and Delia Feijo, (Coordinator/Office Administrator), and the numerous camp counsellors, volunteers and campers have made inclusion and belonging a common practice and are to be commended.

Extend-A-Family appreciates and celebrates community organizations such as Islington Community School that celebrate diversity, inclusion, friendship and belonging.

Reach for the Rainbow—Gift of Belonging

On Saturday November 16, 2013 Extend-A-Family was presented with the Gift of Belonging Inclusion Award from Reach for the Rainbow. In honour of the long standing partnership between the two organisations.

The award was accepted by Jeff Short (Extend-A-Family Board Member), at Reach for the Rainbow Annual Crystal Ball.

Extend-A-Family and Reach for the Rainbow share the common belief that all people should be included and that our communities are stronger when everyone is welcomed.

We all have possibilities we don't know about. We can do things we don't even dream we can do.
Dale Carnegie

Volunteering with Extend-A-Family



VOLUNTEER

**To find out more about the exciting volunteer and host opportunities available with Extend-A-Family contact the main office for further information
416 4841317 or
info@extendafamily.ca
www.extendafamily.ca**



Verona at HMV

My Year with Chiara

My name is Verona. I'm 18 years old and I go to Richview High School. Last summer, Chiara and I met and we did a lot of fun things. We hung out for 2 weeks during the summer and on the weekends during the school year. I liked going to Chapters, the St. Michael's Cathedral, HMV, the library and getting hot chocolate. We usually took the TTC which I really enjoyed. While we did these fun trips, I learned and practiced taking out money, learning directions, taking the bus and subway, ordering and paying by myself, and counting money. Doing these things on my own makes me feel more independent, and happy. We enjoyed our time together.

Verona F.

Amazing Experiences....

My name is Connor Nychuk and I have been a Summer Student for the past two summers at Extend-A-Family, as well as having the opportunity to be a Host for two families over the past year. Both have been amazing experiences in which I have learned a lot about myself and the individuals I had the opportunity to work with and be along side. In my first summer as a Summer Student, I was nervous to be responsible for the integration of children and youth at camp and community events. As the summer progressed though, I grew more comfortable in my role. I experienced difficulties, but with patience and guidance from my coordinators and the families I worked with, I was able to help children enjoy their experiences at camps and in their communities.

In my second summer, I had more confidence in my abilities to help the children and youth I worked with. I spent time with the families prior to my week spent with each child to ensure I was able to make my time with them as enjoyable as possible. Each week, I had the goal of having the child show me, in their own way, that they had had fun...and each week I was not disappointed. Whether it was a huge smile at the end of the day, a hug, or even a thank you, I was shown that my efforts had paid off. I was shown that with patience, time, awareness, and support...any individual could be included, given the opportunity. I hope that the work Extend-A-Family does is appreciated and reciprocated by all who are in any way associated.

As a Host, I am able to continue attempting to reach the goals I set out during the summer. Working alongside one family for an extended period of time allows further development of the relationship I am able to create with the youth. This allows for a special experience, in which I can see how the individual grows and matures, and how I myself can affect that growth and maturity. My role as a Host is different from my role when I am a Summer Student. But in the end my goal is the same... to have the child become a part of something, even if it is for only a limited period of time. The more I can assist this in happening, the better the chances that the when the youth becomes an adult, they will be able to do this for themselves.

Connor Nychuk

It's the Little Things that Matter

Last Tuesday marked three months that I've been in Canada. I arrived here, from Australia, on August 26 armed with my best friend, two suitcases and a twelve month working holiday visa. In two weeks I'd found a job that I loved. In three weeks we found a house with awesome roommates, close to downtown. After a month into my time in Toronto, I decided that I better restore the cosmic balance and 'pay it forward' on all of the good fortune I'd had. I first heard about Extend-A-Family through a Volunteer Toronto message board and what drew me to it mostly, was the opportunity to work with kids. I'd spent the summer working at a summer camp and was missing my niece and nephew back home; the lack of children in my life had left a serious void.



Desiree and Nik Spending Time Together

I met with Ruth and Anne from Extend-A-Family over coffee a week or so after I sent my first email and a week after that, Ruth and I met with the family of 4 year old Nik, who would become my buddy. At our first meeting, Nik couldn't have cared less for my presence and on our first play date he refused to be in the same room as me without his dad or his nanny. I remember feeling pretty discouraged when I went home that night and saying to my friend that I just didn't think the pairing was right.

I've spent every Tuesday for the past two months with him and now I know that it's about the little things when it comes to Nik. The first time I made him laugh; the first time he greeted me at the door; the first time he hugged me good-bye. It makes sense that a child will love you if your sole purpose with them is to play and make them laugh. But every now and then, in between games, Nik will be content to just sit with me. It doesn't sound like much, but given Nik's attention and energy level, these moments to me, are the most rewarding. It's easy to get down about missing home, missing any familiar face while living and working in such a big city. But every Tuesday afternoon, after 50 minutes on the TTC, taking my jacket off at the front door and racing downstairs to find Nik in his play room, and the way his face lights up in the shared excitement we both have for our time together – that is the best homesickness remedy I know!

Desiree



Growing Connections

Chiderah and I have had the opportunity to start a friendship and get to know each other over the last 4-5 months, our time spent together has been filled with activities.

Chiderah is a happy guy who likes to smile a lot, after our first few outings together this became quite evident. Chiderah and I have spent time at the library selecting movies and music that he can enjoy at home, we've gone to the arcades, played mini putt and played basketball at the park. Additionally, we have spent time going to the theatre together and enjoying new films, we plan to do more of this in the future.

Perhaps our most memorable outing was an afternoon at the arcades when Chiderah was able to score enough points in both a moving basketball target game and a soccer challenge to win a ball and a collectors bobble head of NBA star Dwight Howard.

Over the winter months, we will probably spend a considerable amount of time learning about various recording artists and song writers and listening to their music as this is Chiderah's favorite activity. We are both looking forward to further developing our relationship and getting to understand each other better.

Adam lasenzaniro



Friendship Circles

RH McGregor Elementary School has hosted a friendship circle for five years. During those five years we saw lots of kids come and go and some kids just kept coming back! We watched each other grow older, interests changing year after year. Last year the friendship circle grew to large proportions, and the kids spent a lot of time working on art related activities, playing games, listening to music and getting to know each other better.

The last friendship circle we enjoyed a pizza lunch and some treats provided by some of the kids. Plus everyone had the opportunity to decorate a T-shirt. Here are some of our creations.



A great time was had by all. Thanks RH McGregor! And thanks to all the staff, students and their families who supported the friendship circle over the past five years!

Holy Angels Catholic School Friendship Club is Thriving!

Holy Angels C.S. friendship club is now in its 3rd year, with a group of grade 7 regular attendees. The group spends time playing games and activities over the lunch hour. This year the members have decided to extend the friendship club outside of the school to do a variety of community activities together such as: watching movies, bowling, ice skating, swimming, Go Karting, snow boarding, video gaming and hanging out together. As an end of year activity, the members are planning a camping outing.



The members have known each other for a number of years and have a strong bond. There's a real sense of camaraderie between the members. They look out for each other, and have taken time to get to know one another and strengthen their relationships. One's gifts and challenges are celebrated and accepted by all.

Both the school and parent body are highly supportive of the friendship club and the members. It's a real delight working within such a positive inclusive school environment, where people take time to get to know one another and share. There's a real sense of friendship and belonging within the school and the friendship club.

What is a Friendship Circle?

A friendship circle offers an invitation to elementary school children to cultivate a circle of friends. This small group setting provides an opportunity for all members of the group to get to know each other better and an intentional opportunity to help develop friendships. The friendship circle gives a student with a disability an opportunity to become meaningfully involved with their peer group in a supportive manner. In this way, it is hoped that the circle will help nurture the meaningful participation of a student with a disability with their peers within the school community and encourage the opportunity to extend this participation and friendship outside of school.



For further information speak to your Extend-A-Family coordinator.

Summer Student Program 2013



Extend-A-Family Summer Students 2013, Back Row from left to right: Mackenzie, Rachel, Daisy, Antara, Chiara & Jamie
Front Row from L-R Ian, Matthew, Yussuf, Clevan & Connor

Extend-A-Family Summer Student Program 2013

Extend-A-Family, with partial funding from Human Resources and Skills Development Canada hired 11 Summer Students this past summer to support our young people in summer camps and in community across the City of Toronto. It provided great learning on the part of University and College students and for our children/youth; it gave them the opportunity to participate in regular city camps, enjoy the events in the summer and meaningfully engage in their neighbourhood or community.

Applications go out in February to Extend-A-Family families who have been working in partnership on inclusion and relationship building. Applicants must be returning to school and be 20 years of age or younger.

Let your imagination release your imprisoned possibilities. Robert H. Schuller

Annual General Meeting June 2013

The Extend-A-Family Annual General Meeting and Summer Picnic

On a beautiful, sunny, Sunday afternoon in June, my Mom, Gramma, friend Aida, her mom, Anne, and I went to the Extend-A-Family picnic. We were excited to go because it was our first time. We were surprised to see so many people there.

There was lots to do. We had a yummy lunch. I liked the hot dogs, cupcakes, and cookies. Mom helped me make a picture frame for my Dad. I will give it to him for his birthday. I liked playing games, and winning a prize. I liked the singer, too. Aida had fun doing lots of things, too.



From Left to Right: Dianne, Hilary & Jacquelyn

We met my Extend-A-Family volunteer, Jacquelyn, for the first time. She is really nice. She has been to our house. We have done crafts, and read stories. One day, we went to the library. We also went shopping at the Scarborough Town Centre. I got new shoes, and fancy tights.

I want to go to the picnic again next year. I hope there will be lots of chocolate cupcakes again.

Hilary Ball



The O'Connell Family Enjoying the picnic



Board Members Jeff & Michele

What's Extend-A-Family's Annual General Meeting All About?

The Annual General Meeting is an opportunity for the membership to support the organization by electing board members, affirming the work of the board and staff, reviewing the audited financial statements. It is also a time for members, alumni, board members and staff to come together and celebrate by visiting with one another, sharing food and enjoying a fun filled afternoon with family and friends.

Extend-A-Family thanks those who were able to attend.



Exciting Happenings & Workshops



Compassion Fatigue for Care Givers

Safe & Secure Future Networks will be offering a Compassion Fatigue Workshop for Care-givers in 2014.



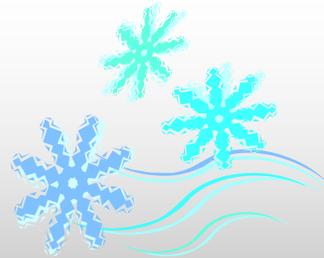
- **Royal York United Church Tue., March 11, 2014**
- **St. Simon the Apostle Tue., March 25, 2014**

The Workshop will be facilitated by Canadian Centre for Mental Health.

The workshop is a continuation from the Stress Sense Workshop which was offered last year.

Stay tuned for further information!

Extend-A-Family's **Winter Gathering** will be on Sunday, February 9, 2014 from 1:00—4:00 PM at St. Clements Church.



Invitations will be emailed January 6, 2014 or visit www.extendafamily.ca for further information.



Sexuality and Healthy Relationships

Extend-A-Family offers a Sexuality workshop with a focus on Healthy Relationships each year for families whose children are between 9 and 15 years of age. This year it was held over 4 weeks in the fall. Families shared, taught and learned from each other.

In 2014 early in the year, we hope to offer an information evening for Parents of young people 16 years of age and over, on the topic of Sexuality and Healthy Relationships. Families will be contacted directly by their coordinators with further information.

Ruth Fernandes

Our thoughts and imagination are the only real limits to our possibilities.

Orison Swett Marden

Educational Updates

Demystifying Differentiated Instruction

Differentiated instruction (DI) holds the key to education and learning for all. For those learners who are either under-motivated, or whose learning profiles make it difficult for them in any classroom setting, DI opens the door to the possibilities and potential for all students. Some teachers are experts in this area, and others may not have received experience as students or mentoring as professionals to feel comfortable in this area. There are some easy to access resources below which may assist those in education to begin to understand and expand their teaching repertoire. They are great resources for parents and tutors too, as a great deal of learning occurs or continues outside of the classroom.



“Differentiated Instruction is effective instruction that is responsive to the learning preferences, interest and readiness of the individual learner. Curriculum informs teachers what to teach, but doesn't instruct teachers on how to teach, nor how to address the wide range of learners in each class. The notion behind Differentiated Instruction is that it guides teachers on how to teach it to a range of learners by employing a variety of teaching approaches,” OISE Ontario Institute for Studies in Education www.oise.utoronto.ca/adaptivetech/Differentiation/.

Whether you are a teacher, an educational assistant, a tutor, or a parent these books provide great ideas to explore or build on to create your own materials and methods to differentiate instruction.

- **How To Differentiate Instruction in Mixed Ability Classrooms**, Carol Ann Tomlinson
- **Restructuring High Schools for All Students, Taking Inclusion to the Next Level**, Cheryl Jorgenson
- **You're Gonna Love This Kid! Teaching Students with Autism in the Inclusive Classroom**, Paula Kluth
- **Integrating Differentiated Instruction and Understanding by Design, Connecting Content and Kids**, Carol Ann Tomlinson and Jay McTighe
- **Access to Academics for ALL Students**, Paula Kluth, Diana M Straut, Douglas P Biklen
- **From Text Maps to Memory Caps (100 More Ways to Differentiate Instruction in K-12 Inclusive Classrooms)**, Paula Kluth, Sheila Danaher

Websites:

Paula Kluth www.paulakluth.com

Alberta Education <http://education.alberta.ca/departement/ipr/inclusion/capacity/differentiated.aspx>

PEAK parenting www.peakparent.org

Differentiation Daily <http://differentiationdaily.com/>

Cheryl Jorgenson www.cherylmjorgensen.com/

Canadian Research Centre on Inclusive Education www.edu.uwo.ca/inclusive_education/index.asp

Video: Top 10 Questions Asked About Inclusion www.mn.gov/mnddc/patrick_schwarz/index.html

Beyond the Crayon www.beyondthecrayon.com/

Reading Rockets www.readingrockets.org/article/263/

Transitioning

Endless Possibilities

My name is Dave, in June I graduated, I am finished grade 8. My graduation was good. Everyone was there. I was very proud. It was a good year!

At my graduation my teacher said in front of everyone...

"Dear Dave...

Where do I begin with you? Watching you grow, both with your peers as part of the collective and as an individual who knows exactly how he feels, what he wants, and how to express it has been nothing short of inspiring. You are a star photographer, an incredibly thoughtful person, someone who loves a good laugh, and the one who we can always count on to remember something or everything! I have not a sliver of a doubt that you will be successful in whatever you set your mind to. At both the high school level and beyond."

This made me feel very proud. I was excited and sad to leave my school.

In the summer, I started doing some volunteer work. I went to the Daily Bread Food Bank. I really liked it there. I had to sort and pack up food. There were nice people there. Then I came home on the GO train!

I worked in the school vegetable garden this summer too. I mowed the lawn, I didn't bring the whipper snipper over but I clipped the grass around the edges, pulled some of the weeds and watered the gardens.

Now I am in grade 9 at SATEC@WAPorter!

I like my school, I am very busy. When I finish school I might go to college.

When I'm done, I think I would like to work as a carpenter or a welder or work in a hardware store.

I want to get my driver's license too! It's good.

The possibilities are endless!

Dave P.



Dave & Endless Possibilities

Endless Possibilities
Dave P.

INTEGRATION ACTION FOR INCLUSION CONFERENCE

This past May, **Integration Action for Inclusion** hosted a weekend conference at Queen's University in Kingston. Their keynote speakers were Cheryl Jorgenson and Caroline Musselwhite. Expert speakers in their field with lots of experience and research to back them – they knocked the ball out of the park as far as conferences go!

www.cherylmjorgenson.com/ www.aacintervention.com

This was the conference to attend for anyone who has committed to inclusion, knows why they are committed but needs more ideas and examples on how to make it work. The conference was economical and jammed packed with valuable information geared towards parents, educators and support people with the focus on inclusive education and the tools to make it work. The conference was full and attendees came from all over the province and some came from the United States too. Time and money well spent! Check out Integration Action for Inclusion, see their website for membership information and stay tuned to this group, who knows when and where they will host their next workshop! www.integration-inclusion.com/

Extend-A-Family Support Groups

Support Groups & Making the First Step....

Extend-A-Family offers a variety of support groups across Toronto to assist parents/guardians and siblings reach out and support one another. We recognise that the first step to joining a support group can be challenging. That being said, Extend-A-Family staff, and a warm welcoming parental/guardian and sibling body are here to assist you through the initial phase.



You may be thinking: Do I need a support group? Is it right for me? Can I make the commitment? Will I be able to open up and share? Will I be welcomed? Will I fit in? Despite one's initial hesitancy to joining a support group the benefits can surpass one's initial concerns.

Support Groups bring people together that share similar experiences. Members can receive emotional support, information sharing and social support. It is a safe place to share your stories, to receive unbiased feedback. A place where you feel understood, where people "get" where you are coming from. It can be a forum to connect and develop long lasting friendships.

So if you're thinking about joining one of the many support groups offered via Extend-A-Family don't hesitate to pick up the phone and give us a call at **416-484-1317**, or send an email, info@extendafamily.ca, or check out our website, www.extendafamily.ca.

A Turn About!

Three years ago, my husband passed away and I was alone looking after our adult son who has challenges. It was a very difficult time for both of us adjusting to our loss and how was I going to manage on my own without my husband's support caring for our son.

Fortunately, I found out about the Safe & Secure Future Networks at Royal York Road United Church, about a year and a half ago and this has been a turn about for me.

From the very first meeting I was welcomed within the group, many having known one another for quite sometime, they made me feel a part of the group.

I look forward to our monthly meetings where we share our concerns. Our facilitator is wonderful and provides us with good information and speakers.

I am truly grateful for the program.

Sylvia R.

Parent Share – Support Group in East Toronto

If you are available on Thursday mornings, you will find the Parent Share meeting a very warm and welcoming place to receive support and friendship. Co-facilitated by Community Living, Woodgreen Community Services and Extend-A-Family, we explore a variety of topics including: coping with stress, school advocacy, teaching independent skills and transitions to school and onto adult life. Topics are suggested by the caregivers themselves. No matter what age your child is, you will find the Parent Share group a place where you are welcomed and valued.

We all have possibilities we don't know about. We can do things we don't even dream we can do.

Dale Carnegie



extend a family

offers a variety of support groups across Toronto. Flyers are posted on the website. Please contact the main office for further information.

Phone: 416 4841317

Email: info@extendafamily.ca

Web: www.extendafamily.ca

Parents Share East Support Group

Location: Cedarbrook Community Centre

Day: Every other Thursday

Time: 9:30 -11:30 am

Dads' Group

Location: Extend-A-Family office

Day: last Tuesday of each month

Time: 7:00 – 9:00 pm

East Toronto Parent Support Group

Location: Corvette Public School

Day: every other Tuesday evening

Time: 7:00 – 8:30 pm

North East Support Group

Location: Members' homes

Day: Tuesdays – once a month

Time: 9:30 -11:30 am

West Parents Support Group

Location: Long Branch Baptist Church

Day: Every other Wednesday

Time: 9:30 – 11:30 am

Adult Sibling Support Group

Location: Extend-A-Family office, or at a coffee shop

Day: To be determined

Time: 7:00 – 9:00 pm

Youth Sibling Support Group

Location: Extend-A-Family office

Day: To be determined

Time: 6:30 - 8:30 pm

Safe & Secure Futures Network (West Region)

Location: Royal York Road United Church

Day: First Tuesday evening of every month

Time: 7:00 – 9:00 pm

Safe & Secure Futures Network (East Region)

Location: St. Simon the Apostle Anglican Church

Day: Last Tuesday evening of every month

Time: 7:00 – 9:00 pm

Welcome – New Families, Board Members & Volunteers

Hi, I'm Kim Collins and I have been working in the disability field, in a variety of different capacities, for the past eight years and I have seen how natural supports can change a person's life. I heard about Extend-A-Family from one of the first children to be supported by the organization in the 1970s. The connections he made then are still a part of his life today. It was hearing stories about these types of connections that made me eager to become a part of Extend-A-Family Board of Directors. I am currently finishing a degree in Disability Studies at Ryerson University with plans to attend York for the masters in Critical Disability Studies. I am highly involved in the disability community in Toronto, volunteering with other organizations, working directly with people with disabilities, as well as, working for the School of Disability Studies at Ryerson.



Hi my name is Jennifer and I have been committed to the non-profit sector for over ten years. I have worked for a number of organizations in developmental services, inclusive recreation, and health promotion in roles within fundraising, program development, and executive management. I have a Diploma in Outdoor Recreation Management from Capilano University and will graduate from Ryerson University in the Spring with a Degree in Disability Studies. I am an active person and animal lover, I'm passionate about baseball, music, home renovations and family. I value community and believe in the power of creating a sense of belonging for people with and without disabilities. I am inspired about being involved with Extend-A-Family's Board of Directors because of the organization's commitment to providing people with disabilities with strong social networks and a place in a warm, welcoming community.



Hello, my name is Filomena Nait and I was recently elected to Extend-A-Family Board of Directors. I am both humbled and honoured to accept this role. Our family has been members of Extend-A-Family for over seven years. My husband and I are the proud parents of a child who is differently abled. I bring a wide variety of personal and professional experience to the board: a mother, a wife, home maker, family member, educational advocate, faith practitioner, support group member and expertise from the retail industry as a team leader.

Extend-A-Family's support has been vital to our family. For our son being included with the appropriate support has had a huge, positive impact on his life. For us, his parents, it has been a source of comfort, encouragement, and it has helped alleviate some of our worries and concerns. I could not imagine how our family life would have been without the support of Extend-A-Family.

I strongly believe in inclusion for all people but particularly for those who have a disability. As a new board member, I look forward to learning and growing. As a parent with a child who is differently abled, I promise to represent the voice of parents to the best of my ability, and support and defend Extend-A-Family mission and mandate on inclusion and belonging.



Looking for a unique Volunteer Opportunity in your local neighbourhood. Then Extend-A-Family might have just what you are looking for. A host or host family is an individual or family, ideally from the neighbourhood or community who has expressed an interest in getting to know a child or youth with a disability in their local neighbourhood.

To learn more about volunteering with Extend-A-Family contact info@extendafamily.ca or 416 484 1317 or www.extendafamily.ca



Book Reviews

Far From the Tree

Andrew Solomon's "Far from the Tree: Parents, Children and the Search for Identity" (Scribner) is an exploration of "horizontal identity" a term Solomon uses to describe a change in the way that parents and children relate to one another due to unexpected circumstances. Solomon is a gifted and compassionate writer, the vast research he has done on each type of difference is woven alongside real life experiences of both parent and child gathered from the more than 300 people he interviewed over a 10 year period of time. The chapters explore deafness, Down Syndrome, autism, schizophrenia, multiple severe disability, early genius, conception through rape, criminal behavior and transgender life. It is a dense book, as Solomon has taken great care and sensitivity to provide the reader with a balanced understanding of the issues, heartaches and joys inherent in the conditions themselves. I would heartily endorse this book. I learned so much and I'm grateful for the greater understanding and compassion I derived from its pages.

Lee Steel

Out of My Mind

"**Out of My Mind**" is a fictional book about a grade five student Melody Brooks told from her viewpoint. Melody is brilliant – though has not been able to show this or share it with her family, school or professionals. Their eccentric neighbour inherently knows Melody is bright and pushes her to learn more and more. Through assistive technology, Melody finds her voice to mixed reviews; some students and even teachers doubt she really knows as much as she appears to know. They doubt she is completing her work on her own and suggest her assistant is answering questions for her. This book demonstrates the drudgery of low expectations, the heartache of differences and the beauty of belonging and the need to be accepted and valued. This book is not without struggle and heartache and is a great tool to bring awareness about disability, difference and inclusion. It also highlights typical reactions and attitudes of society in general to those who are seen as being different and are reliant on others for the most basic personal needs. A must read for kids, teachers and families alike and potentially will open an uncomfortable discussion and a close look at our personal practices and beliefs!

Kim Southern-Paulsen

Book Reviews

- Far From the Tree
- Out of My Mind
- When My Worries Get to Big



When My Worries Get to Big

A Relaxation Book for Children Who Live with Anxiety by Kari Dunn Buron

My colleague recommended this book for a little person I facilitate a friendship circle for. The book acted as a great introduction into understanding one's anxiety levels and how to use a calming technique when one's emotions get too big. The book is particularly good for children who have sensory or anxiety issues; for children who may become overwhelmed and struggle with emotional outbursts.

The book is simple in design, and child friendly. The book can be utilised in a home or educational setting. Children can easily relate to the book and identify their emotions. The kindergarten children I work with really enjoyed the book and were able to use the simple calming technique when their emotions got too big.

If you're looking for a simple book to share with your child, something that assists him or her with their anxiety levels then I highly recommend this book.

Sharon Power

The impossible is often the untried. Jim Goodwin

Acknowledgement & Appreciation

Extend-A-Family would like to acknowledge the following schools for their partnership and support in building friendships and creating awareness about inclusion in the community: St. Alphonsus Catholic School, Balmy Beach Public School, Blessed Sacrament Catholic School, St. Cecilia Catholic School, Clinton Public School, Cosburn Middle School, St. Henry Catholic School, Hollycrest Middle School, Holy Angels Catholic School, St. John the Evangelist Catholic School, Kingsview Village Junior School, Leslieville Public School, Mary Shadd Public School, Pelmo Public School, Pineway Public School, Pleasant Public School, Portage Trail Community Junior School, RH McGregor Elementary School, Regent Heights Public School, R J Lang Elementary and Middle School, Stella Maris Catholic School.

Extend-A-Family would also like to thank:

- Reach for the Rainbow for working in partnership with Extend-A-Family and supporting children and youth inclusively in recreational opportunities and camps.
- Pet Valu for welcoming Extend-A-Family youth as volunteers at the Toronto Cat Rescue.
- “It’s a Dog’s Life” for welcoming dog lovers.
- Hollycrest Summer Camp and Islington Community School for embracing Extend– A– Family youth volunteers.
- “Mighty 4th Scouts Troop” for working in partnership with Extend-A-Family on Spinclusion.

Thank you for your contributions!

Charitable Registration Number 11890-4846-RR0001

Please make cheques payable to **Extend-A-Family** & mail to:



Extend-A-Family
200-3300 Yonge Street
Toronto ON M4N 2L6

For receipt purposes we require the following information:

Name _____ Tel: _____

Address _____