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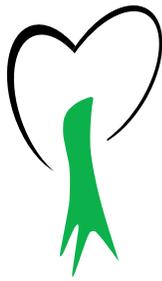
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January 2011

extend a family

*Welcoming*



**RECREATION CLUB AT  
FISHERVILLE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL**

Extend-A-Family and Fisherville Junior High School have been working towards building a welcoming, inclusive place for all. The Recreation Club at Fisherville Junior High School meets every Tuesday over lunch time. Students from grades 7 & 8 are invited to drop by, eat lunch together, converse with one another, play games together and build friendships. Here is a photo of a henna party that the students organized. Henna is a plant; a paste is made from it and is used in creating beautiful designs.

*We must dare to think 'unthinkable' thoughts. We must learn to explore all the options and possibilities that confront us in a complex and rapidly changing world. We must learn to welcome and not to fear the voices of dissent."*

J. William Fulbright.

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## Call for Submissions

If you would like to submit an article to upcoming Extend-A-Family newsletters, please send it to your coordinator or the office, specifying that it is for the newsletter. 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!**

## FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

Greetings!

It seems appropriate as we welcome in another year that the theme for this edition of our newsletter is "Welcoming." How do we make people feel welcome? We all want to be accepted and appreciated for our uniqueness.

When we feel welcome, whether it is within our own family, workplace, school or community, we are more likely to reach out and welcome others. When we are recognized and acknowledged we develop a sense of belonging, which allows us to feel safe, valued and respected. It's the small gestures that make people feel welcome, such as calling the person by their name, making eye contact, asking questions and listening to answers. Even a simple smile can make the difference of someone feeling uncomfortable and excluded or safe and welcome. When we see the intrinsic value of all people, when we look beyond labels and descriptors, we are able to welcome people into our hearts, homes and community.

Anne Marie Cole

## FROM OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Hi, my name is Jeff Short, and I am the secretary for the Extend-A-Family Board of Directors. I have been involved with Extend-A-Family for approximately 20 years and have supported a few young people with disabilities, with one becoming a long lasting friendship. I initially worked with individuals as a Special Services At Home worker, in which I supported individuals on a part-time basis to help them build relationships and be more engaged in the community. Over time, my friendship evolved with one person and continues to this day. I am grateful for my friendship with this young man, and to have been a part of his life for so many years.

A few years ago, I had begun looking for an opportunity to gain experience on a board of directors, and was happy to learn about an opportunity to join the Extend-A-Family's board. This is now my second two-year term on the board, and I have really enjoyed being part of it! If this is something you are interested in doing, I would encourage you to consider attending a board meeting as an observer. Meetings are held on a monthly basis, so there isn't a significant time commitment, and the Extend-A-Family staff are very supportive of the board and are great to work with. Please feel free to contact the Extend-A-Family office if you have any questions.

## COMMUNITY ACTIVATORS ON WELCOMING

Long ago, in a village, a person was welcomed in the womb, welcomed coming out of the womb, and again, re-welcomed at each new stage of life. It was said then, and is still spoken by some today, that if we do not receive these welcomes, there is a part of us that always feels exiled. A part of us is homeless and looking for fullness that comes from being seen. Some of us who have been more severely pushed aside, and left out because of the current condition of our lives feel this lack of welcoming more intensely. These citizens can be seen as messengers - informing us about the welcoming nature of our community.

Source: Community Activators: Professional Helping Organisations.  
Website: <http://www.communityactivators.com>.

## WHAT'S FOR DINNER?



Katherine Scherer,  
Jim Comishen , Amy Petko

About 6 months or 28 recipes ago Amy Petko began volunteering in the President Choice Cooking School with me for my "What's For Dinner?" cooking class. Amy was referred to me by an Extend-A-Family coordinator. This referral turned into a fantastic opportunity for both Amy and I. Her help each week getting ready for the class has been most helpful, but what

is more notable is how Amy herself complements the cooking school. It was not long after Amy began volunteering that she began to form relationships with other customers who attend the class each week. Any observer can see how each week these customers enjoy and look forward to hearing from Amy. Amy has compiled a very organized book of recipes from the chefs that have taught each Monday, additionally she has shared these recipes with her family. Amy has impacted me in so many different ways. Her phenomenal memory aids me each week in keeping track of all we have to do. What I really look forward to each week is Amy's humor, smile, positive attitude and high level of enthusiasm. Because of Amy I smile and laugh more each Monday. I thoroughly look forward to her presence and cannot thank her enough for being a part of the cooking school.

Katherine Scherer  
(Cooking School Coordinator)

### Beliefs Necessary to Achieve Community Inclusion

- People with disabilities are not their diagnoses.
- The "problem" is never a person's diagnosis; the real problems arise out of our attitudes and actions related to disability.
- Like gender, ethnicity and other traits, disability is a natural characteristic of being human.
- People with disabilities are more like people without disabilities than different.
- All people have gifts and talents, and can contribute to their communities.
- Communities—and the ordinary people in them—have great capacity to include and support all citizens.
- Most needs of individuals with disabilities and their families can be met by natural supports and generic services in typical, ordinary environments.
- Communities are "ready" to include and support individuals with disabilities right now, and children and adults with disabilities are "ready" to be included right now.
- Identifying a person's interests, connecting the person to others with similar interests in ordinary community activities, and providing the appropriate supports and accommodations can ensure community inclusion.

**Inclusion in the community will happen  
when we believe it can happen.**

## WELCOMING NEW FAMILIES



My family has really benefited from our association with Extend-A-Family. When we first moved to Toronto we left our support network of family and friends behind. It was a really positive experience to have some help in getting to know our community, both through finding out about other services here in the city and other families who needed them as we did.

We have attended parent meetings hosted by Extend-A-Family, which featured public speakers, and met many other families at the semi-annual Extend-A-Family gatherings. We have gained knowledge of other events of interest in the community through our internet mail group operated by Extend-A-Family. On a personal level I have benefited from the friendly and caring attitude of Extend-A-Family, which goes so far beyond anything that could be called being of service. My son is now part of a friendship circle within his school. This friendship circle includes his classmates and is facilitated by Extend-A-Family. The group gets together twice a month, share a lunch period and enjoy each other's company. This is a truly important piece in building strength in my son's future.

I would like to welcome new families to Extend-A-Family and encourage other families to join Extend-A-Family, as my family has. I think many hands can make work light, and we each have individual gifts and stories, which once shared, will bring wisdom to us all.

Alison Beahen



## SUMMMER STUDENT REFLECTIONS

### MY SUMMER WITH ESTHER, ASHLEY AND MATHEW

#### Mathew's Summer in Community



Mathew & Heryka

Nineteen year old Mathew was a riot! A fun filled summer two week vacation indeed. We visited his local library, went swimming, explored hiking trails at High Park and Echo Valley, and saw go kart racing and played video games. We also took a friendly walk on the lake-

shore where we saw a live movie set and took day trips to Centreville where he greeted all street cars along the way, explored downtown Toronto and visited the Spirit Movers dance group. He also received a private salsa dance lesson from me in exchange for teaching me Kung Fu fighting moves. He was able to demonstrate his slick new salsa moves by asking one of the participants to dance with him in front of the group. It was quite a treat to see him turn into a prince charming!

#### Esther at Hill Top Community School Camp



Esther & David

Summer 2010 was filled with much play and exploration. It started with a 4-year old beauty by the name of Esther. Each day at camp was filled with new challenges and opportunities for her to build upon her social development skills. Each day she took gentle risks that only increased her self-esteem and ability to

be independent. Witnessing these daily shifts in moods and behaviours were a great privilege and honour.

I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to accompany and witness Esther, Ashley and Mathew's interactions, triggers, and in particular, how they choose to communicate and be with their surroundings.

Heryka Miranda

#### Ashley at Latin American Girl's Summer Camp



Ashley & Heryka

Accompanying 16-year old Ashley at a Latin American girl's summer camp was quite extraordinary. She was able to speak Spanish or Spanglish (a combo of Spanish and English) with other Latin American girls her age and participate in a variety of cultural activities and formal workshops around the ingredi-

ents needed to have healthy relationships, safe sex, and the ability to identify the signs and warnings of abusive relationships and situations. She cofacilitated a dance/movement workshop with me and was able to perform a hip-hop dance piece in front of a group of her peers. Her leadership, courage and risk taking abilities were greatly appreciated and praised by all. She made lots of new friends and baked cookies to share for a party on the last day of camp. She enjoyed swimming and playing in the park with her new friends and most of all, making people laugh.

#### Nicholas' Summer

This summer, Nicholas spent a productive week volunteering at Epilepsy Toronto. Nicholas was a welcome addition to the staff. Nicholas was busy collecting and delivering mail, getting supplies, copying and preparing fact sheets. Shredding and preparing



visa slips were among his favourite activities! The office staff loved having him around and appreciated all of his hard work! The real fun came when Nicholas was able to volunteer at the Annual Busker fest!

## FROM DREAM TO REALITY

Jillian is a typical teen. She likes to hang out with her friends at school and on the weekends. She l-o-v-e-s shopping for clothes, going to the malls and then of course there is her love of sports; the Toronto Maple Leafs and the Toronto Blue Jays to be exact!

Recently Jillian invited some of the most important people in her life to come together as her support circle. Almost instantly a trend emerged, Jillian loves children! She loves being with them, playing with them, caring for them and she dreams of working with children one day.

Through the creativity and resourcefulness of this group, they were able

to find a summer program that would prepare Jillian for her dream. It was a Counsellor-In-Training program. Those responsible for the program were open to welcoming Jillian into their program and allowing for the necessary supports to ensure her success.

Jenny Blaser, Extend-A-Family Summer Student shared, "This was our third summer together. This year we tried something new and Jillian participated in a Counsellor-In-Training (CIT) program with Toronto Parks and Recreation. Jillian's favourite part of this opportunity was playing with the children in the camp that she was placed in. Jillian found the CIT experience

to be a great way to gain skills which she is looking forward to applying to a job in a day camp or day care in the future! The connections Jillian made during her time as a CIT are invaluable and the experience brought her many opportunities."

Jillian's perspective on the training, "the counsellor in training program was fun! I loved working with the kids! We got to go to the park and the wading pools, we had a movie day, and I helped them set up for crafts and activities, and I got to play with the kids. It was really fun!"

As a result of her training, Jillian is volunteering at a local community centre.

## WELCOME TO MY WORLD

It was October 31, 2010 and my daughter Cheyenne did not know we had a big surprise for her. She thought she was going to stay home and hand out Halloween candy but instead we were going out! We were going to see Battle of the Blades and cheer on Shae-Lynn Bourne and Patrice Brisebois. Shae-Lynn is skating in support of Make-A-Wish Canada. We had our banner all ready and I told Cheyenne we had to cheer very loud. First Cheyenne got dressed up as a pirate girl. Then she got the idea all by herself to pack up some bags of candy for the Wheel Trans drivers and for Shae-Lynn and Patrice. She was so excited at the prospect of handing out her candy.

When Cheyenne gave the first bag of candy to the Wheel Trans driver, he said "no thank you, that's yours." He was thinking that she was giving her own candy away. I said "Oh no, she packed that especially for you." He was very surprised and thanked Cheyenne. She was so happy. Then off we went to the show.

We enjoyed watching Battle of the

Blades. It was exciting and amazing to see how well the couples skate together. After the show we waited and tried to get to meet Shae-Lynn. I knew Cheyenne would be upset if she didn't have a chance to share her surprise. We waited and waited and waited and we were just about to give up as we couldn't be late for Wheel Trans. Finally I told someone that Cheyenne had something for Shae-Lynn and Patrice and they called Shae-Lynn over. Shae-Lynn was so gracious and kind and gave me a hug. Cheyenne gave her the treats and she commented how no one else had given her treats that day and that Cheyenne had given her one of her favourite chocolate bars. She shook hands with my son Samuel and my husband Peter. We got her autograph and a picture of Shae-Lynn and Cheyenne together. It was a great ending to the show.

Then we had to run to catch Wheel Trans. It was a cold, bitter night and we were standing in the middle of nowhere. And of all nights, the Wheel Trans bus was late! We were

just about to take a taxi when Samuel noticed a Wheel Trans bus go past us. He ran to check it out. We were relieved that it was ours. Cheyenne was excited to hand out her last Halloween bag. The driver was very surprised. He said to Cheyenne, "Since you gave something special to me, I have something special for you. Here is a bottle of chocolate milk that I brought back from the States." It was a welcome treat for Cheyenne after an exciting night out. When we got off of Wheel Trans, I heard the driver say to Cheyenne "You are a very special girl."

In sharing her treats, Cheyenne welcomed people into her world that evening. In turn, they reacted in surprise, delight and in sharing. The simplicity of Cheyenne's act brought people together, even if it was just for a few moments. But next Halloween, I am sure they will remember the pretty pirate girl that welcomed them into her world!

Ellen Doxtator



## **NORM KUNC PRESENTS AT REGENTS HEIGHTS PUBLIC SCHOOL**

Norm Kunc is an inspirational speaker, writer, consultant and advocate for inclusion. He recently made a stop at Regent Heights Public School and spoke to grade 6, 7 and 8 students, staff, a few parents and the local trustee. I and other attendees were inspired with Norm's message and wanted to share it with Extend-A-Family's readers. Norm said, "we are all strangers until we begin to share our stories and find out more about each other." He encouraged us to go out and learn about the strangers within our own school. He recognises that people fear what they don't understand. It is our diversity which makes us more interesting. Norm claims that "by embracing our diversity, we build inclusion, acceptance and a true sense of community." I whole heartedly agree with Norm's message. Below find a sample of people's responses to his presentation:

*"The Story of a Stranger" I learned that we shouldn't pity people for their disabilities; instead we should treat them just like everyone else.*

**Pooja (Grade 6 student)**

*The presentation was inspiring, and your funny way of telling about your childhood and positive message helped us feel more confident, and ready to be courageous so that we treat everyone with respect and kindness. Your story about how people always said hello to you but weren't really listening or caring about your response made us laugh but it also made us think*

*about the way we talk to others in our class. We try to make sure we talk to everyone in a Grade 5/6 way!*

**Samantha Gillan, (Teacher)  
& Grade 5/6 students**

*Whether you are able bodied person or disabled all humans face challenges. Norman Kunc showed that to the students of Regent Heights during his presentation. He had them engaged with his stories, jokes and insights. Exposing our students to a wide array of experiences allows them to ask thought provoking questions and reflect upon their own choices. My grade 6 class walked away from Norman's presentation with a better understanding that people are just people.*

**Davina McLean (Grade 6 teacher)**

*Stand up and be the change.*

**Nancy Keenan (Principal)**

*Norm Kunc said "Are you going to be the change or are you going to take the easy road? I thought about making a change. I could stand up for a friend and do something nice. I would make a change. Norm Kunc inspired me just so much.*

**Anisa (Grade 6 student)**

*He taught us we can choose to be happy and love life in spite of challenges and disappointments. He encouraged us to not make assumptions based on outward appearances but to invite the participation of "others" through authentic discussion and activity. Norm proposed an inclusive society in which people value difference and view diversity as the norm.*

**Rita DelCotto (staff)**

*Are you going to be the change or are you going to take the short cut? I liked it when Norm told us "once you see the problem with society you can't see the problem in the disabled person." It reminded me of a child in trouble and that they can't go through it alone, the family goes with the child and helps them.*

**Ritika (Grade 6 student)**

*Your presentation made us realize that everything is normal in the world and that being disabled is not a bad thing. We loved the way that you made a serious topic funny. You took the time to explain the struggles that you had, you showed us that you can do anything, even if you're disabled. If we fail at something, we should keep on trying, just like you did. You truly made an impact on our perspective.*

**Norma Rojas, (Grade 8 Teacher)  
& Grade 8 students**

*I am going to be the change.*

**Gursharan, (Grade 6 student)**

*It was a delight to hear Norman present to students with his great sense of humour, and ability to make strong points while at the same time making people feel at ease. His voice is so much more powerful because he has lived it. He was also able to state values that affect the lives of all children and youth, not just those with disabilities.*

**Susan Beayni, (Parent, Advocate)**

## **NURTURING RELATIONSHIPS & COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS**

My family has been with Extend-A-Family for about a year, I discovered Extend-A-Family through attending their Dad's group. My son is in Grade 8, and quite active in his community, participating in scouts and a member of his church youth group, and has many other interests. We have many close family and friends that we socialize with regularly, but I only started to realize that my son needs to deepen his relationships with not only these people, but his school friends too. We haven't hosted any gatherings, or had an outing with my son and his school friends since grade 1. With Grade 8 approaching, my wife and I decided to take the chance and start becoming actively involved to ensure our son's social life.

With Extend-A-Family's help, we organized a bowling party for him and

his classmates at the end of the school year. I was nervous, and excited about this. When the day came, we were expecting 8 kids to bowl, and 14 showed up! I was a bit overwhelmed. As the evening went on, I looked around and it was great to see other kids conversing with my son, and my son interacting with his peers. I saw firsthand that he has friends!

Since then we have had a barbecue, and celebrated our son's 13th birthday. Both, friends and family came to celebrate; he was especially excited to have everyone together! I see how my son and his friends have similar interests; computers, board games, cards, and music. We are going to work on getting his friends together at least once a month for a "games night".

I recognize how important it is to invest and nurture the friendships and relationships in my son's life. Even though I was hesitant for so many years, I realized that the more you welcome others into your life, the easier it gets. Pick up a phone, call your friends ... invite them over for special occasions or just for fun. We all have something new to learn, teach or share with one another. These friendships are so valuable to my son; I hope they continue through high school.

An Extend-A-Family Dad.

## **THE SUMMER INSTITUTE**

Several of our Safe & Secure Future Networks members attended the Summer Institute hosted by Inclusion Press at Ryerson University last summer. The Summer Institute is for people working actively on the complex issues of inclusion and diversity in communities. To find more out about the Summer Institute go to the Inclusion Network. <http://www.inclusion.com>



Laura, Daniel, Renate, Jordan, Doris, Elisabeth & Paul

### **DORIS POWER ON HER SUMMER INSTITUTE EXPERIENCE**

The Summer Institute was a conference I wish I could attend again, because it gave me an opportunity to examine beliefs, explore some new areas, stretch myself somewhat and share experiences with a diverse number of individuals from around the world. It validated my belief and practice of storytelling as instrumental in community building. Days spent in this milieu often gave mothers from Safe and Secure Future Networks chances to meet between workshops and compare notes ... as well as to get to know each other and our adult sons and daughters in a much deeper way than is possible at our monthly meetings.

For further information on Safe & Secure Future Networks contact main office 416-484-1317

**Extend-A-Family**

**Memories!**

**AGM & Winter Friendship Gatherings**

- An opportunity to meet with members, alumni, friends, funders & staff
- Be informed about what is happening with E-A-F.
- A place of welcoming—to share stories, talents, joys, challenges, laughter
- A place of belonging....

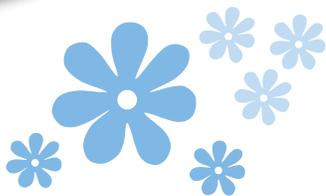


*A smile is the universal welcome.*

**Max Eastman**

*Circles create soothing space, where even reticent people can realize that their voice is welcome.*

Margaret J. Wheatley





## **EXTEND-A-FAMILY ON WELCOMING MEMBERS, ALUMNI, FRIENDS AND FUNDERS AT OUR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND FAMILY PICNIC!**

Every June Extend-A-Family hosts their Annual General Meeting (AGM) combined with a family picnic for families and friends of Extend-A-Family, this year was no exception. On June 13th we gathered at St. Leonard Church. The day was such great fun! With over 80 attendees, we had many families come out to share in the fun, food and conversations.

Comments by Attendees:

### **The O'Connell family**

*Extend-A-Family's AGM gave us an opportunity to get to know other parents and children, learn about future Extend-A-Family initiatives, have some food and participate in the games and activities and have fun together, in a welcoming and relaxing atmosphere.*

### **The Ambelez Family**

*This summer I attended the AGM with Isidro and Julia. The young families were having a lot of fun and brought back memories of the days when Julia loved the games and face painting going on during the meeting. I met a couple of new families and I made sure they knew we were one of the 'old ones' that kept in touch with Extend-A-Family even though Julia is almost 26 years old. We will always remember the good times we had and the support Extend-A-Family has given us and I am happy to see so many new families being part of it.*

### **Ann Berhanu**

*It was encouraging to see so many people working in similar circumstances towards similar goals. It was a good learning experience to socialize with other families and learn from them too, especially since I could pay attention with my child off having fun on the bouncy castle.*

### **Doris Power**

*I most appreciated the opportunity to meet parents who attend Safe and Secure Future Network's meetings in other areas of the city.*

### **The Alcon Family**

*We were very happy at our first AGM. It gave us an opportunity to meet other parents and kids. I enjoyed being with other parents.*

### **Alison Beahen**

*Griffin reported that the inflatable bouncy obstacle course was a delight. "First you bounce on the landing, then up over the hill, then through the woods of things toppling on your head, and finally jump and squeeze through the narrow tube at the end." What fun!*

### **The Schauer Family**

*We had a wonderful time at the AGM this past summer. There were plenty of activities for the children to enjoy and the jump castle was a huge hit. We were able to connect with other families and felt very welcome at our first AGM meeting.*

## **FRIENDSHIP CIRCLE UPDATES**

### **Friendships Grow at Cummer Valley Middle School**

The friendship circle at Cummer Valley Middle School is growing and blossoming. Students from the grade 7 classes have come together to enjoy getting to know each other and be creative with their choices of games and activities. Some are new to the group and others are hoping to rekindle a friendship circle of yester year. As communicative technology takes over our in-person time together, friendship circles provide the opportunity to enjoy priceless conversations and times of togetherness. As in the past, Cummer Valley M.S. has been supportive in partnering with families and Extend-A-Family in the work of inclusion. Our thanks go out to the Principal, Mr. Giorgi, classroom Teacher Mr. Tozer and the students for making this possible!

### **A FRIENDSHIP CLUB IS BORN AT MUIRHEAD PUBLIC SCHOOL**



From left to right, standing -Heather, Sammia, Hayley, Aidan, Mason and sitting -Navin, Grace and Deana

Students from the grade 4 class at Muirhead P.S. excitedly pose for a photograph. They are part of a friendship club that began very recently. They are enthusiastic about playing together, learning new games and sharing in conversations. The principal Ms. Robbins, the classroom teacher Ms. Nanthacumar and Staff at Muirhead P.S. have been welcoming and supportive of Extend-A-Family and the friendship club idea. We look forward to a year of growing and learning more about inclusion and participation.

## FRIENDSHIP CIRCLE AT OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL HELP P.S. ART & COMMENTS BY MEMBERS

- Friendship Circle is an awesome place to be during lunchtime. We are all excited to see our facilitator.
- We eat lunch together and then we play games like battle ship. We take turns leading the friendship circle. We have a partner and do a project with the group.
- Friendship circle involves teamwork and we do not choose whom we are with. This way we can work together with people we are not usually friends with.
- It gives us time to bond with friends. We find out more about each other and we



- express our feelings. We also talk about how to be a good friend.
- It also gives us time to talk and share together.
- Another good thing about our friendship circle is that it is made up of girls.
- In friendship circle we learn to give our trust and loyalty to each other.
- It is so much fun to be in friendship circle!

Comments by Friendship Circle Members: Jessica, Bobbi, Tania and Tiffany

## CREATIVE CORNER



Anthony in front of his favorite piece of art work.

Anthony M. has been attending Waterfront Trail Art Centre for several years now. And as a result of his artistic talents Anthony had his first art showing at Cafe Musique. On painting Anthony says, "I wanted to take the colors and see how far I could go with them and what I could do with them. It was very fun to be at Water Front Trails Artists Camp and have people really like my paintings, it's amazing, simply amazing."

## ESTHER'S FIRST DAY OF CAMP

Tears rolling down

A new challenge

First steps are risky little one

Carefully and reluctantly, your parents hand you to:

My care

My trust

My guidance

Mom nourishes you with a warm and hearty lunch so you have energy for what lies ahead

You make a new friend, an angel who is enchanted by your being and curiosity You are wiser than your years

Your connection to your ancestral roots through the music of the Andes grounds you

Filling you with pure inspiration to fully express yourself One can only be inspired to write poems and songs to recite and serenade the beauty that only you can bring

Heryka Miranda

## BLOSSOMING FRIENDSHIP

Sarah and Azba are very fortunate to share this unique bond of friendship. It helps them explore their relationship in an entirely new and positive light. They have been buddies for over three years.... and Azba says, "the moments we share continue to help us learn, care, and help our friendship to blossom".



From left to right, Azba and Sarah

*Beauty is everywhere a welcome guest.*

Wolfgang von Goethe



## BEYOND THE FRIENDSHIP CIRCLE...

The lunch bell rings; it's time for the friendship circle to gather. A gathering of two or more people is a friendship circle. We don't typically call it by that name but each of us either belongs to one or has a desire to be part of one. Friendship circles in schools are intentional gatherings of children or youth who come together over the lunch hour, share stories, plan and play games and gradually get to know each other better. Extend-A-Family coordinators have initiated and supported a number of friendship circles in schools over the years. We try and create a welcoming presence among the group of children. Being welcoming and respectful of each other is an intrinsic part of any relationship. You may ask how does this come together. An invitation to join a friendship opportunity is put out to a classroom of children; some respond enthusiastically; others tentatively ask what this is about. A common question from children is "Is there a cost to join the group?" and my response is "Yes; we give our time, our commitment and enthusiasm – a cost in friendship that is priceless."

As the group becomes more connected, they may want to plan an out of school gathering such as a skating or swim party, or go to the movies;

doing the fun and typical things that friends do together. Being invited to a birthday party or having a play date at each others' homes can be an exciting and often desired outcome for some. With young teen participants, discussions about feelings, broken hearts, belonging or competing may be a pressing discussion that happens during a particular lunch time together. Children and youth of all ages have learned and grown in friendship circles. Those who belong to a friend-



ship circle mutually benefit from the experience. Respect, taking turns, sharing, playing as a team member, finding ways to include everyone and having fun are essential ingredients to having a meaningful group. Like with any friendship or relationship, if we want it to thrive and sustain itself,

we need to work at it. Betty, a parent who has been actively involved in building and sustaining friendships for her daughter Janice, has said: "Offer a welcoming home to your child's friends, their siblings and parents. Parents of all children have concerns and challenges, so be open to hearing the struggles of other parents and sharing positive experiences too. Just having Janice's friends over is a joyful experience for Janice; she enjoys being in their presence, listening to the conversations of her peers, and participating in different games and activities."

Other suggestions to keeping friendships alive and coming are: Friendship circles have the potential to impact everyone participating. Children have remembered fondly their time together; the moments that required them to think about making accommodations in games so all could be included and to still have loads of fun. Parents have commented about how their child's presence in the friendship circle has helped them to take time to listen and be kind. Everyone gets to win something in this game of friendship.

Ruth Fernandes (Coordinator)

### EDUCATION CORNER

#### What is Inclusive Education?



"Inclusive education / is not concerned with the assimilation or accommodation of discriminated groups or individuals

within existing socio-economic conditions and relations. It is not about

making people as 'normal' as possible/ Inclusive education is not an end in itself, but a means to an end -the creation and maintenance of an inclusive society. As such, the interest is with all citizens, their wellbeing and security... It is ultimately about the transformation of a society and its formal institutional arrangements, such as education. This means change in the values, priori-

ties and policies that support and perpetuate practices of exclusion and discrimination."

Source: Len Barton (1999). Market ideologies, education and the challenge for inclusion, in: Inclusive education, World Yearbook of Education (eds.) Harry Daniels & Philip Gardner. pp 54 -62.

## REGENT HEIGHTS PUBLIC SCHOOL RECEIVES ANNUAL INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AWARD FROM COMMUNITY LIVING TORONTO



Susan Beayni comments on the award, “as a community member, a former teacher and advocate for those who are often marginalized, I was delighted to nominate the team at Regent Heights School for the incredible work they do to make sure that all people in the school feel valued, included and learn the skills to be good citizens now and long into the future. Their team became an example to others of how to build a loving, caring, cooperative community in which students are being prepared to be great citizens now and into the future.”

Thanks to Susan’s nomination, this September a team of teachers, support staff, students, parents and the Principal from Regent Heights Public school received the Community Living Toronto’s Award for Inclusive Education which recognizes outstanding practices in inclusive education.

Here’s what some of our school and community members had to say about the award:

*I was impressed that the inclusive culture of Regent Heights P.S. was recognized beyond the community that lives within its walls on a daily basis into the larger community of Toronto, I was impacted by seeing how fundamentally important it is to the student, the families and ourselves when we make sure that our classrooms and schools serve all the students within its walls, its life altering beyond a shadow of doubt. Once you see the impact then it motivates you to do a better job.*

**Tom McKeown**  
(former Regent Heights P.S. teacher)

*I was fortunate to be a part of a team whose contributions enabled inclusion to happen. That can be a challenge and a privilege at the same time. The results can be very meaningful to all.*

**Gill Russell (Educational Assistant)**

*Me and my brother get the chance to go to the same school. When I used to wait for the school bus to come and pick me up, I would see all my friends going to my old school (Regent Heights). It would make me feel very sad. Finally we are all happy because I get to see my friends from the neighbourhood.*

**Zahhid (Student)**

*Inclusive education were words which sat unfulfilled in a dream which I held for my son, and his school. There were always reasons why it couldn’t happen and too many people who supported those reasons. This past school year it all changed. The dream has become reality! The benefits have been far reaching; for all of our students and the parents as well. The morale, support and the positive energy which can be felt throughout the school is uplifting. Being able to participate the evening of the award; walking up to receive the award with teachers, parents, students and the principal was amazing! Sixteen people accepting the award for our school! I hope this was an awakening for everyone who holds the same dream. It can happen!*

**Kim Southern-Paulsen (Parent)**

*Supporting and connecting with disabled students often brings out the softer gentler side of many students and adults. By learning about our differences, we also learn about our similarities. It was heart-warming to see how appreciative the families of some of our students and the members of Community Living Toronto were of the efforts, big and small, that we have made at Regent Heights P.S. toward true inclusion. Inclusion is successfully happening at Regent Heights P.S. because we believe it’s important and because it makes our community richer. We are more motivated to find solutions to difficult situations and to work as a team to support our students.*

**Nancy Keenan (Regents Heights P.S. Principal)**



## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT TRANSITION PLANS

A transition plan is to prepare a student for moving from secondary school to post secondary settings; college programs, or supported work environments, as an example. Transition planning begins at age 14 according to the Ministry of Education. Students with a gifted exceptionality cannot have a transition plan based on giftedness alone.

The transition plan is to prepare the student for their future after high school; whether that is to prepare them for further postsecondary education, employment training, supported employment and or community living. The Transition Plan is part of the Individual Education Plan; the same standards for IEP monitoring apply to the transition plan and it is the Principal's responsibility to oversee the creation and monitoring of the transition plan.

To initiate a transition plan, if the school has not taken the initiative, parents should request this in writing, directed to the Principal. The needs and goals of the student noted in the transition plan should be consistent with those on the Individual

Education Plan. The transition plan is done in consultation with the principal, parents, the student, school staff, community agencies and post secondary institutions.

Expect your teen's assigned guidance counsellor or Special Education Resource Teacher to be involved with the preparation of the transition plan.

'Regulation 181/98 subsection 6(4), requires that, where the pupil is 14 years of age or older, the Individual Education Plan, must also include a plan for transition to appropriate postsecondary school activities, such as work, further education, and community living. Subsection 6(5) states that 6(4) does not apply in respect of a pupil identified as exceptional solely on the basis of giftedness" Regulation 181/98, subsection 6(7), requires the principal, in developing a transition plan, to consult with such community agencies and postsecondary educational institutions as he or she considers appropriate.

The student's needs and future goals should be consistent with the IEP. The plan should include:

- specific goals for the student's transition to postsecondary activities. The goals must be realistic and must reflect the strengths, needs and interests of the students; the actions required, now and in the future, to achieve the stated goals. The actions identified must build on the student's identified strengths, needs, and interests;
- the people who are involved supporting this individual to complete the noted action. This could be a person or agency (the student, parents, educators, providers of specialized support and services, community agencies)
- timelines for the implementation of each of the identified actions.

Resources related to Transition plans:

Transition Planning: A Resource Guide, 2002

[www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/spiced/transiti/transition.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/spiced/transiti/transition.html)

IEP Standards [www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/spiced/iep/iep.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/spiced/iep/iep.html)

## EXCITING HAPPENINGS AND UPDATES 2011



### Extend-A-Family Winter Friendship Gathering

@ North Toronto Memorial Community Centre Sunday, February 06, 2011 @ 1:00 PM

### Sexuality Information Night



Thursday February 17th 2011, 7 pm to 8:30 PM at St. Leonard Church -see

flyer

### Extend-A-Family Annual General Meeting

June 5, 2011

### Youth Conference on Inclusion

- Community Living Ontario, March 2011

### Extend-A-Family New Website



Thanks to the talents and expertise of designer David Frederik Moussalem, [www.davidfredrik.com](http://www.davidfredrik.com) and web site programmer Matt Stephens [www.deflime.ca](http://www.deflime.ca), Extend-A-Family is delighted to invite you to visit our newly designed website at: [www.extendafamily.ca](http://www.extendafamily.ca)

We trust you will find the new website interesting and informative and welcome your feedback.

### Safe & Secure Future Networks Workshops & Presentations 2011

- Power of Attorney for Finance & Health
- Supported Decision Making
- Reflecting on the Art of Interviewing
- Scarborough Residential Alternatives
- Lights - Innovative Living Arrangements
- Life After School
- Taking Care of the Care Giver

For further information contact: email: [ssfn@extendafamily.ca](mailto:ssfn@extendafamily.ca) phone: 416-484-1317

## EXTEND-A-FAMILY & COMMUNITY SUPPORT GROUPS



**West Parents Support Group at Longbranch Baptist Church**  
**Day:** Every 2nd week on Wednesday morning  
**Time:** 9:30 – 11:30  
**Contact:** Sharon Power  
**Phone:** 416-484-1317  
**Email** [sp@extendafamily.ca](mailto:sp@extendafamily.ca)

**Adult Sibling Support Group at Extend-A-Family main office**

**Day:** 2011 TBD  
**Time:** 7.00 PM – 9.00 PM  
**Contact:** Jessica Van Wyk  
**Phone:** 416-484 1317  
**Email** [jvw@extendafamily.ca](mailto:jvw@extendafamily.ca)

**Mom's Morning Out at East Support Group and Cedarbrook Community Centre**

**Day:** Every other Thursday  
**Time:** 9.30 AM -11.30 AM  
**Contact:** Tamara Bailey  
**Phone:** 416-484 1317  
**Email** [tb@extendafamily.ca](mailto:tb@extendafamily.ca)

**Safe & Secure Futures Network (West Region) at Royal York Road United Church**

**Day:** Monday evening once a month  
**Time:** 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM  
**Contact:** Sharon Power  
**Phone:** 416-484 1317  
**Email** [ssfn@extendafamily.ca](mailto:ssfn@extendafamily.ca)

**Safe & Secure Futures Network (Central & East Region) at St. Simon the Apostle Anglican Church**

**Day:** Tuesday evening once a month  
**Time:** 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM  
**Contact:** Anne Murray  
**Phone:** 416-484 1317  
**Email** [ssfn@extendafamily.ca](mailto:ssfn@extendafamily.ca)

**Dads' Group at Extend-A-Family Main Office**

**Day:** Tuesday 2011  
**Additional Dates TBD**  
**Time:** 7:00PM – 9:00PM  
**For further information and to register contact Sam Rochese**  
**Phone:** 416-484 1317  
**Email:** [sr@extendafamily.ca](mailto:sr@extendafamily.ca)

## RESPITE SERVICES.COM

On behalf of the Respite Network, [respiteservices.com](http://respiteservices.com) in Toronto will be conducting an online survey for families who use respite services in Toronto. The purpose of the survey is to gather information from families about what respite works for them and what they would like to see within the system. The survey which

currently was done during the summer months each year is now going to be posted online throughout the year. Each summer the survey results for the year will be tallied and recommendations regarding the results will be fed back to the Respite Network table. [Respiteservices.com](http://Respiteservices.com) and the Respite Network members appreci-

ate the time families take to assist us in evaluating the respite system in Toronto. The survey will be going online through survey monkey in January 2011 so stay tuned for future announcements about access to the survey.

Lorna Powers

## ADULT SIBLING GROUP

I am a sibling to a wonderful, caring man. As he ages, health problems have surfaced and my brother has been bravely dealing with them over the last 5 years. My family (Mum, Dad, and myself) rallied around him; his needs have changed, and will probably continue to change as he goes through life. I understood that my brother would always need advocacy. If life follows the path people expect, then, this advocacy piece would be in my hands; I had taken some of that responsibility over the years. During the intense few years of my brother's

hospitalization, I became, as many caregivers do, overwhelmed. He was in a hospital near my retired parents, in another city, so when not working, I was there, spending time with him, providing relief for my parents, advocating on his behalf. Fear and negative thoughts gripped me. Can I handle this responsibility? Do I want this? And for the first time in my 40 years, I had doubts.

I love my brother very much and will always be there for him as he is for me. But, surely I was not alone in my thoughts. Through my work with Ex-

tend-A-Family, I knew there were supportive groups for parents and "sib shops" for children, but nothing for us older siblings. And so began the Extend-A-Family adult sibling group. We are fairly new, but, with the exceptional facilitation of Jessica Van Wyk, we have shared our stories, joy of love for our siblings, fears and successes. Yes, I may continue to have doubts, but it is comforting and reassuring to know that I am not alone.

For information on the adult sibling group contact the main office 416-484-1317



## ACKNOWLEDGMENT & APPRECIATION

- A huge thank you to the following schools for continuing to support friendship and being places of welcoming within their school communities: Portage Trail J.C.S., Park Lawn J. E.S., Mother Cabrini C.S., Holy Angel’s C. S., Our Lady of Perpetual Help C.S., St. Cecilia C.S., St. Alphonsus C.S., St. Henry’s C.S., St. Vincent de Paul, Stella Maris, Transfiguration of our Lord C.S., Dallington P.S., R.H. McGregor, St. George’s J.S., Cummer Valley M.S., Eastview P.S., Muirhead P.S., Regent Heights P.S., St. Clare C.S., Fisherville J.H.S, Etobicoke School of the Arts, Pleasant Public School, St. Luke Catholic School.
- Reach for the Rainbow for working in partnership with Extend-A-Family to support children and youth inclusively in both, camps and recreation programs.
- City of Toronto Parks & Recreation for working with Extend-A-Family’s summer students and coordinators to ensure our children and youth are supported inclusively in recreation programs across the city.
- A special thank you goes out to Long Branch Baptist Church, Royal York Road United Church, St. Simon the Apostle, St. Leonard Church for use of your facilities. We appreciate your willingness to work with our organisation.
- A special thank you goes out to Community Living Ontario Kimberley Gavan for working jointly with Extend-A-Family in inviting Bruce Anderson to present on “Welcoming” to our collective agencies.
- On behalf of Safe & Secure Future Networks a heartfelt thanks goes out to the individuals and organisations who have shared knowledge on various topics of value and services and supports, with our membership.

*“Welcome every problem as an opportunity. Each moment is the great challenge, the best thing that ever happened to you .The more difficult the problem, the greater the challenge in working it out.” .*

Grace Speare

## 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 \_\_\_\_\_