



extend a family

winter 2005

Extend-a-Family

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“The Only Disability Is Having No Relationships”

Judith A. Snow



There are years of experience shadowing this profound statement. Within those shadows are reflections of the many friendships that surround Judith Snow. These relationships and her remarkable tenacity continue to resolve many issues faced by Judith through the years.

It was 1980 when circumstances resulted in a breakdown in Judith's support that prompted the creation of the first Support Circle, called the Joshua Committee. So called because this ever-changing group of unpaid people would assist Judith to break down many walls. Twenty-five years later, the Joshua Committee is still convened regularly by Judith to assist her with decision making, to encourage and aid her support staff, to smooth her affiliation with NABORS, and, most importantly, to simply be with her in friendship!

Judith works unceasingly for inclusion. This commitment to communicating this principle takes her around North America and Britain. Her straightforward manner of being with people is often a refreshing burst of energy for people who are labelled and a call to raise the expectations of their families and any nearby professionals.

Judith Snow is an internationally known key note speaker and workshop leader on areas surrounding inclusion who lives in Toronto. Much of our work here at Extend-A-Family is directly and indirectly inspired by Judith's life and work. To further explore Judith Snow's story, the Extend-A-Family library has her books: *From Behind The Piano* by Jack Pearpoint and *What's Really Worth Doing And How To Do It* by Judith A. Snow.

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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 can not guarantee that your contribution will be used. Given all of that... **We would love to hear from you!**

From our Executive Director:

Happy 30th Anniversary Extend-A-Family!

In 1975, some parents of children with disabilities decided to create a program that would provide opportunities for their children to develop meaningful relationships and to participate in community activities. Today, Extend-A-Family remains committed to these principles.

At Extend-A-Family's 20th Anniversary of friendship, John O'Brien said "[There are] two things I want to celebrate: a) people claiming the power to define...to name, to say how things are and how they ought to be [and]; b) people claiming the power to act." The twelve founding families of Extend-A-Family did exactly that. On behalf of everyone involved in Extend-A-Family, I would like to thank these founding families for sharing their vision of friendship and intentional community inclusion. Our Founding Families are: Arnold, Chernets, Coupel, Davies, Distin, Francis, Haggerty, Helleiner, Houghton, Nightingale, Peck, and Scarfe.

Anne Marie Cole

From the Chairperson

Happy New Year.

2004-2005 started out with a bang. The Board of Directors had some major changes in its membership. Please join me in welcoming Bob Slessor, Delores McFadden and Susan Walker-Kennedy. Michele Schmidt and Susan Petko would like to leave the Board after serving as Secretary and Co-Chair, respectively, for a number of years.

We have a dedicated Board of Directors who is committed to the mission of Extend-A-Family and the families we support. We are always interested in attracting more parents and community members to sit on the Board, assist with the Governance of policies, and contribute to success of our program.

The time commitment is minimal. The Board meets once per month (not during the summer months) and the meetings last about 2 hours. Any additional work is based on your position in the Board. Should you be interested in joining the Board of Directors or should you know of anyone who would be interested in joining the Board of Directors, please forward your resume with a cover letter indicating why you want to be a member and we will be in contact with you.

The Extend-A-Family Board of Directors wishes families, friends and staff a healthy, happy and prosperous 2005

Anne Bloom

Rebecca and Sui Lee



Rebecca Beayni treasures her friendship with Sui Fung Lee, which started back in 1991. Extend-A-Family brought the two together 14 years ago and they have been steadfast friends ever since. Some of the memories over the years include going away to camp together for 2 weeks; having pyjama parties at Sui's home; celebrating Extend-A-Family's 20th anniversary celebration at Inn on the



Park at which time, Tanya Chernets used her talents to cut out a beautiful profile of Rebecca and Sui together; celebrating Rebecca's 16th birthday at WindReach Farm; gathering for many circle meetings and parties over the years and many more memories.

On Dec. 18, 2004, Sui married her sweetheart Amidou and Rebecca and her family were greatly honoured to be among the guests. As the relationship between Sui and Amidou had deepened over the years, it was agreed that he must come and meet Rebecca since Rebecca is such an important part of Sui's life and vice versa. We were delighted to have Amidou join us for one of Rebecca's potluck dinners.

More recently, their wedding was beautiful and it was a wonderful time to reflect on love, friendship and commitment. As Rebecca's mom, I'm touched that, even though I didn't know many of the people at the reception, they all seemed to either know Rebecca or know of her. Even Sui's colleagues from the school where she works had heard Rebecca's story. There was an ongoing slide

show, repeating throughout the evening of Sui with family and friends for all to watch. I was deeply touched to see photos of Rebecca over the years, remembering the many fun times she and Sui had over a 14-year period. The fact that our family picture



was also included meant a lot. As much as we treasure our friendships, sometimes we don't fully realize the impact it has on others' lives.

After the bride and groom had danced the first dance, Simon and I were called up to the dance floor to dance in honour of our 25th wedding anniversary, which was on Dec.15. Sui and Amidou danced with Rebecca as I danced with Simon. We left the way we arrived, with four strong and caring guests, carrying Rebecca in her wheelchair down the long set of stairs. Our hearts were warmed as we continue to believe that it is our friendships and committed relationships that give our lives meaning. What a wonderful way to enter the Christmas season, a time to focus on love and peace.

Rebecca and Susan Beayni



Reflections on Gentle Teaching

On November 23, 2004, several staff from Extend-A-Family were gifted with the opportunity to attend a Gentle Teaching 1 Day Introduction Workshop with John McGee. For several years I had heard about Gentle Teaching, but as a former teacher I had misunderstood it as simply teaching gently. So I had neglected to ask the questions that would have led me to this work many years ago. I regret that.

What follows is a reflection of my experience of that day. I only hope I can do Dr. McGee's work justice.

I entered a large open room full of chairs, two televisions, and one large screen for overheads. More importantly what struck me was the number of people who I already knew in the room. These are people who I deeply respect and if they were here,... and did this work,... well... I felt myself open and escape layers of resistance and tiredness. Greetings completed and refreshments gathered, I found a seat beside a colleague.

The day started with several layers of introductions; someone introduced someone who introduced someone who introduced John McGee. There stood a giggling Irish Catholic American man with silver in his hair. I was charmed. I was sitting at the back and tried to sit taller, finally sitting on my foot on my chair, not comfortable, but successful!

Quoting the Gentle Teaching International webpage (www.gentleteaching.com),

"Gentle Teaching is many things. Gentleness toward others, in spite of what anyone does or does not do, is the critical factor. It is a paradox. Fists are met with hugs. Cursing is met with words of affection and nurturing. Spiteful eyes are met with warmth.

Gentleness recognizes that all change is mutual and interwoven. It starts with caregivers and, hopefully, touches those who are most marginalized. Its central focus is to express unconditional love. It is the framework around a psychology of human interdependence. The main

idea of gentleness is not to get rid of someone else's behaviors, but to deepen our own inner feelings of gentleness in the face of violence or disregard.

Gentle Teaching is also a teaching approach. As such, it has four initial teaching purposes—to teach others to feel safe, loved, loving, and engaged. These do not just happen. They are taught through repeated acts of love. Gentle caregivers learn to use their presence, hands, words, and eyes as their primary teaching tools to uplift and honor others." (emphasis added)

*"Gentleness toward others,
in spite of what anyone
does or does not do, is the
critical factor..."*

These words do form a vital element of Gentle Teaching. However more significant to me was the exertion that all people are my Brothers, my Sisters, my Mothers and my Fathers, which of course speaks to why I would seek to be with people in this very challenging way. Dr. McGee would begin a video with a ruthlessly honest portrayal of the conditions that people are forced into and say; "This man is your Brother". For me this served as a reminder that could push me past my fear of what this person could do or how they looked or what they might say. It reminded me that I would never allow my brother to be treated thus. Never.

John McGee has worked with people around the world; people who are labelled with developmental disabilities, homeless men and women,

children forced into prostitution, terribly impoverished people. These are desperately vulnerable people who, pushed by circumstances, abused by workers, and caged by governmental policy, act violently either towards others or themselves. Our typical response to violence is to meet it with more violence, anything from ignoring the individual, to a segregated, isolated 'time-out room', to 'privileges' or even food being denied, to restraint of varying degrees, to imprisonment, to physical beating. Gentle Teaching challenges caregivers to meet this violence with love, unconditionally. Gentle Teaching challenges me to wrestle with my seemingly inherent fight or flight response to feeling threatened, to rise above this to my love for people, to my understanding of why this person would hit themselves or me, to my compassion for their pain.

The videos, with their haunting pictures and powerful music, forced tears and muttered curses from myself and many others in the room. I could have easily slipped into a despair; nothing could be done, nobody would do what needed to be done, no one would pay for what needed doing. Except that standing right in front of me was Dr. John Joseph McGee. He was the one who knew what could be done, was doing what needed doing, and knew it cost far less than what was happening!!! Despair ran from the hope that filled me.

There are pieces of this work that confront me and others that seem to just open more questions than offer answers. Nevertheless, there are opportunities for me to spend more time in this. I have colleagues and friends who work with Gentle Teaching. There are many books and videos to access. In April, there is a Gentle Teaching conference in Toronto.

I am summoned to be with people and I only want to do that in a way that is healing for both of us. Gentle teaching challenges that this is really the only way to be with people.

Thank you John.

Rain C. Hood

Dr. John McGee and guest speakers from across Canada will be leading sessions on a variety of areas related to Gentle Teaching. Nerina Robson and Felicia Jarvis will share their knowledge about the impact Gentle Teaching has had in families and schools. Cam Dore and Steve Theisen will be speaking from the perspective of implementing Gentle Teaching in their agencies. This is an opportunity to hear stories from other communities about the impact Gentle Teaching is having within families, schools, faith communities and agencies.

There is an early enrolment discount, if you register by March 7, 2005. Your cost would then be \$330.00 for the entire conference. This includes two days of workshops, a banquet dinner, two keynote addresses, a continental breakfast and lunch. There is also an opportunity to register for one day.

The Gentle Teaching Conference is being held at the Radisson Hotel Toronto Markham. The dates are April 6, 7, & 8, 2005.

Mark the dates on your calendar and plan to attend. Please contact Joanne Partridge at 905.686.6592 ext. 221 for more registration information.

Safe and Secure Futures Networks

Safe and Secure Futures Networks aim to empower families to develop and nurture a support circle for their family member who has a disability. A support circle is a group of people, primarily family and friends, who are invited to come together regularly, to focus on the individual and his/her evolving personal vision. Circle members are intent on supporting the person to have choice and control in his/her life and to experience a variety of meaningful relationships. The Safe and Secure Futures Networks offer opportunities to share and learn from each other, building our confidence to invite people to meet, listen to hopes and dreams, consider possibilities, and plan with the individual we love, who may be vulnerable and at risk of isolation. As a framework for discussion, meetings will focus on these four broad topics this year:

- Relationships-The heart of the matter (February)
- Person-centred Planning with a support circle (March)
- Ensuring Financial Security and Estate Planning (April)
- Creating the right place to live- and the right support (May)

Resource people may be invited to share their knowledge and expertise. A family social will be scheduled and organized for the June meeting.

You are invited to join one of the monthly networks:

West Network meets the 3rd Thursday of each month at Royal York Road

United Church, Ennals Room,
851 Royal York Rd. (Two blocks south of Bloor).

Central Network meets the 2nd Thursday of each month at Harry "Red" Foster Clubhouse

40 Birch Ave. (One block southwest of Summerhill subway station)

Hospitality begins at 7 pm
Meetings start at 7:15 pm

To register, or for more information, please contact Christy Barber, Coordinator, Safe and Secure Futures Networks at cb@extendafamily.ca or 416.487.4564. If you would like to develop a support circle for your family member, or if you are part of a group that would like to know more about support circles and person-centred planning, I would be pleased to hear from you.

We greatly appreciate that Safe and Secure Futures is funded through a City of Toronto Community Services Grant.

Safe and Secure Futures Networks Web References- Relationships and Support Circles

These references are for information purposes only

www.plan.ca
www.tiesthatbind-nfb.ca
www.communityworks.info several articles
www.lifespan-wa.org
www.fsa.toronto.com/programs/OPTIONS/circles
www.inclusion.com

New Companion Policy

About 2 years ago, I got involved in a human rights complaint (not as complainant but as a writer of submissions) to do with Famous Players Movie Theatres and their companion policy for people with disabilities. As the result of this complaint and other pressures, it was announced on December 3rd (International Day for Persons with Disabilities) that there would be a new companion policy in place for people with disabilities (not just physical) that will involve companions paying a \$3.00 rate for admission.

My understanding is that families will receive a card to avoid having to ask each time they attend (as issues of dignity were central to the complaint).

Please check before attempting: www.access2.ca

Mom's Groups

Comments from participant of Central Mom's Group, Extend-A-Family family member/Mom, Shar Jaglall:

"I appreciate the avenue to vent. It's a comfortable environment- the facilitator, Linda, makes sure the physical setting is comfortable. Other moms have expressed these views. It's a place where you can speak everything and anything. We are grateful for the opportunity and would like to see it continue."

Mom's groups are proudly co-sponsored by Extend-A-Family and Community Living Toronto. Our groups are designed for Moms of children of any age who have an intellectual disability. These gatherings are intended for Moms to informally share, be together, and connect with each other.

East Mom's Group

Time: *Every other Thursday Morning 9:30—11:30*

Dates: *January 13 – June 16*

Location: *Cliffcrest United Church, McCowan Rd. (1 McCowan Rd. at Kingston Rd.) Northeast corner*

Contact: *Janice Matthews, 905.509.8494 jm@extendafamily.ca*

Central Mom's Group

Time: *Tuesday mornings, 9:30-11:30*

Dates: *January 25 - April 5**

(excluding March 22nd)

Location: *Harry Foster Clubhouse, 40 Birch Ave. (Summerhill subway station - directly across the street on west side is Birch Ave.) Parking available.*

Contact: *Linda Ger Walters, 416.651.2477 lgw@extendafamily.ca*

West-End Mom's Morning Out

Time: *Thursday mornings, 9:30-11:30*

Dates: *January 27– April 14**

(excluding March 17 & 24)

Location: *Community Living Toronto Etobicoke/York Regional Office 295 The West Mall, Suite 204 (Parking Fee \$5.00 Maximum.)*

Contact: *Linda Ger Walters 416.651.2477 lgw@extendafamily.ca*

Moving Forward... one step at a time

Ontario Human Rights Commission Accessible Education Guidelines

On November 30, 2004, the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) released a policy document entitled Guidelines on Accessible Education. This document was introduced as a companion piece to their 2003 report, The Opportunity to Succeed: Achieving Barrier-Free Education for Students with Disabilities, and is the final product of a province-wide consultation process that began in the summer of 2002. Guidelines on Accessible Education addresses issues of placement, services and accommodation, funding, training, attitudes, unfair systems and the harm that the Safe Schools Act has caused to students.

The OHRC already had developed a very strong policy on disability, named Policy and Guidelines on Disability and the Duty to Accommodate, which applies to the service sector of education. However, because this document was written mostly within an employment context, there were no specific guidelines on how to apply its principles to education.

Those in attendance at the release of Guidelines on Accessible Education were advised that throughout the consultation process, the OHRC has advised the Ministry of Education of their obligations and responsibilities under the Ontario Human Rights Code. However, it remains apparent on review of the Ministry's recently published The Individual Education Plan (IEP): A Resource Guide 2004 that the application of concepts, such as appropriate accommodation and undue hardship, still has not made their way into education policy.

It looks as though students and their families will have to lead the charge and bring these new guidelines to their local school councils and Special Education Advisory Committees (SEAC) in their individual and systemic advocacy efforts. No student or family should be without a copy of this resource, as its content has the potential to prevent the pain and anguish of litigation. As for those who find themselves in the unfortunate position of having to file a human rights complaint, perhaps the arrival of Guidelines on Accessible Education will result in the OHRC taking issues forward to the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal.

Here are links to the reports and policy documents mentioned in this article:

Guidelines can be downloaded at:

<http://www.ohrc.on.ca/english/publications/accessible-education-guide.pdf>

The Opportunity to Succeed: Achieving Barrier-Free Education for Students with Disabilities:

<http://www.ohrc.on.ca/english/consultations/ed-consultation-report.pdf>

Policy and Guidelines on Disability and the Duty to Accommodate:

<http://www.ohrc.on.ca/english/publications/disability-policy.pdf>

The Individual Education Plan (IEP): A Resource Guide 2004:

www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/guide/resource/iepresguid.pdf

You also can get copies of any of the above-referenced resources by calling the Commission at (416) 326-9511 (in Toronto), 1-800-387-9080 (toll-free), 1-800-308-5561 (TTY toll-free) or (416) 314-6526 (TTY local).

A Note on the Linguistic Roots of Friendship

If you want to stand up for a word, it's good to know how deep its roots go, where it comes from, and what its relations are. Renewing the meaning of old words brings power and richness to life. Deep roots connect people who call one another friend with some of humankind's highest hopes and powers. However flimsy "just friends" may seem in a high tech world, the expression resonates through ages.

Friend is a word as old as written English. The Oxford English Dictionary tells that more than a thousand years ago, the poet sang of Beowulf, who fought the monsters that threatened Hrothgar's household because Hrothgar was Beowulf's friend:

"one joined to another in mutual benevolence and intimacy."

At it's beginning, the word friend was created by a contraction of the Old English verb, frijon, which means "to love." (Partridge, 1983)

That word in turn arose from an ancient Indo-European root, prai, which means "beloved, precious, at peace with, and free." (Shipley, 1984) Powerful ancestors indeed.

The roots of the word friend illuminate the source of some of our most prized human qualities. Liberty and citizenship arise linguistically and politically from groups of people who call one another friends. Freedom,

however, does not derive from words that speak of being free of something, but from words that speak of belonging to a circle of friends (Benveniste, 1973). And it is ties of affection and belonging that lie at the linguistic roots

of oneself. At root, a person only discovers self among friends.

John O'Brien and Connie Lyle O'Brien, *Members of Each Other Page 89*



Dominique and Julia are having fun together!

Tyler and Monica

Since June of 2004, I have had the opportunity to spend time with Tyler O'Hearn on a weekly basis. During the summer, we would go to the park, walk my dog Chico, and play games in my backyard or with my brother and sister. With the beginning of the school year, our Saturday adventures turned into Monday night basketball. Every Monday I would pick up Tyler, take him to my house for a couple of hours and then watch him practice basketball for the Special Olympics. Seeing Tyler every week has enriched my life as I have learned what a difference a few hours a week can make. Tyler is an energetic and happy 8 year old who wants nothing more than to play and watch Bob the Builder! Unfortunately, I am on exchange in France, but I am looking forward to continuing my relationship with Tyler, as it has been an enjoyable experience for the both of us. Until I get back, my mother is spending time with Tyler as the Out of Home Respite Host.

Monica Ambelez



Joel moved into his own apartment this fall with the involvement of his Support Circle: Elaine, Gillian, Melody, Ed, and Liz.



An Uncommon Life

Compared to many I hardly knew Scott, yet he and his family touch my life.

They say Scott had no eyes, nor had he hearing. Scott, they say, couldn't move himself across a room. Perhaps most importantly, they said he was medically fragile, with many labels. They would say these are the most important identifying characteristics about Scott, thus they should come first. They say this as if it is truth. Perhaps they would say that focusing even more on these things would have delayed his death. Do I live my life to avoid death and sadness and embarrassment and conflict? Why should he? What of living?

Let me tell you what little I know of Scott and his family.

Scott was a slender man of average height with straight blond hair. The exact colour depended on how he had coloured it that season. His skin was a glowing pale, alabaster, and the envy of many women. I don't know how he kept his face so smooth. Scott had long slender limbs and fingers. He had a magnificent smile that drew you into his deep hugs. Here he was able to completely surrender in the intimacy of holding another person. I always came away from my time with him knowing I was cherished and loving. I'm sure many people did.

Often there were many people surrounding Scott. This is common for people with disabilities. He was well taken care of by many professionals including western medicine's doctors, dentists, neurologists, nutritionists, and physiotherapists and alternative medicine's Reiki masters, massage therapists, homeopaths, and naturopaths. He had teachers and all the other professionals the school board can provide. Social workers and other such could have been there if needed. Scott also had a dedicated team of young people who worked for him as support staff. What was uncommon about Scott and his family is this: most of the people surrounding Scott were not paid to be in his life. This is a significant distinction.

There was little space in Scott's days for the professionals to take over his

life because he was so busy with his family and his community, and his friends, his Support Circle! He loved listening to music. He went to school dances, with several attractive young women on his arm. Scott hosted Circle meetings. He went to Canada's Wonderland. He swam with Charlie, the dog, and me. With some struggle, he was included in school. There he took photography, while taking all the typical classes as well. Scott had his own walkout basement apartment in his parent's house. He went where his friends went and did what his friends did! His friends were typical young men and women who put significant energy into their relationships with him. They fought for him at school. They made inaccessible places accessible to Scott in his wheelchair. They did presentations to other schools about their relationships with Scott. They made the world work for Scott! As did his parents.

Peter and Gloria, in so much as I've known them, always agreed on what had to happen, even if the method was to be negotiated. What had to happen was this: a real life with real relationships. They had deep and committed family relationships. They sought and maintained wonderful community connections, many of which became profound friendships that are sure to last life long. To support Scott and create a real life for him, they had a fight on their hands, with others and perhaps with themselves.

However, Peter and Gloria knew struggles and conflict surround real life! The battles with outside forces can be obvious: trying to have Scott baptised, fighting to have Scott in the photography class that his friends thought he should take, etc. The added internal struggles are more difficult to see. These questions are many. Are we making the best decisions in regards to Scott's health? When do we interfere with/contribute to Scott's Circle? Can we trust Scott's friends who are driving the van? At what point do we ask a staff member to leave and how will it affect Scott? In letting go of some responsibility and giving it to the Circle, how much

control will we abdicate?

For all parents these may be very common questions, but with a slight twist to each in this context. Parents of typical teenagers will have similar conversations. These are really about: Do I trust my child's friends? Do I trust my decisions and myself? Moreover, do I trust my child's decisions? This last one can be the kicker for parents of labelled children. Their child may not be able to make wise decisions or may not communicate their wisdom. Thus to accomplish a dynamic life for Scott, Peter and Gloria had to hand over more responsibility and control to Scott's friends and staff. And they did!

Perhaps this is what I first loved about Peter and Gloria. I saw that they would risk their hearts so that Scott would be included. They would struggle between their innate need to protect Scott from danger and their committed passion that he would have a real life. I trust they see that Scott having a bona fide life was genuine parenting and true love.

I knew Scott for four years before his death and I continue to get to know him better. My experience of him grows with my conversations with Peter and Gloria, my work in the disability community, and my commitment that all labelled people should be able to have a real life like Scott. He and his family are one of my touchstones, my benchmarks or standards. When I get confused and start to look appreciatively at compromises and quick answers, I try to recall all that I know of their lives. Moreover, I ask myself: Do my actions contribute to someone's life being real and dynamic? Do I offer healing and an opportunity for growth? What do I need to say to stay on my path? Am I in alignment with my integrity?

**Scott participated in Extend-A-Family Hamilton.

Rain C. Hood

The Two Stephanies

On December 21, 2004, Stephanie Low, a 'Best Buddy' from Bishop Strachan School, met Stephanie Metcalfe from Extend-A-Family for the first time. The meeting took place at Grandma and Grandpa Metcalfe's home and in keeping with the season, was a very festive gathering. Grandma, Stephanie and her older sister, Naomi, gave a warm welcome to Stephanie Low and Liz Short, the Extend-A-Family coordinator. Mom joined the party after work. Stephanie Low brought Christmas cookies, which she and her mother had baked, and we all enjoyed them with our tea. Stephanie Metcalfe had made a gift for her new friend - a photo and some of her artwork that her grandfather framed. After tea, Stephanie Metcalfe got out a songbook and we all sang Christmas Carols together. What a beautiful beginning!

Liz Short



***Best Buddies Canada and Extend-A-Family have partnered again this year to establish friendship chapters at the University of Toronto, Scarborough Campus and Bishop Strachan School. In each chapter, students are matched with individuals supported by Extend-A-Family who share similar interests.

Our Best Buddies Experience

Last year we both signed up for the Best Buddies Program, and by early winter, we were invited to a Meet and Greet session. All of the buddies in our chapter got together with their parents to meet their new friends. We had pizza, and we all talked and got to know each other. We found we both like animals, cooking and movies. Vinnie also likes horseback riding, and Marta dances ballet twice a week. After that, we went home with a new person's phone number and lots of excitement for the year ahead. We met up in January last year at Marta's house to bake cookies. Vinnie met Marta's family, and we got to talk, look at some pictures and of course eat lots of cookies. After that, our chapter joined all the Best Buddies groups in Toronto at a downtown YMCA for the Best Buddies Bash- a night of music, food, dancing and karaoke. We rapped up the year with a group bowling and pizza party, then we said goodbye for the summer.

This fall we met up for lunch at a nice restaurant and shared stories from our summers. Soon our chapter was up and running again, with five new buddy pairs. We recently had our meet and greet, where we, once again, ate pizza, talked and got to know each other.

We are both very glad to have joined the Best Buddies program because we have met another person who likes has some different interests, and many similarities. We are able to learn from each other, talk about all sorts of things, and just have fun hanging out. We definitely want to keep getting together and participating in the program, and are making plans for sleepovers and movie nights. Best Buddies has really been a great experience for both of us, and we can't wait to see what other fun, crazy and community-building events this year has in store!

Marta Hodgkins-Sumner and Vinnie Stalk

Sibling Groups

We just wanted to take an opportunity to highlight the Sibling Groups that some other organizations have put together and likely will again.

The Griffin Centre is currently offering a group to adolescents (aged 15-18) who have siblings with Autism. The purpose of this group is to give these youth the opportunity to speak about issues relevant to their situations. The group is co-educational and consists of 4-6 adolescents. To check out the next group, please call Randolph Sealy 416.222.1153, ext. 183.

Reena is pleased to be offering a workshop, Sibshop, for youth (aged 11-15) with a sibling who has a developmental disability and/or an Autism spectrum disorder. The workshop is designed to allow these siblings the opportunity to get together and share experiences with one another in an informal and fun environment. The group include guest speakers, fun activities, group discussions and games. If you want information on an upcoming Sibshop, please call Debra Waring or Ann Szabo 905.889.6484.

Summer Students

My name is Jessica Van Wyck. During the summer of 2004, I was fortunate to be able to explore the city with the youth I was working with. We continue to see each other and to learn from each other! I have learned so much from everyone I've worked with this past summer. Thanks for the experience!

I am Diana Reis. I have worked with Extend-A-Family for three consecutive summers. Each of these summers has been a tremendous learning experience for me. I always feel like I have gained more than I have given.



Remembering Patrick Worth

When I was first asked to write in memory of Pat, I was honoured and eager to do so. Then, as I began to write, I realized what a difficult task this would be. How can I put into words what a loss our community has suffered?

Simply put, I am grieving the loss of a friend, a mentor and a colleague. Patrick Worth was an extraordinary person. I will miss Pat for his ability to put me at ease when I was uncertain about my abilities, and yet make me uncomfortable when I was complacent about injustice. Pat was an educator, a listener, a challenger. I giggle when I think of how his stories changed and grew depending upon his audience. He did not confine himself to the limitations of being literal. His anecdotes made people think. He stood up for what he believed and always tried to make people feel special and important. Many miss him; as I write this, I recognize a joining because of our loss.

When my father died, Pat put his arm around me and reminded me that my dad lives on. I think he said that the spirit of my father would be alive as long as I let his memory and life lessons live in me. I hope that those of us fortunate enough to know Pat will adopt this belief. As we remember Pat, his spirit will be living among us, facilitating inclusion for all people everywhere.

Rebecca Lovering Spencer

Mother Daughter Spa Day

My mother and I attended a mother-daughter spa day on November 14 sponsored by Community Living Toronto's In Support of Siblings Network. It started out with several fresh faced, kind ladies greeting us with delicious smoothies and a huge banner to write comments about the staff and the activities that we were going to do. After about 30 minutes we had a smudging ceremony. If you don't know what a smudging ceremony is, it is when you burns herbs and fan the smoke all over your body.

After we had the refreshing smudging ceremony, we went inside and shared our names and got to the activities. First, we learned about the soothing and healing effects of aromatherapy. One staff passed around a few small bottles of aromatherapy scents, and this is probably only my opinion, but I liked the artificial scents from the Body Shop.

Next, we made two groups, one went to henna, and the other went to beading. Luckily I went to henna first. Henna is an Indian body art when they have a thick paste like mud that dyes the first layer or two of your skin a reddish brown colour in patterns.

When our group was done the henna, we had a delicious lunch with fresh fruits, vegetables, and many varieties of wraps. When we were done lunch, we all finished up the day with beads, yoga, and an art project. At the end, we each received a gift. Everyone enjoyed the day. We learned new things and had fun.

Elizabeth Markle, age 12

Here Comes Summer

It's that time of year again. Here's suggestions on beginning to plan your summer!

Extend-A-Family can assist with planning inclusive community opportunities. We will be applying to Human Resources and Skills Development Canada for funding to hire summer students again this year. As in previous years, we will try to offer support for a maximum of 2 weeks per family. The focus will be on supporting children in integrated recreation programs and teens in planned community activities.

Families can also request one-to-one Integration Worker support from Parks and Recreation for a maximum of two weeks. Contact your district Adapted and Integrated Services office as soon as possible to apply.

East District 416-396-7760

North District 416-395-6183

South District 416-392-1783

West District 416-394-8533

The City of Toronto Parks and Recreation Spring/Summer Fun Guides will be available at the end of February. The starting dates for registration for summer camps, spring/summer general programs, and spring aquatics are as follows:

East District Monday, March 7

North District Tuesday, March 8

South District Thursday, March 10

West District Saturday, March 12

Registration for City of Toronto Parks and Recreation summer aquatic programs will start on Saturday, June 11 for the West and South districts and on Monday, June 13 for the East and North Districts.

Contact your Extend-A-Family coordinator at the end of February for assistance in planning to make this a safe, enjoyable and fun summer for all!

Circle of Friends at John A. Leslie Public School

What do I like about the Circle of Friends and what is friendship to me?

Jamila: I like having friends around me, to play with me and help me when I need it. I like the circle a lot to be with friends and get to know them better.

Jake: I like the circle because its fun, I make new friends. Adam is a nice polite student and I have fun with him.

Liam: I like it. It's fun. I've made new friends and I've got to know Adam more.

Manan: I like being friends with everyone, have fun and learn about friends.

Adam: Friends. Lego.

Anthony: Lego.

Clarissa: I like to play and to see Adam. Adam helped me do a clock craft. He told me what to do and if I made a mistake.

Dorsa: I like playing with Adam and having a lot of friendship. Friends play together, have fun together and are friends forever.



Another Circle of Friends Story

My family came to Canada 2.5 years ago from Moscow where we had many friends. When we came to Canada, we had problems with finding new friends. My English was poor and I communicated only with Russian people. However, Canada is multi-cultural country. I always wanted my daughter and I to have friends from different cultures.

One year ago, my daughter said that Pleasant School has a Circle of Friends where children find new friends and go to many interesting places with their parents. I gave my permission and began to meet other parents from Circle of Friends. We went bowling and did performances of 'theatre of hands'. In the Circle of Friends, my daughter learned to have new friends and respect other people. As for me, it became a place where I could stop feeling ashamed of speaking English. I want to say "Thank you" for my experience with people of different cultures.

Ella Berliant

Extend-A-Family Word Find

Find these words.

Art

Care

Circle

Crafts

Fun

Learn

Love

Me

Run

School

Share

You

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S | H | A | R | E | E |
| T | C | U | R | L | N |
| F | C | H | C | T | R |
| A | U | R | O | Y | A |
| R | I | N | M | O | E |
| C | A | R | E | U | L |



Book Reviews

Hold On To Your Kids: Why Parents Matter by Gordon Newfeld, Ph.D. and Gabor Mate, M.D.

The authors make a compelling case for why parents need to preserve deep connections with their children, particularly through adolescence and specifically with the very teens who want their parents out of their lives. The authors go beyond their theories and provide tangible suggestions on how to do this. This is a deeply thought-provoking book that challenges many of the mainstream beliefs about teen culture and our responsibilities as parents and families.

Mending Children’s Broken Hearts by John J. McGee, Ph. D.

Who of our children has not had a broken heart? As well as presenting his counter cultural theory, McGee gives tangible how-to’s to help us “gentle our way into their hearts” and connect with a child through our presence, our hands, our words, and our eyes. A life giving read for parents or caregivers of children who are hurting and who are trying to push their loved ones away.

Get Out of My Life, But First Could You Drive Me and Cheryl to the Mall? by Anthony E. Wolf, Ph.D.

With an up beat, frank, no nonsense approach, the author provides common scenarios with dialogue for parents to see the important messages and limits they need to give to their children/teenagers. An excellent read for parents/caregivers of the socially active teen who is not content to sit at home. Caution - the author doesn’t hold back on what can be typical language for some teens.

The Bully, the Bullied, and the Bystander by Barbara Coloroso

This complex topic is deconstructed, illustrating that we all have responsibility to do something in the face of bullying, children and adults alike. Coloroso suggests there is rarely, if ever, a truly innocent bystander. There are no simple solutions. Much responsibility rests on the culture of our schools and families to address the issue, educate all concerned, name it for what it is and support all involved to follow through on their responsibilities.

These books are all available in the Extend-A-Family library.

Our thanks go to Fred Clemente and Mosaic Media for donating time and resources in doing the layout for the Extend-A-Family newsletter again this issue.

Thank you for your contributions!

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

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