

Everyday Ordinary

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Growing Relationships in Everyday Moments

Have you ever wondered how best to get to know your community and meet with your neighbours? It really comes down to those everyday moments that take you out of the place you call “home” and have you take part in life outside your front door. Find the courage and step outside your door and check out your surroundings with a new-found curiosity. Who knows what you will see?

This is one way I have introduced myself to my neighbours in the past. Taking out the garbage is not always the most pleasant weekly chore we have, but someone must do it. Whether it be to the garbage chute in your high rise or wheeling the bin to the curbside. This has worked for me in the past, when I am taking out the garbage, I take a little extra time and pay attention to who else is doing the same. This is a good opportunity to get their attention with a wave or just say hi and make some comment like “Glad to get this out of our place.” You may gradually get to know more about each other. Of course, you are the one to decide to make a connection, not everyone does. If you do, try striking up a conversation.

Pay attention to who is around. Maybe there is a neighbourhood kid/teen who seems to be interested in your garden and enjoys watering plants. That could be a great opportunity to invite them over when you garden. With neighbours helping neighbours, not only would plants be growing but your friendship could grow as well. That is definitely a win-win situation.



Parents, pay attention to your kids’ interests and passions such as pet sitting, shoveling, grass cutting, or mailing a letter. Any of these could be the starting point to meet and connect with your neighbours.

It can be hard to go into a new place for the first time – a school, the library, a church, the local gym, etc. Slow down, pay attention to who is around you, be curious about people and start a conversation. This may be the start of a new relationship.

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Who Is Extend-A-Family

Extend-A-Family is a not-for-profit, charitable organization that works in the community to facilitate the building of relationships between individuals who have disabilities and other members of the community. We believe that all people belong and that our community is stronger when all members are included. We foster public awareness of the gifts and contributions of people with disabilities.

<http://extendafamily.ca/>



Call for Submissions

If you would like to submit an article to an upcoming Extend-A-Family newsletter or website, please send your submission to your Coordinator or to the office, indicating such. All submissions must have a signed release form from the author and any photographs must have consent release forms from all persons appearing in the photo. All submissions are subject to the discretion of Extend-A-Family. We cannot guarantee that your contribution will be used. We would love to hear from you.

Message from the Executive Director - Ruth Fernandes

At the start of this year, Extend-A-Family had a Strategic Plan in place and once again the message of inclusion rang clearly through our vision, mission and values statements.

Recently, I came to hear of a young boy who opens his mind and heart to welcoming his classmate with a disability. It seems that for this little boy, seeing how to make the day better for his classmate is not an option; it is the natural thing to do. Changing the game slightly, modifying the rules, selecting the space that works, choosing the words that are respectful – all the things that will make it fun for his buddy to enjoy the everyday ordinary things that everyone else is enjoying. It is by no stroke of luck that this boy thinks about the importance of the value to belong. It would likely be the people in his life that have shaped his thinking and set him on a path of being compassionate. Creating a place of belonging, whether it be in a classroom, a playground or a work place is each of our responsibility. This young child has shown how it can be made possible.



Earlier this year our former Board Chair resigned from his position. Jeff Short had served on the Extend-A-Family Board for 10 years and over the past two years as Board Chair. While we miss his astute and calm ways of leadership, we are extremely happy to welcome Elizabeth MacLean as our new Board Chair!

Message from the Board Chair - Elizabeth MacLean

Hello, I am the new Chair of the Board. I became a member two years ago after seeing firsthand the valuable contribution Extend-A-Family made in the life of our family. A friendship circle at school has helped our daughter make some lasting friendships.

This is an exciting time to chair the board. We've spent the past year looking forward to where Extend-A-Family is heading over the next couple of years. We have a new strategic plan, and a fresh set of by-laws in place, thanks to the guidance of Susan Trembley and William Sparks with Management Advisory Services <https://masadvise.org/>. Susan Trembley has come back once again to help us with board governance. We are now looking forward to working together this year not only to carry out our mission, but to become more efficient, and encourage more voices at our table. Diversity in the membership brings valuable perspective. In this past year we welcomed our first board member who is an alumnus and we hope to see more people willing to give their time to help Extend-A-Family grow in the years to come.

Vision

Engaged and inclusive community where everybody belongs.

Mission

In partnership with families and community, we foster a life of belonging for children and youth with developmental disabilities, building meaningful relationships and valued roles. We share and promote the value of inclusion and belonging.

Values

- Diverse, caring relationships
- Individual gifts and strengths
- Participation in everyday community life
- Respecting and honouring choice
- Valued member in society

Building a Context for Relationship Workshop

Extend-A-Family had the opportunity to host an incredible workshop presented by Janet Klees, in November 2018. The workshop, Building a Context for Relationship focused on the importance of creating an intentional community for our children. For all of us, (disability or not) the relationships we create in our lives bring us happiness, love and belonging. Janet is a wonderful storyteller who shared many stories of individuals who use their gifts and interests to build on relationships. This is done by being in a place, being present in community, having a valued role and being amongst people of similar interests.

This is Janet's formula in building a context for relationships. The stories which Janet shared did not develop overnight but took years of planning to design opportunities for places where relationships are more likely to occur. It's never too late and we can start within our home and focus on deepening the familial roles. I hope this workshop provided hope, inspiration and a reminder to ask ourselves WHO WILL MY CHILD BE?



Memorable Moments in Friendship

Verona: Chiara and I met when I was in high school and spent a couple weeks together through the Summer Student Program.

My favorite memories of that summer were going swimming together and exploring HMV, Chapters and Sherway Gardens mall.

We stayed friends after the summer and met on some weekends to explore the sites downtown including St. Michael's Cathedral Basilica and St. James Church, and we enjoyed our chats over a warm drink at Balzac's coffee shop. When we can't see each other in person I text Chiara to say Hi and catch up.

This summer Chiara invited us to her Wedding! My family and I attended. It was a great day!

"My favorite part of Chiara's wedding was the ceremony, the meal + the Dancing!"

My sister said the food and desserts were delicious.

Chiara: Seven years ago, I worked as an Inclusive Recreation Assistant with Extend-A-Family. I was lucky enough to have been paired with Verona who I have been friends with ever since.

What drew me to Verona was her love for music, her excellent taste in food, her compassionate heart, and her overall presence. She really is a joy to be around. Since that summer, Verona and I have become close friends. I have learned many things from Verona; like how to skate, how to dance the robot (I'm still not good), and I still learn things from her today.

Verona was there for me in hard times and in times of joy. Most recently, Verona and her family were able to celebrate with me at my wedding in the summer. Verona is a MUCH better dancer than I am, and she certainly brought life to the party. It was so much fun to have her and the whole family share in such an important moment in my life. I am thankful to have met Verona and to still have her in my life today. I know that Verona is a lifelong friend and that her family is like family to me. I look forward to celebrating many more milestones as we both move forward into new phases of our lives.



Host Experience

In May 2018, Andrew met his new Extend-A-Family Host, Kevin.

Andrew: Kevin and I have seen movies. We talk about computer games. We also went to a market at The Beach. We bought a Minecraft Redstone book, and a book called, “Amulet”. I like hanging out with Kevin.

Kevin: Andrew was shy at the beginning, showing a spark of enthusiasm when talking about the ships and planes he makes out of paper. Fast forward a few months of getting to know one another and Andrew is outgoing, expressive and willing to explore outside his comfort zone. I am overjoyed to continue to spend time with Andrew.

Mom, Pam: It is heart-warming to see my son light up when there is talk of him and Kevin doing things together. Andrew is always eager to plan new experiences with Kevin. Until Andrew and Kevin started getting together, neither Andrew nor I really realized what Andrew was missing out on! Andrew’s enthusiasm clearly demonstrates that he fully embraces this new friendship!



Inclusive Recreation Assistant - Nitin

...The things I have learned (this summer being an Inclusive Recreation Assistant) will help me moving forward in not only my career path but in my academic life and daily life as well. My outlook on individuals with disabilities has been transformed and Extend-A-Family is to thank for that. Thank you...for believing in my abilities throughout. I will be reflecting on my time in the Summer Student Program for many years to come.

Giving Back

My name is Anjali and I am 16 years old and in grade 11. I am a very happy, young woman. I enjoy music, dancing, singing, swimming and meeting people. Over the past few years, I have volunteered with the City of Toronto. During the summers, I volunteered at the Parks and Recreation summer camps. During the fall and winter season, I volunteered at my local community centre with the Dance Basics class.

This summer an Inclusive Recreation Assistant accompanied me when I was volunteering. Together, we volunteered and I had the opportunity to lead a game of Octopus. I enjoy wearing my green volunteer t-shirt. When I volunteer, I feel happy, proud and welcomed at the community centre.

I am very proud that I have been able to contribute a total of 63 hours of volunteer service at the City of Toronto and received a certificate for completing my 40 hours. I really enjoy volunteering and working with kids. Soon I hope to pursue my interest in dance, music and theatre performance.



Summer Support – Rachael Wallace, *Inclusive Recreation Assistant 2018*

This past summer, I had the privilege of working for Extend-A-Family as an Inclusive Recreation Assistant. Through this position, I was lucky to meet so many wonderful young people and their families – but one young girl really stood out for to me! Her name is Rida.

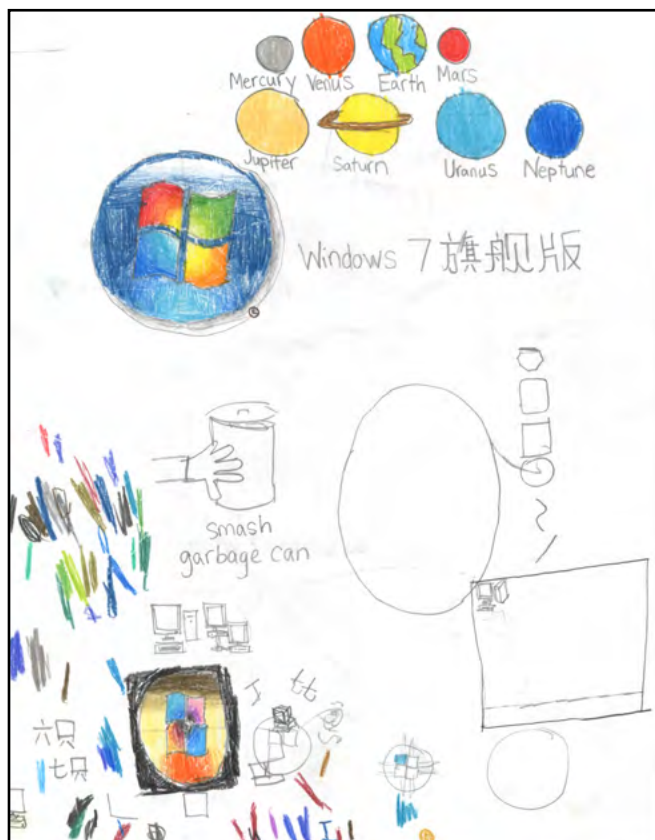
I remember during my initial meeting with Rida, she was very quiet but she donned the biggest smile that was so welcoming! I knew that even though my time with Rida was short, we would enjoy our time in community.

As the week went on, I saw Rida's comfort and confidence grow, both with me as well as with using her own voice and making choices.

We had a great week, focused on what Rida was interested in, new things she wanted to try, and favourite things she liked to do.

The biggest take away was seeing Rida using her voice. Her voice is powerful. Her voice matters.

Art Corner



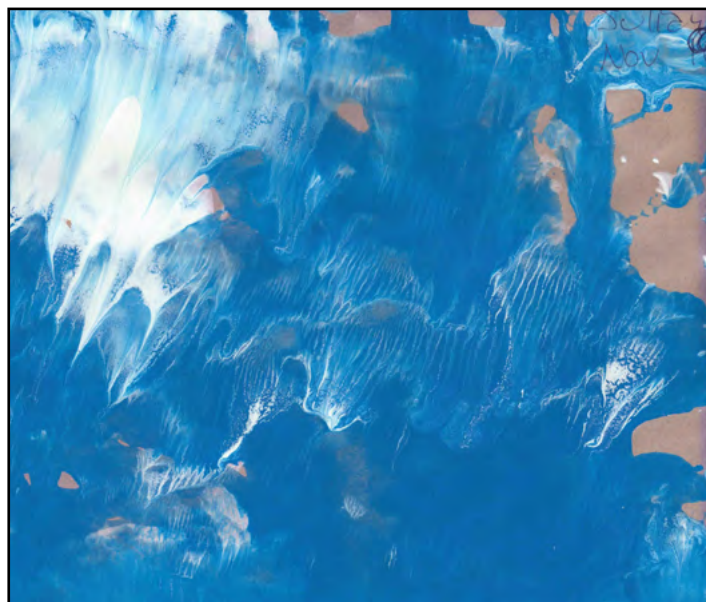
by Greg Chen



by Eddie Li



by Wardell Talento



by Julian Nevolic

Calling All Artists!

If you would like the opportunity to be showcased in future Newsletters, please send your artwork to your Coordinator.

Leadership Camp - Fathiya Elmi, *Inclusive Recreation Assistant 2018*

This past summer, I had an unforgettable experience supporting kids and youth in inclusive camps and communities around the City of Toronto. During one of the weeks, I accompanied a fun and clever young boy in a Boys Leadership Camp at Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment (MLSE).

From the moment we stepped into MLSE, we were greeted with warm smiles and felt a part of a positive space where everyone could be themselves. The camp was arranged with many inclusive activities and engaging workshops for the week. Every morning started off with a leadership activity that helped the boys develop skills such as team building and self-esteem. The leadership activities gave an opportunity for the campers to interact and create bonds with one another and share great ideas about the activity. The young boy was open minded every day of camp, and excited to participate in: learning about mindfulness and yoga, financial literacy, rapping, S.T.E.M. (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), skillful drills taught by athletes from the Toronto Argonauts and Toronto Raptors, art work, daily tournaments and so much more.

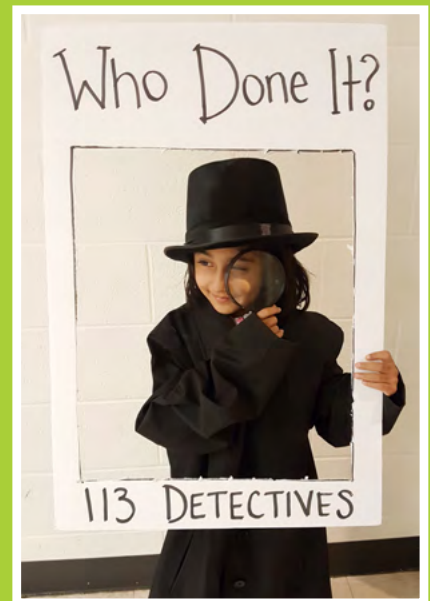
His knowledge and love for technology, video games and electronics connected him to one of the workshops which taught the campers how to use a camera. He learned more about the effects of blurring and focusing on certain objects as well as slow motion effects when taking a video. Another highlight from the camp was being able to watch him reach the top of the rock climbing wall. With words of encouragement from his team members and coaches, he enthusiastically achieved his goal.

At MLSE, the campers were full of excitement, confidence and developed tonnes of leadership skills by the end of the week. It was a memorable experience to be in a welcoming environment where staff members believed in all the campers for their abilities and strengths.

Aarya's Experience

Aarya is a very enthusiastic 5-year-old girl. She had a wonderful time at the Parks and Recreation summer camp of 2018. She was at camp with an Inclusive Recreation Assistant, Krupal. Aarya participated in many activities during the camp. She came home with different craft creations every day. She made new friends at the camp and continued to learn about sharing and taking turns. Aarya would come home and make crafts and write letters. I noticed that during the summer camp, Aarya's conversations were more in-depth.

After noticing the benefits of sending Aarya to the Summer Camp, we decided to enroll Aarya in the Girl Guides of Canada and she is now a proud "Spark Girl Guide." She wears her Girl Guide uniform very enthusiastically and gets ready for her Monday evening meetings. Recently, we sold Girl Guide cookies and raised money. For Halloween, the Sparks went to a long-term home to celebrate Halloween with seniors. Aarya made candy bags for her friends and Halloween cards for the seniors. One of the Girl Guide leaders identified that Aarya has a keen interest in robots and recommended that she should get involved in the robotic S.T.E.M. program (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics). Aarya is very excited to be part of the S.T.E.M. program, which will be her next venture.



<http://extendafamily.ca/our-services/the-summer-student-program/>

Friendship Club Presentation – Aazim Ashraf

Hello everyone.

Did you know that the coolest club is coming up in Joyce Public School? It is called Friendship Club and I am going to tell you about it.

First, I am going to talk about what is Friendship Club. Friendship Club teaches us how to play with friends. For example, you should share with your friends and not keep the whole thing to yourself. Another good thing about Friendship Club is I can talk and share ideas with my friends. For example, we talked about what we did during the long weekend and that helps your brain grow because you learn new ideas.

We do fun things in Friendship Club. For example, we had a picnic lunch last year. I bought chips and hot dogs for lunch and I shared it with my friends. We did arts and crafts and played board games. We decorated our wooden boxes with stickers. We played Connect 4 and Twister with my friends. Now I am going to talk about some of the fun things we can do this year. They are: science experiments, water games, making s'mores, and field trips.

Friends are important to talk to and share feelings. This helps you feel happy. When you are bullied by another person you can ask for help from your friends.

Would you like to join my Friendship Club? Friends are fun to play with.

<http://extendafamily.ca/our-services/friendship-circles/>



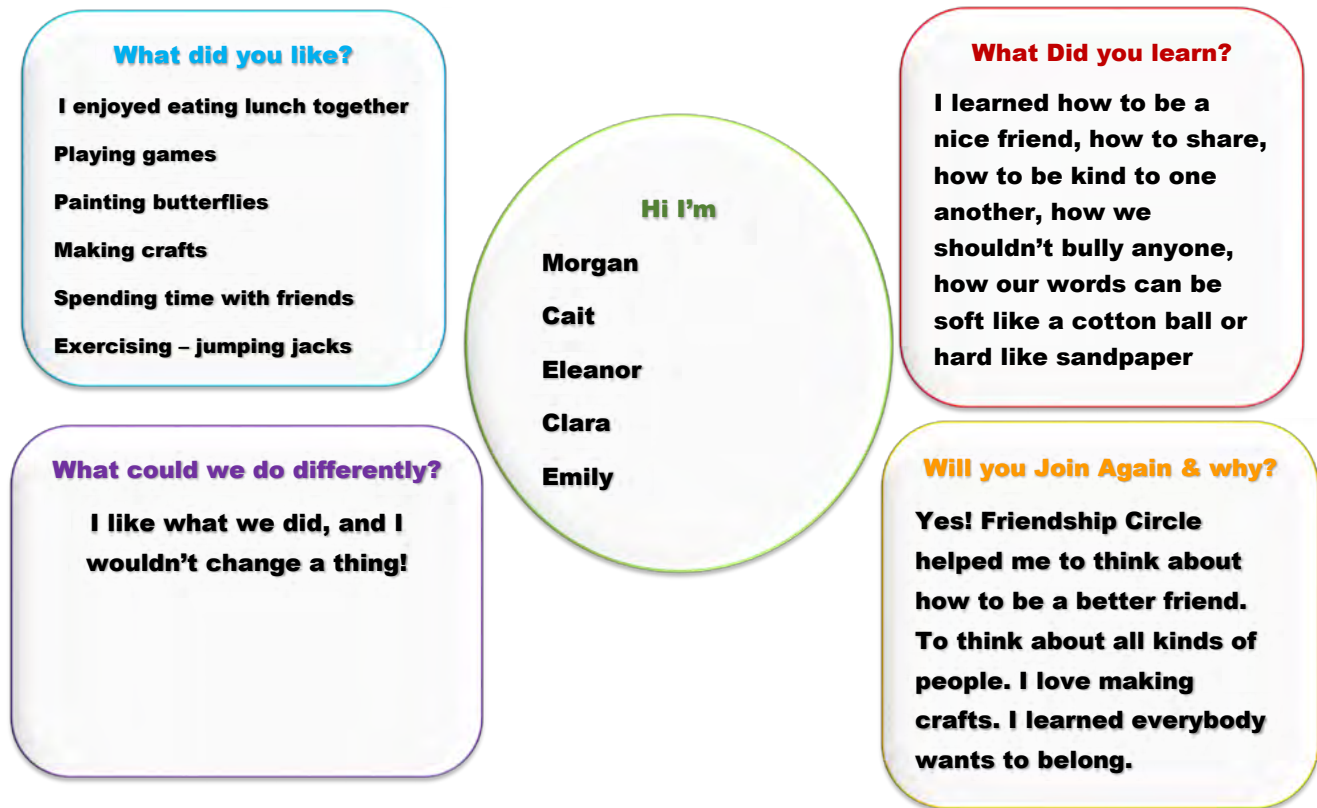
Friendship Sun – Maurice Cody



Friends
Respect
Including
Everybody belongs together
Nice
Drawing
Sharing
Hope
Independent
Playing

Singing
Understanding
Not being naughty

Friendship Circle Questionnaire – Leslieville Junior Public School



At the last two Friendship Circles, while the girls were eating their lunches, we discussed what the Friendship Circle has meant to them.

We discussed what it means to be a friend. This is their feedback.

- You don't have to ask or wait for someone to join you, you can walk up to someone and ask them to play first.
- Friends are trustworthy. Not like wolves dressed like grandmas.
- Friends help one another.
- It's not fair to exclude anyone by not including them.
- Be kind to everything, including little ants.
- Treat others like you want to be treated.
- Friends share.
- Being a friend means to be kind to one another.
- We need lots of friends. If one friend is busy, we can ask another to play with us.
- You don't have to play with just one person, you can play with multiple people at the same time.
- If you don't have a friend or someone to talk to, you could go up to someone and ask, "do you want to play?" or
- If you see someone all alone, you could go up to them and ask, "do you want to play?"

Let's Talk About Sex

Let's face it, talking to our teenagers and pre-teens about sex is no easy task. That statement is probably very true for most parents of pre-teens, and how much more challenging for parents and caregivers of teens with developmental disabilities?

When I heard about Extend-A-Family's 5-week workshop, I was very eager to attend. The group has provided us with permission to talk about sex and puberty with our teens and preteens, and a language with which to communicate clearly with our kids.

Our facilitators have taken a group of families who were strangers to start, become friends with common interests and bonds. Together with our kids, we have gained insight into puberty, private vs public spaces, and how to recognize both our individual personal space and respect others'.

It has been said that "it takes a village to raise a child." When we are struggling with the pressures of work, family and trying to find home life balance, all the balls we have in the air can become a few too many. What Extend-A-Family does, is help families create that village. Meeting other families on similar journeys and meeting volunteers and professionals, helps all of us get stronger and benefit from each others' ideas and experiences.

My son, who usually doesn't like to go anywhere that doesn't involve his PS4, really enjoyed the workshop and actually participated! Because we are learning together, we are able to practice the language and terms we have used in the workshop at home.

We look forward to future Extend-A-Family events.

Thanks to Extend-A-Family, "let's talk about sex" is not so scary!

Carol and Evan

<http://extendafamily.ca/our-services/sexuality-workshops-with-a-focus-on-healthy-relationships/>

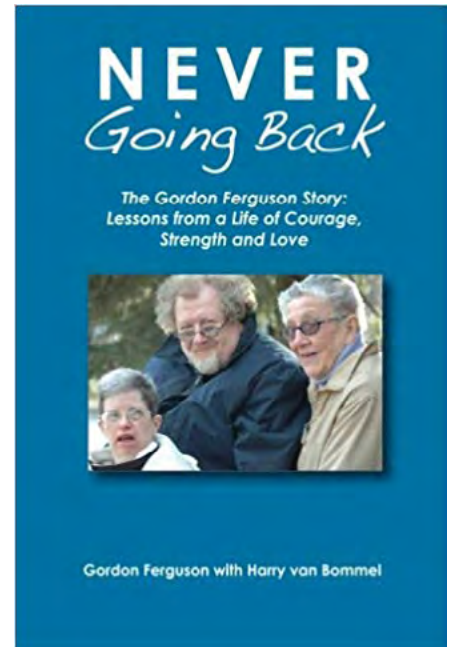


Book Reviews

This is Gordon Ferguson's life story. Gordon shares many of his life experiences in many different settings and the people who shared his journey through life.

What is striking about his story, Gordon was able to experience and attain an everyday ordinary life after his release from the institution. Later he would play a role in the closure of institutions. Gordon was resourceful and resilient. Gordon found love and was married, and they had a home of their own. He had employment, many hobbies and interests and he was involved in many associations as an advocate and spokesperson. Gordon was a car enthusiast, a musician, a husband, a baseball fan, a homeowner, an employee, a board member, a spokesperson and the list goes on.

Gordon passed away in the spring of 2018, but his legacy will live on. This book offers a perspective of true community life and hope to all families who have a loved one with a disability and what is possible. This book is recommended not only for family members, but for support agencies and schools to bring a fresh and healthy perspective to what is possible and how to get it.

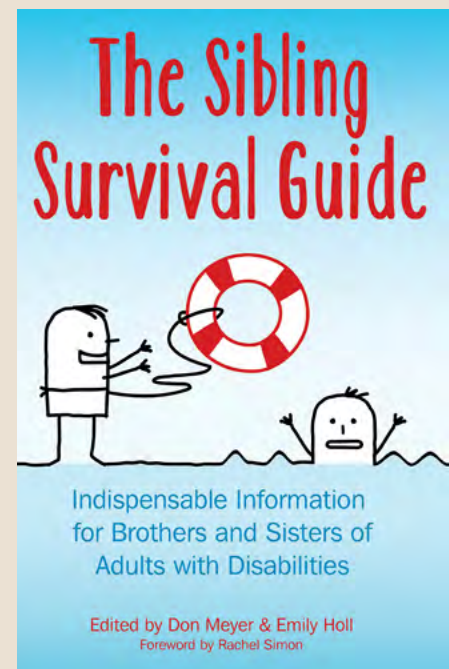


Uncertainty about the future, pressure to be perfect, strained parental relationships, fear of intimacy, and feelings of guilt or jealousy, are just some of the many common symptoms of being a sibling. If you have a sibling with a developmental disability, it is natural to have these feelings and questions. But with so much information and opinions out there, where does one even begin to find the answers?

We'll look no further, *The Sibling Survival Guide* edited by Don Meyer (Director of the Kindering Center's Sibling Support Project) and Emily Holl (licensed social worker, writer and sibling) is a one stop guide full of answers to all your sibling symptoms. This book offers honest and relatable insight from sibs just like you, with contributions from Katie Arnold, Kitty Porterfield, Rachel Simon and many more! It provides valuable information and validation for those of us drowning with doubts, fears or insecurities about our relationships with our siblings.

This book shows that the power of sharing information and building community with those in the same boat as you, can make the biggest difference in your journey. As a sib, reading through the various experiences of other sibs, such as their embarrassing moments, their experiences of being left out of the conversation with their parents and the importance for self-care, truly resonated with me.

But that is only the tip of the iceberg, this guide provides advice on a variety of topics and questions. This book is a must read that I not only recommend for sibs of all ages, but for parents, educators and leaders, to help open their eyes and bring awareness to the sibling experience.



Extend-A-Family offers a variety of support groups across Toronto.

Visit our website, connect with staff or the office for information.

Web: www.extendafamily.ca ■ **Email:** info@extendafamily.ca

Phone: 416 484 1317

ADULT SIBLING SUPPORT GROUP

Location: Extend-A-Family office or to be announced

Time and Day: 7:00pm-9:00pm, once a month on Thursdays

Contact: Jessica 416-239-7161, jvw@extendafamily.ca

DADS' GROUP

Location: Extend-A-Family office

Time and Day: 7:00pm-9:00pm, once a month on Tuesdays

Contact: Salvatore 416-530-0272, sr@extendfamily.ca

EAST TORONTO EVENING PARENT GROUP

Location: Birkdale Community Centre

Time and Day: 7:00pm-8:30pm, once a month on Wednesdays

Contact: Kim 416-757-2780, ksp@extendafamily.ca

SAFE & SECURE FUTURE NETWORKS – EAST

Location: Donway Covenant United Church

Time and Day: 7:00pm-9:00pm, once a month on Tuesdays

Contact: Kristen 647-292-5175, ssfne@extendafamily.ca

SAFE & SECURE FUTURE NETWORKS – WEST

Location: Royal York Road United Church

Time and Day: 7:00pm-9:00pm, once a month on Tuesdays

Contact: Jessica 416-239-7161, ssfnw@extendafamily.ca

WEST PARENT SUPPORT GROUP

Location: Humber Valley Junior Middle School

Time and Day: 6:30pm- 8:30pm, once a month on Thursdays

Contact: Marissa Wolicki 647-292-5357, mw@extendafamily.ca

ACT SUPPORT GROUP (ACCEPTANCE AND COMMITMENT THERAPY)

Location: Extend-A-Family office

Time and Day: 7:00pm- 8:30pm, once a month on Tuesdays

Contact: Lee Steel 647-220-9412, ls@extendafamily.ca

Welcome to Nawin Mutti

Hey Extend-A-Family, it's Nawin here. I joined the board in early 2018. I am so honored to be on the board and helping to look over the organization I loved since I was a child. Having a disability, I have been connected to EAF for most of my childhood. For 8 years, I have volunteered with different organizations. I always have been interested in learning how to make policies and improve them if required. Over the years I have gained a growth mindset, in part by going to many of the leadership/inclusion workshops offered by EAF and my education institutions.

Welcome to Ahmad Jabbir

My name is Ahmad and I am a new Coordinator with Extend-A-Family. I have an educational background in Psychology and 6 years of experience working with youth in charities. One of my first experiences with Extend-A-Family was attending the Adult Sibling Group. This group made a profound impact on me as I was introduced to new perspectives I had not seen before. I find it such an honour to be able to work alongside other families who share many similar experiences as I have. I truly believe that together we can build Toronto to be a more inclusive city.

Farewell to Jumoke Famutimi

We would like to acknowledge Jumoke's work as a former Coordinator at Extend-A-Family. Jumoke had a way of respecting the individual's choices and recognizing their potential. Extend-A-Family wishes her success in her future journey.

Farewell to Dinesan Varendran

Dinesan joined Extend-A-Family last year, supporting families over a one-year contract position. We would like to wish Dinesan every success in his future pursuits.

Farewell to Jeff Short

With deep gratitude we would like to acknowledge Jeff Short, our former Board Chair. Jeff was introduced to Extend-A-Family by his mother, a former Coordinator with Extend-A-Family, Liz Short. Jeff's initial acquaintance with the organization was as a Host with a young man. He then served on the Extend-A-Family board for 10 years, first as a Director and in the past couple of years as the Board Chair. It was fitting when we had the honour of Jeff's parents, Liz and Paul, join us at our recent summer gathering and AGM along with Jeff's wife Beverley, in celebrating his time with the organization. We appreciate Jeff's genuine support and contribution to Extend-A-Family and wish him well in his future endeavours!

Acknowledgements

Thank you to Linda Ger Walters for sharing her experience and wisdom with our Safe & Secure Futures Network West.

Thank you also to Alexandra Shannan for sharing her new position as Housing Navigator of the DSO with both Safe & Secure Futures Network East and West groups.

Extend-A-Family would like to give a special thank you to Management Advisory Services through which we had consulting services from William Sparks (By-Laws) and Susan Tremblay (Strategic Planning and Board Governance).

Extend-A-Family is very appreciative to all the schools and community centres that kindly provide space with an opportunity to build new skills, foster friendship, and support inclusive school communities. These include Toronto Catholic District School Board, including St. Anselm and Toronto District School Board, including Berner Trail Junior Public School, Corvette Junior Public School, Fern Avenue Junior and Senior Public School, Highcastle Public School, Joyce Public School, Leslieville Junior Public School, Macklin Public School, Maurice Cody Public School, Muirhead Public School, Pauline Johnson Junior Public School, Rockford Public School, Zion Heights Middle School and Community Partners including Bloordale Camp, Constitution Place Retirement Home, Daily Bread Food Bank, Earl Bales Community Centre, MLSE LaunchPad, Parks and Recreation Toronto, PC Cooking School, Parkway Forest Community Centre, Scadding Court Community Centre, Smithfield Community Camp, Warden Hilltop Community Centre.

Thank you to Extend-A-Family funders: Ontario Ministry of Children, Community & Social Services, City of Toronto and Service Canada.

Award of Inclusion

The Extend-A-Family Award of Inclusion is an annual award recognizing the outstanding work that schools and community organizations contribute to inclusion, friendship building and partnership. Congratulations to the recipients of the 2018~2019 Award of Inclusion: Berner Trail Junior Public School and West Scarborough Neighbourhood Community Centre.

Thank you for your contributions!

Charitable Registration Number 11890-4846-RR0001

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



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

For Charitable Receipt purposes, we require the following information:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Mailing Address: _____