



extend a family

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

Phone: 416-484-1317
Fax: 416-484-1589
Email: info@extendafamily.ca
Registered Charity Number:
11890-4846-RR0001

Board of Directors

Chair: Michele Schmidt
Vice Chair: Jeff Short
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Treasurer: Adam Pearson

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Filomena Nait
Jennifer Wilson

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Comments from Attendees (see above) from the Conscious Care & Support Workshop

"Peter Marks is a profoundly wise, gentle and compassionate teacher. The way he lives his life is as much of a teaching as the words and exercises he shares. I will carry the teachings and practises with me always. I am deeply grateful." Susan B.

"A fresh look at how to support people in a caring way. Very different from any course I have taken." Sharon D.

"Mindfulness skill is the base of everything else. Being mindfully, consciously present is the right way versus just being physically present for the people we support. In this way we can consciously correct and support in a way that every minute we are giving the message that they are LOVABLE and CAPABLE." Csilla D.

"Our thoughts become our lives intention; intend as though it's already happening! Without separateness there is no other, we are all whole." Jessica VW.

"Not only has this course benefitted my support for others, it has reflected in my day to day as well. This insight can be applied to home and relationships for all who accept this profound mindset." Kim A.

See page 5 for further comments

IN THE MOMENT

*"The past is behind,
learn from it. The future
is ahead, prepare
for it. The present is
here, live it."*

Thomas S. Monson

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ARTICLE	PAGE
New Year Message from Anne Marie Cole	2
From the Chair of the Board of Directors	2
Really Hits Home for Us	3
A Little Sunshine	4
Making Sense of Senses	5
Comments from Conscious Care Series	5
Friendship Circles	6
Award of Inclusion	7
Summer Student Program 2014	8
Exciting Happenings & Updates	9
Educational Updates	10/11
Inclusion	12
Members & Volunteers	13
Safe & Secure Future Networks	13
Voices of Siblings	14
Tribute to Peter Dill	15
Acknowledgement & Appreciation	16

New Year Message from Anne Marie Cole, Executive Director

One of my favorite pastimes is baking with my two older (3 year old) grandchildren. The experience is filled with laughter, sometimes a few tears, endless questions and hilarious conversation. Who knew an egg could be the topic of an “important” fifteen minute discussion. Everything from the typical “where does it come from?” to reassuring that it doesn’t hurt the egg when we crack the shell and break the yolk is questioned with great interest. I am always inspired by their innocent curiosity and ability to experience being “in the moment.” When I bake (alone), my mind usually veers to thinking of the never ending list of things I have to do, or conversely, things I’ve done and am now questioning my actions. When I am “mindless baking” I often wonder if I’ve included all the required ingredients because I’m focused on the end result rather than the “experience.” Teachers come in all ages and stages of life. My little bakers continually invite me (and sometimes force me) to be present and truly enjoy the moment. I don’t think it’s a coincidence that the “Nana” muffins we bake together are always much tastier!

From The Chair of the Board of Directors, Michele Schmidt

“In the moment.”

What does that mean?

For me it means paying attention to what is happening right now that is important to me and those I care about. It also means discerning whether or not I can contribute anything positive to the situation. My husband has a way of looking at a situation that always sees what is positive first and then he asks the question, “Is there anything we need to do, or can do, here and now?” Sometimes, being in the moment means that you patiently wait for a storm to pass. Sometimes it means stating the truth of your situation again for the 100th time. Sometimes it means asking others for support when you feel out of your depths. Always it means distinguishing between being in the moment and being the moment. There is a big difference between being in the moment and being the moment. The first requires that we act with maturity and discernment while the latter seeks to return us to our childhood where it was all about our wants. When I feel overwhelmed by my need to return to childhood, I say out loud something my grandson used to say, “wanty, wanty, wanty!” Adding things such as a more just world, a more inclusive education system, more than 24 hours in the day and anything else that is vexing me at the moment, and then I return to reality and ask my husband, “Is there anything we need to do, or can do, here and now?” Stay in the moment and eventually it will take you closer to the place you want to be.

Really Hits Home for Us!

Extend-A-Family's mission - to support those with disabilities to "develop meaningful relationships and participate fully in the community" - really hits home for us. Our daughter, Anna Maria, has autism, and since her diagnosis we have struggled to find opportunities for her to be integrated with other children, in a way that respects her individual needs while allowing her to be happy and successful. And despite a great deal of effort on our part, her opportunities for integration seemed to be shrinking every year. When we made the decision to send her to a private school for children with disabilities, it was absolutely the right choice for her education, but it also made us feel like we had "failed" in our goal to make her welcome and included into her own community.



Fortunately, Extend-A-Family has been able to shift our thinking about what it means to be included. In many ways, it is about "being in the moment," focusing on small but very meaningful encounters with members of our community, made possible by our Extend-A-Family network of neighbours and support staff. Here are a few examples:

- ◆ Family to Family – Our wonderful Extend-A-Family coordinator helped us find a host family in our neighborhood. With busy lives, it's hard to visit often, so we try and make the visits a bit more unique and memorable, like the time we had a "Winter Olympics Day" on our back yard rink. Did my daughter engage in a lot of social interaction or conversation that day? Maybe not. But I know she'll remember lacing up skates and sharing her rink with her former schoolmates, and a clear snapshot of that moment will stay with her.
- ◆ Mentor to friend - An adult Extend-A-Family volunteer from our neighborhood, Karen, takes Anna Maria out for strolls to our local shops. Some visits include a trip to the grocery store, shopping list in hand, followed by a related activity like making Rice Krispie squares. It's amazing how positive these small experiences have been. Anna Maria has even asked me on occasion if we could go "buying" – a highly unusual request from a child whose communication skills can be limited at the best of times. It's clear to me she feels like she is part of something bigger than just a walk when she steps out the door.
- ◆ Camp support– We have been fortunate to receive Extend-A-Family's one-to-one support for Anna Maria at camp, so she can have an integrated camp experience. Beyond the obvious benefits of camp, there are the more subtle ones. Autism Spectrum Disorder is almost 5 times as common in boys as girls, so in her school and therapy environments, Anna Maria is almost always the only girl. But at camp, she spends her whole day with a small cabin of other girls. I can't express how important those few weeks are, where she just gets to experience camp like any other 9 year old girl, moving through the activities and being part of a little team.

As you can see, it takes a great deal of effort and commitment on everyone's part to make these moments work, but it makes a huge difference to one little girl and her family.

Rosanne Renzetti

"Happiness, not in another place but this place...not for another hour, but this hour."

— Walt Whitman

Volunteering with Extend-A-Family

A Little Sunshine

It was March Break and I was looking to get involved in the community some way. I did what any typical person would do to look for a volunteering opportunity. I went online to search for something that would suit me. That's when I saw the post from Extend-A-Family about Christopher. The post was appealing because I love children and I love spending time with them, and being a buddy just sounded fantastic. I was sure about one other thing as well; I would definitely learn something from the experience. After I applied for it, I had a nice chat with Ruth at Starbucks. She got to know a little more about me and I learned more about Extend-A-Family. We planned to pay Christopher a visit sometime later that week and I was thrilled about meeting him. I had never really met somebody with autism before and I did not know what to expect. I also feared I might do something wrong and mess everything up. Nonetheless, I was looking forward to the visit and I upheld a positive attitude. The first time I met Christopher, he seemed very friendly and energetic, which was adorable and his family was very welcoming and kind. Usually, when I visit Christopher, his younger sister, Tabitha joins us and plays with us as well, doubling the excitement. They are both such nice children. Being able to escape from school and home to spend time with them brings me a lot of joy. There is a communication barrier between Christopher and me, but that never stops us from trying to understand each other. If there is anything I learned from this experience, it is that you do not have to be 5 years old to be friends with a 5 year old and that friendship involves understanding one another and finding ways to understand each other. Although, at first, Christopher may not have realized the purpose of me being there, I feel like he understands now. I've noticed more enthusiasm in him now whenever I come by for a visit. Since we often go outside to play, he once tugged my arm, indicating me to put his shoes on so that we can go outside for fun. It is amazing being around Christopher and his family, there's a lot of delight and the innocence of the children is something to cherish. I hope Christopher is learning that it is not just kids he can be friends with, or even just me, it is everybody that he can befriend and get support from. Extend-A-Family introduced me to an awesome family which includes a marvellous mother, remarkable three daughters, and of course, the little sunshine, Christopher. I've embarked on an epic learning adventure with Extend-A-Family and it is one I want to be a part of forever. THANK YOU Extend-A-Family!



Afnan Shahid (Volunteer)

"The secret of health for both mind and body is not to mourn for the past, not to worry about the future, or not to anticipate troubles, but to live in the present moment wisely and earnestly." — Buddha

Making Sense of Senses

I would like to thank Extend-A-Family for hosting the **Conscious Care and Support for Individuals with Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities** workshop via a beautiful stone church called St. Clement's Anglican Church.

For eight Tuesday mornings Peter Marks taught us how to "balance body, brain and being" by being more mindful, open hearted and caring for ourselves and others. Doing his guided mindfulness practice almost every day came at a time when I needed it the most.

The "making sense of the senses" exercise gave me insight about how my son who has special sensory needs could be best supported. His behaviours have often been described as attention seeking, which I never fully accepted, so it was good to read in Peter's book that difficult feelings and/or challenging behaviour is never about attention.

- "These individuals are not seeking your attention; they are seeking authentic, caring and meaningful activity and connections."
- "If I have no chance to use my energy constructively I can get bored and agitated."
- "An inadequate social structure that provides the Autistic/DD individual with few life opportunities to accentuate their positive gifts and attributes contributes to anxiety producing boredom. These individuals, like us, want to help others and have a socially valued role."

This course was a wonderfully refreshing reminder how we can all be more compassionate, connected, and live in the moment. **Laura Van Wyk (Workshop Attendee)**



Cont. from page 1... Comments from Conscious Care Series

- ♦ "This was a highly stimulating, informative and extremely useful workshop that addressed important issues and day-to-day experiences – and gave us concrete tools to use, practise and implement to be and act from a more "mindful" place in our daily life and interactions." Marcia A.
- ♦ "I feel extremely privileged to be a part of such a wonderful group of people and to be involved with the teachings and power of teachings associated with both CCS and Peter Marks." Sue M.
- ♦ "I was fortunate to have had the opportunity to learn about mindfulness. Peter is a wonderful teacher and taught much by his peaceful demeanour." Ruth F.
- ♦ "By intentionally staying 'in the moment' with who we are in relationship, we can manage our emotions to bring peace and harmony and connecting to 'other.'" Anne M.
- ♦ "Extremely useful tool! Spectacular and very easy to understand. Muy linda experiencia y extremadamente sencilla de comprender!" Marlene F.
- ♦ "What an amazing, self-knowledge journey. Peter Marks and his colleagues are purposeful and thoughtful in the text and presenting the course that allows a profound deepness. Thank you!" Cate D.
- ♦ "I feel empowered in going out in the world and knowing my filter/triggers. This will help in my approach with deep appreciation." Salvatore R.
- ♦ "A fabulous life tool to be taught from day one." Deborah M.

"Realize deeply that the present moment is all you have. Make the NOW the primary focus of your life." — Eckhart Tolle

Friendship Circles

Enthusiasm and Excitement in Grade 2

The start of school this year began with the usual enthusiasm and excitement typical of grade two students. Several of our daughter's classmates made a point of asking us if the friendship circle would be starting up again this year. They have really embraced our daughter, not only in the classroom setting, but also playing with her in the school yard as well as walking to and from school. Geneviève likes to hold their hand as they walk, it's just one of the quirky things they accept about her, and as we walk, they ask me about the things she likes, such as her favourite flower. The answer to that question is not easy, since our daughter has a speech delay, I'm not sure I know the answer, so I say, "Well, I think she likes them all."

Outside of school is the real challenge to bring the friendships to the typical play date level. We've had a few invitations to birthday parties which is more than we had before this friendship circle started. But the biggest value to us, through the friendship circle, has been meeting the other parents and through them seeing a willingness to include Geneviève in their child's life. And we thank Extend-A-Family for helping us bridge that gap. I think the one-on-one play dates will come, but for now it's a matter of play parties, having a few friends over to run through the sprinkler or baking cookies together.

Elizabeth Maclean (Parent)

What is a Friendship Circle?

A friendship circle offers an invitation to elementary school children to cultivate friends. This small group setting provides an opportunity for all members of the group to get to know each other better and an intentional opportunity to help develop friendships. The friendship circle gives a student with a disability an opportunity to become meaningfully involved with their classmates in a supportive manner in both the school setting and community setting.

For further information on friendship circles please speak to your Extend-A-Family coordinator.



Thoughts on Friendship Circles

Pelmo Park Public School (JK & SK)

"Friends hold hands."
"Friends share."
"Friends play together."
"Friends are kind."
"Friends hug."
"Friends kiss."

Kingsview Village Junior School Grade 5's

"Friendship circle is about making friends."
"I learned it's good to have both girl friends and boy friends."
"I learned about cooperation."
"Everyone is nice."
"I learned about being respectful."
"The games we played were great."
"I had sooo much fun!"
"I learned to never pre-judge people."

St Anselm C.S. Grade 4's

Why did you join friendship circle?
"To make friends."
"Help out for others, to make new friends, as it is easy for me but may not be for others."
"I am new at the school and don't have many friends here."
"A time to interact with other people – when outside it is hard to find friends – inside is easier."
"Sounds like a great idea to interact with each other."
"Sounds interesting."
"Love helping others."
"Always like making new friends but want to make more."
"Want to interact with others to make new friends."

Extend-A-Family Award of Inclusion

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

Congratulations to the recipients of



the 2014 Inclusion Award:

- Boys & Girls Club and West Scarborough: Summer Camp
- Islington Community School (Parks, Forestry and Recreation)
- R J Lang Elementary & Middle School
- San Romanoway Revitalization Association

Extend-A-Family Award of Inclusion

San Romanoway Revitalization Association Receives Inclusion Award for Outstanding Performance!

A small community association tucked into the heart of the Jane and Finch community is doing outstanding work in the area of inclusion. The Executive Director, Stephnie Payne, her team, volunteers and campers embody all the qualities of what it means to live in a vibrant welcoming community that celebrates diversity and belonging. The entire team at SRRA takes time to get to know the campers that attend their summer camp program. The program offers a rich assortment of activities to engage campers. Staff at the camp take time to ensure that each camper is supported to achieve their maximum potential. When issues arise the team takes time to problem solve and find solutions to resolve challenges.

Several of Extend-A-Family's children have been supported at the camp over the last few years and the children have found the program rewarding and accepting. They can't wait to go back next year.

On behalf of Extend-A-Family, congratulations to the entire team for making friendship and belonging matter.

Inclusion Award recipient, West Scarborough Neighbourhood Community Centre (WSNCC) Boys and Girls Club Summer Camp

WSNCC was presented with an inclusion award for their openness and creativity this summer as they strived to adapt activities and games and create alternatives for those needing a break from the rigour of the regular camp activities. The staff were willing to take on the challenges of trying new approaches and being mindful of those potentially being left out. Inclusion is never perfect. Over the summer we observed the group gain knowledge and build on their knowledge. They demonstrated you don't need to be an expert to be creative and caring about the campers who are present. They discovered participation may look different from camper to camper and there are ways to subtly change the games to include everyone.

Summer Student Program 2014

Summer Memories

I had the wonderful opportunity of spending a week with the lovely Mikaela during the summer of 2014. And I couldn't have asked for a better way to end the summer! Our week was jam-packed, full of fun things to see and do around the city of



Toronto. Some of the highlights we agreed upon were watching a movie at Cineplex, visiting the CNE Fair, exploring downtown Toronto on foot and shopping at the Eaton Centre. We also enjoyed trying out new things like eating fried Twinkies and Mars Bars at the CNE. On the topic of food, Mikaela and I were happy to discover that we both share a deep love for sushi when we stopped for lunch at an 'all you can eat' sushi restaurant downtown.

Mikaela and I also took some important steps in helping Mikaela develop her future goals by gaining meaningful volunteering experience and exploring the possibility of becoming a hairstylist. Mikaela has two pets at home and loves animals; so volunteering at Pet Valu was the perfect place for her. We were able to attend a volunteering orientation at Pet Valu where the volunteer coordinator showed Mikaela what her role would be as a volunteer in the coming school year. This included feeding and cleaning out the kittens' cages and also spending quality time with the kittens until they found a loving home. It was wonderful to see Mikaela show the kittens so much love and attention while carrying out her tasks to take care of them.

Mikaela enjoys talking about topics on pop culture including music, films and especially hairstyling. Through the help of Mikaela's Extend-A-Family coordinator we were able to visit the Aveda Institute, a hairstylist school in Toronto. Mikaela is very passionate about hairstyling and loved talking about her interest in becoming a hairstylist during her career planning session at Aveda. After our informative talk with the admissions representative, we were taken on a tour of the whole Institute. It was fascinating to be in such a high-energy environment and Mikaela particularly enjoyed watching the hairstyling students fully absorbed in designing their mannequin's hair.

Our days together went by way too fast but we had a great deal of fun seeing and experiencing new and familiar things together. Thank you, Mikaela for the many pictures, stories and memories that came from our adventures during the summer. And thank you Extend-A-Family for the constant support and guidance that made this a truly memorable week for Mikaela and me.

Johanne J.V.Vuuren (Summer Student)

Eager to Learn

My name is Natasha Rajaratnam and this past summer, I was provided the opportunity to work as a Summer Student with Extend-A-Family. Being responsible for the integration of children and youth in a camp or community setting left me eager to learn while slightly nervous.

One of the children I supported, Omer, doesn't know it but he has provided me with a wealth of knowledge within just two weeks. His determination is admirable. His strength is commendable. His persistence is exemplary. His smile is contagious and his spirits are always shared with those around him. In such a short time, I was witness to Omer's triumphs and efforts. As I watched him make many friends and lasting memories, I came to the realization that it is important to stretch out of your comfort zone.

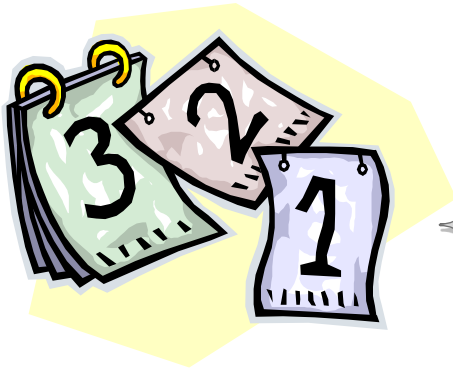
When presented with something new and unfamiliar, I'm no longer nervous as I'm reminded of the summer I spent with Omer where I learned about perseverance and to live life with a purpose regardless of the barriers or setbacks presented.

Thank you Omer and Extend-A-Family for a memorable summer.



"Living in the present moment creates the experience of eternity." — Deepak Chopra

Exciting Happenings & Updates



Extend-A-Family's Winter Gathering will be on Sunday February 22, 2015 @ Earl Bales Community Centre. 1:00—4:00 PM.
For further information, visit
www.extendafamily.ca.



"Commence' 15 – Shining Forth"

Community Living Ontario Conference

The conference will focus on social roles, employment, mentors, and communities that will help a student shine forth into the future.

**February 11 & 12, 2015
Toronto, ON**

Contact Joel MacIntyre

1 800 278-8025

NEW! Jane St. Hub Support Group

By popular demand a new parent/guardian support group has started up at the Jane St. Hub for Spanish and English speaking parents in the Lawrence/Jane neighbourhood.

To find out more about the group contact Sharon at
sp@extendafamily.ca

Nuevo Grupo De Apoyo

En Espanol y En Ingles

Lugar: Jane St. Hub

Cada Segundo miercoles De Cada mes

Contractor a = Sharon sp@extendafamily.ca

Extend-A-Family Sexuality and Healthy Relationships Workshop Series, Spring and Fall of 2015.

The workshop series offer parents and youth from 9 to 15 years, a learning opportunity to come together once a week for 5 weeks. We teach and learn about sexuality, healthy relationships, feelings, personal space and other relevant topics.

The spring session will be held in Etobicoke. If your son or daughter and you, as parents, are interested in participating, kindly contact **Anne at abm@extendafamily.ca** in February of 2015 for more information.

"Now is the only time. How we relate to it creates the future. In other words, if we're going to be more cheerful in the future, it's because of our aspiration and exertion to be cheerful in the present. What we do accumulates; the future is the result of what we do right now." – Pema Chodron

Educational Updates

Behaviour? Then Think GUT!

We like to remind people that behaviour is communication. This is often forgotten when we are in the middle of a challenging situation. When it comes to the young people we support, attend school, participate in recreation activities, and live with, it is extremely important to keep this in mind...behaviour IS communication.



Recently while attending Peter Mark's Conscious Care and Support training, it was shared how nutrition has a big impact on the youth we support. Food choices may cause stomach upset, pain, discomfort, not to mention, they may cause chronic problems which could lead to challenging behaviour especially if it is not known how to effectively communicate this discomfort verbally.

Processed foods high in sugars, artificial sugars, powdered milks, processed cheeses, refined sugar and flours are all culprits. The best choices are whole foods such as: soaked home cooked beans, soaked whole cooked grains, organic, local fruits and vegetables and limited organic milk, yogurt and cheese, eggs, fish and poultry, and cold pressed and un-refined oils.

It is very possible to eat nutritionally balanced meals but still have poor gastro-intestinal (GI) health. Often the young people we support do not have the proper amounts of healthy bacteria/flora in the stomach and intestines to aid in digestion. Even the manner in which we eat may influence our GI health. Chewing challenges are not uncommon and can be linked to motor planning issues, aversions to food texture, taste or smell, they may also be linked to problems with the inner ear.

We may see people who have stomach or bowel pain who are unable to communicate these difficulties in traditional ways. They may do the following: hurt themselves or bite themselves to distract from the pain which they have no control over, become physical towards others or try to escape their current activity. Forward rocking, simultaneous walking and rocking, or even toe walking can be a sign of GI upset/pain.

Anxiety can be a result of poor gut nutrition and can result in poor GI health as well, leading to challenging behaviours.

So next time you are either observing or in the middle of someone's challenging behaviour, remember to consider the health of the person as a causative factor. If they are in pain, using behaviour modification techniques will not assist them in the short or long term. **Behaviour is not just bad behaviour, it is communication!**

For more information see "Conscious Care and Support for Individuals with Autism & Other Developmental Disabilities, Balancing Body, Brain and Being," Peter Marks, Gareth Marks.

<http://www.centreconsciouscare.ca/>

What's New in Education

Policy Program Memorandum 156 – effective September 2, 2014

Supporting Transitions for Students with Special Education Needs

The implementation of PPM 156 came into effect September 2014. It requires school boards and schools to create transition plans for ALL students with special education needs, inclusive from Kindergarten to Grade 12. Meaning students who have an IEP, including those who are solely gifted, and whether or not they are deemed to be exceptional. At the School Board's discretion – Transition Plans may also be developed for students who receive special education programs and/or services but do not have an IEP and/or have not been identified as exceptional.

Transition plans are part of the IEP (Individual Education Plan), therefore a student's IEP MUST have a transition plan.

According to the Ministry of Education, the transition plans reflect the student's strengths and needs and is the cornerstone for effective and successful transitions throughout their school day and school career, with the end goal of building successful and bright futures for all students. It is also to ensure there is a continuity of services and programming for the student promoting student achievement and well-being.

A Transition Plan indicates steps and goals needed for the student's transition for further education, from school to work, and for life in the community.

Education Transitions:

- School entry – new to school, new to Board, school to school, entry to school in JK, from an outside agency to school.
- Transitions within school – between grades, from one program area or subject to another.
- To post-secondary – pathways to college, university, training, work, etc.

Things to consider when developing a transition plan. The student's needs:

- Emotional
- Physical
- Learning.

Every transition plan will identify:

- Specific goals
- Supports needed
- Actions required to achieve the goal
- Identify the roles and responsibilities of those involved
- Timelines to implement or complete the action.

If the student has no identified needs during transition, it should be stated as such on the transition portion of the IEP.

Parents please begin to be aware of the transition plan in your child's IEP. Ask questions concerning this document and provide input with the involvement of your child about current concerns in their day requiring transitions and strategies to assist in this regard. Begin planning early with your child and their team for their future. What do they hope to do when they finish school; will it be post-secondary education, training, employment or other activities. Begin the planning early and the creative thinking to develop a plan to assist your child reach their goals. Involve people who know your child well and see their strengths and abilities and can be creative in the manner in which they can be supported.

Inclusion.....



Inclusion is Possible...

Thanks to Marilyn Dolmage and Extend-A-Family for the great opportunity to visit St. Anne's Catholic Secondary School. We also met staff from Avon Maitland District School Board, the newly converted inclusive school board. It was uplifting to see how inclusion is a way of life in their school. Students with different abilities are welcomed, accepted, valued and taught every day in an all-inclusive environment. A dream for many parents.

It was wonderful to meet such a talented group of teachers and support staff, who have learned to fully include every one of their students. The school body does this by embracing and implementing changes. Some of the staff have never had any special education training. However, they took the time to get to know each one of their students and figured out ways to make it work. As teachers, they have helped and supported each other and got stronger as a team in the process. There are no limits set, everyone tries everything. How wonderful!

I live in Toronto and navigating the school system is not an easy process. Many parents in our school boards work endlessly to take down barriers every year, every semester, every school trip, and often, every school day. And we are not even close to dismantling many of the barriers to inclusion our children face.

I have always believed that school inclusion is possible; if there is a will there is a way. Today, I have witnessed inclusion is possible and it is working. This gives me great hope. Let's work together on influencing that will. **Filomena Nait**

Creating Inclusive Classrooms

Having worked for Extend-A-Family (as a summer student), I have directly seen how creating an environment of inclusion can have an impact on young people. I am now in teacher's college and am doing a placement in a Grade 4/5 class in St. James Town. I recently reached out to Extend-A-Family and had them facilitate a game called Spinclusion in my classroom. This proved to be an excellent learning experience for my students as well as myself.

The game required creating teams and having each student share equally. It also involved asking questions about how the students could approach situations to make them more inclusive. It was great to be able to cruise around and listen in on the brainstorming sessions and hear the students' creativity flow. The results were better than expected!

This particular classroom had been having a lot of difficulty with engagement. For the first while they had to deal with a slew of supply teachers which was disruptive to their focus and interest. When we started the game this seemed to change. Every student participated and seemed to be genuinely engaged with the activity.

In our follow-up discussion and reflections, many of the students focused on the aspect of friendship. Some had not considered what it would be like not to have friends while others wondered why it was so hard to make friends. Many students reflected upon how they could reach out to students who they might otherwise not talk to. They also enjoyed the last question where they got to learn something new and special about another student. This was almost everyone's favourite question because it gave them a chance to get to know each other better. It also proved to be a point of discussion for students later that day as they got to learn more about their peers.

Overall the activity was a success and is helping our class to become more inclusive. Our school has a peer leadership program which many of our students are in and the game was referenced by some in that space. This fun activity was a springboard to talking about inclusion and what it means to create inclusive classrooms, schools and communities. **Chiara Tari-Arnold (Student Teacher)**

Extend-A-Family Members & Volunteers

A warm welcome to the new families and volunteers that have joined Extend-A-Family this year. We trust that our services and supports are meeting your expectations. New members who wish to strengthen their child's relationships or community connections are always welcome; families may self refer or have someone assist them with the application.

For more information visit
www.extendafamily.ca

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

To learn more about volunteering with Extend-A-Family contact info@extendafamily.ca **or 416 484 1317 or check out our website at** www.extendafamily.ca

Safe and Secure Future Networks

Safe & Secure Future Networks Members Reflect on the Compassion Fatigue Workshop They Attended in 2014

Members of both East and West SSFN spent some time thinking about Compassion Fatigue during a workshop presented by the Canadian Mental Health Association. The toll of caregiving can result in insurmountable stress if self-care is neglected. However, caregivers were reminded of the many ways in which they can implement various simple methods to help ensure personal health and well-being. The presentations sparked a lot of discussion, reflection and shared understanding.

Here are some of the comments from participants:

"The life wheel was very helpful in recognizing areas in my life where I need to find time for me."

"This was an eye opener for some changes I need to make in my life."

"It is so important to take time to take care of myself."

"The evening was really informative in a relaxed and comfortable way."

"I realized that I count too!"

"It was comforting to hear from others in the group who are experiencing similar feelings."

"Learning the importance of self worth."

"I am more aware of my current state and what needs to happen."

"I need to continue to take intentional steps for self care."

If you would like further information or to join one of the Safe and Secure Future Networks please contact Lee at ls@extendafamily.ca **or Selena at** sb@extendafamily.ca

"When you love someone, the best thing you can offer is your presence. How can you love if you are not there?" - Thich Nhat Hanh

Voices of Siblings.....

Adult Sibling Relationship by Cate Downey

I find much value in being a member of, and participating in the adult sibling group. As the oldest member, it has not only given me fellowship and the knowledge that I am not alone in my sibling journey, but also validated emotions I had when I was younger. All sibling relationships ebb and flow, but my brother, Micheal, and I can attest to the fact that, for the most part, our grown-up relationship has been mutually supportive and enjoyable. We share a closeness that not many siblings experience. We live in different cities, we both work and volunteer, have separate interests and I now have a family. Micheal has found a new role as brother-in-law, and uncle who adores spoiling his nieces and nephew. When our respective schedules permit, we get together, share meals, and keep our traditions alive; he also has me stay over when I have meetings in Toronto. It is so important that Micheal and I have our time together, just the two of us, so that he can continue his big brother role (which includes teasing me) and me in my little sister part. This comforts me, because I know that we can always count on each other.



The Joy of being a Sibling

Being asked about the benefits or joys of having a sibling with special needs was never an easy question. Growing up with a highly demanding sibling didn't exactly do wonders for my sanity or my social life. With years comes (supposed) wisdom and, thankfully, a lot of hindsight. A sibling with special needs has opened my eyes to a 'new normal;' my old, thin, small, narrow view of the world has broken wide open. My brother has shown me the beauty of different and the opportunity in empathy. He loves deeply and without censorship, and encourages me to do the same. There is such joy in the simplest of accomplishments - full sentences, a day with no tantrums, learning a new life skill. While my brother lives a mile a minute, he's also taught me how important it is to slow down and to love, fully and completely. I'm proud of him and what he's taught me, and I know I'm who I am today because of my younger, yet much wiser, sib.

Lisa Endersby

A Place of Understanding: Sibling Support Groups

I can genuinely say I don't know where I would be in my life right now if I didn't grow up with my younger brother, Dan. Growing up with a sibling with special needs has changed my life in so many ways. Dan has taught me to slow down, to express my emotions freely, to not sweat the small stuff, and to truly live and appreciate life "in the moment"... and I am deeply grateful for this. It hasn't always been easy at home, but I always had my twin sister Teresa to talk to when things got "rough." My parents were forever trying to juggle the attention and needs of me, my twin sister and brother, and it got kind of messy at times. There were tears and frustration, but like any family, you learn how to "dance in the rain" and we always knew that love was at the heart of our house. Although many of our friends would smile and nod as we shared about our unique family situation, it was hard for them to fully understand because they were not "living it." It wasn't until later in life that I heard about Sibling Support Groups. Extend-A-Family facilitates 2 Sibling Support Groups. One for Adult Siblings 18 yrs. and older; this group meets one Thursday a month. And a Youth Sibling Support Group (age 10-15 yrs.) which runs 4x a year and includes seasonal activities to enjoy together. Both groups strive to create a safe and welcoming environment, and a chance to connect, share stories and information, celebrate and support one another with others who truly understand.

Jessica Van Wyk

For more information on Sibling Support Groups, please contact Jessica at jvw@extendafamily.ca.

"We spend precious hours fearing the inevitable. It would be wise to use that time adoring our families, cherishing our friends and living our lives."

— Maya Angelou

A Tribute to Peter Dill....

Peter Dill left a huge void in the lives of the people who knew, admired and loved him. He also left us with the gift of conscience by sharing values, beliefs and principles that today guide many of us in our work and personal lives. Peter's humble, generous and genuine nature was only surpassed by his passion and conviction that people with disabilities be treated with dignity and valued as contributing members of society.

Peter spent much of his adult life assisting families to advocate for their sons and daughters labeled with an intellectual disability to be fully included in the broader community. His career included being part of L'Arche/Daybreak, working for the Canadian Association for Community Living, Community Living Toronto, Community Living Ajax Pickering Whitby and Durham Association for Family Respite Service. He believed strongly in individualized funding so that people with disabilities can be empowered and supported to make informed decisions that directly impact their lives. His tireless efforts will be fondly remembered and appreciated for years to come. **Anne Marie Cole (Executive Director of Extend-A-Family)**

Remember Me

Remember me as the one who believed in you and held you with utmost regard. Who believed in your capacity for finding your own way through whatever it was that hindered you or felt insurmountable at times.

Remember me as the one who took sustenance from every gathering you ever gave yourself to, gatherings that had as their solemn purpose to listen and then listen some more to the outpourings of breaking hearts, shattered resolve and faltering vision.

Remember me as the one who held relationships as the most worthwhile venture on the unpaved path to love and belonging. As the one who echoed the essence of "Ubuntu" into your ear and let it resound deeply into your heart space.

Remember me as the one who marveled at how you drew others into your life in such a way that they could help you make sense of your life's purpose and see more clearly what needs to be done. The one that deeply understood the meaning of sacred covenant.

Remember me as the jubilant one, steadfast enough to celebrate all of your victories big and small alongside you through the years. The one watching with amazement at your courage.

Remember me as the one who accompanied you, admiring your tireless efforts at seeking a more "meaningful life," sometimes against all odds.

Remember me as the one who gently urged you to source your hope and fortitude from others, by unfailingly asking:

"When will we meet again?"

Remember, we will meet again.

A tribute to Peter Dill

May 20th 2014

Poem by Judith McGill

"The purpose of life is to live it, to taste experience to the utmost, to reach out eagerly and without fear for newer and richer experience." - Eleanor Roosevelt



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

Phone: 416 4841317

Email: info@extendafamily.ca

Web: www.extendafamily.ca

Dads' Group

Location: Extend-A-Family office
Day: last Tuesday of each month
Time: 7:00 – 9:00 pm

Safe & Secure Futures Networks

West—Location: Royal York Road United Church

Day: Second Tuesday evening of every month

Time: 7:00 – 9:00 pm

East- Location: St. Simon the Apostle Anglican Church

Day: Third Tuesday evening of every month

Time: 7:00 – 9:00 pm

North East Support Group

Location: Members' homes
Day: Tuesdays – once a month
Time: 9:30 -11:30 am

West Parents Support Group

Location: Long Branch Baptist Church
Day: Every other Wednesday
Time: 9:30 – 11:30 am

Spanish & English Support Group

Location: Jane St. Hub
Day: Every other Wednesday
Time: 9:30—11:30

Youth Sibling Support Group

Location: Extend-A-Family office
Day: 4 times a year
Time: To be decided

East Toronto Parent Support Group

Location: Corvette Public School
Day: First Wednesday evening of every Month
Time: 7:00 – 8:30 pm

Adult Sibling Support Group

Location: Extend-A-Family office, or in community
Day: Thursday– once a month
Time: 7:00 – 9:00 pm

INCLUSION : CHALLENGING AND CHANGING THE PARADIGM

"A REPLACEMENT PICTURE"

TRADITIONAL	INCLUSIVE
SEEKING MEDICAL DIAGNOSIS	UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL CONTEXT
BIBLICAL "HEALING"	"WELCOMING", "REMOVING STIGMA"
CHANGE THE PERSON	CHANGE SOCIETY
BURDEN	BELONGING
REHABILITATION REQUIRED	ACCOMMODATION AVAILABLE
SEE PERSON'S WEAKNESSES - TO BE FIXED	RECOGNIZE PERSON'S STRENGTHS / GIFTS
GOAL: TO MINIMIZE DEPENDENCY	GOAL: TO MAXIMIZE CONTRIBUTION
DIRECTING THE PERSON	DIRECTED BY THE PERSON
EXPECTING INDEPENDENCE	ENCOURAGING INTERDEPENDENCE
PLACEMENT	PARTICIPATION
PRE- AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING	CAREER PLANNING
ANNUAL PLANNING GOALS	LIFE DREAMS
CO-ORDINATE TRANSITION – FROM SCHOOL TO ?	CELEBRATE GRADUATION – INTO LIFE AND WORK
"APPROPRIATE" COMMUNITY RESIDENCE	CHOICE OF HOME
SOME PEOPLE NEED LIFE-LONG <i>SERVICES</i>	ALL PEOPLE NEED LIFE-LONG <i>RELATIONSHIPS!</i>
COMPETITIVE EMPLOYMENT GOAL	CO-OPERATIVE EMPLOYMENT SUCCESS
PLATEAU	LIFE-LONG LEARNING
"BE REALISTIC!"	"BE CREATIVE!"
DEMANDING COMPLIANCE	LISTENING
INTELLECT IS VALUED	PRESENCE IS VALUED
ASSESSMENTS, ELIGIBILITY, \$ TO PROGRAMS	PARTNERSHIPS, INDIVIDUALIZED FUNDING
LIFE SKILLS	LIVING!
CASE, TRAINEE, CLIENT	EMPLOYEE, EMPLOYER, ENTREPRENEUR
"PEERS", "SIBLINGS"	"FRIENDS", "BROTHERS AND SISTERS"
CHARITY	RIGHTS
RESPIRE	RELATIONSHIPS
STATUS QUO, MANAGEMENT	ADVOCACY, LEADERSHIP
CLIENT – FOCUS ON PROBLEMS AND NEEDS	CITIZEN – FOCUS ON CONTRIBUTIONS AND PARTICIPATION
"LABEL" / PROBLEMS	MYSTERY / GIFTS

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Acknowledgement & Appreciation

Extend-A-Family would like to acknowledge the following schools for their partnership and support in building friendships and creating awareness about inclusion in the community:

St. Alphonsus C.S., St. Anselm C.S., Balmy Beach P.S., Blessed Sacrament C.S., Bruce P.S., Clinton P.S., Cosburn Middle School, St Henry C.S., Holy Angels C.S., St. John the Evangelist C.S., Kingsview Village J.S., R J Lange E. & M.S., Leslieville P.S., Mary Shadd P.S., Pelmo Park P.S., Pineway P.S., Pleasant P.S., Portage Trail Community School, RH McGregor E.S., Regent Heights P.S., Stella Maris C.S., Topcliff P.S., and West Memorial P.S.

Extend-A-Family would also like to thank:

- ◆ Melissa Clare, Earl Bales Community Centre, for providing free space for our events and workshops.
- ◆ Corvette Junior Public School and Unison Health Jane St Hub for providing space to facilitate parent support groups.
- ◆ The Daily Bread Food Bank for providing a welcoming venue for our young people to volunteer.
- ◆ Grace Christian School Daycare for supporting a youth over the summer.
- ◆ Hollycrest Middle School, Islington Community School and Thistletown Community Centre for creating a welcoming environment for youth volunteer counselors at their respective summer camps.
- ◆ Long Branch Baptist Church for it's continued support of the West Parent Support Group.
- ◆ Ontario Science Centre for offering our families discounted coupons to attend the Centre.
- ◆ Pet Valu for continuing to welcome volunteers that share a love for cats and kittens.
- ◆ Ron Malis for continuing to offer free workshops and guidance to our families.
- ◆ San Romanoway Revitalization Association for their inclusive philosophy.
- ◆ West Scarborough Neighbourhood Boys and Girls Club for their welcoming and creative summer camp experience.
- ◆ We would like to thank Marilyn Dolmage for organizing a visit to an inclusive high school in Clinton, ON and a newly transforming inclusive school board in Stratford, ON. The staff and students of St. Anne's Catholic Secondary School welcomed our small group of parents, opened their classrooms and were giving of their time to share their insights, experience and the overwhelming benefits of the inclusive approaches within their school. Sincere thanks to the staff from Avon Maitland District School Board who gave their time at the end of the work day to share the progress and the challenges as their board moves to an inclusive education model. The day provided great insights, hope and inspiration for the parents involved. Much appreciation and gratitude to all involved!

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 _____