

Interconnectedness

Breaking bread together has many meanings; bringing people together, providing comfort, asserts trust, connotes friendship. Sharing sustenance leads to interconnectedness. Preparing food also helps towards independence, so my mother said as she taught me how to scramble eggs. What an important skill to have, to nourish yourself and bring people together. Food is the easiest way to link people together. Terry learned some recipes this summer and doesn't his food look yummy? So, why not whip up (or buy) a batch of cookies and share with your neighbours or friends. Or if you can safely bake them together. As Cesar Chavez said, "The people who give you their food, give you their heart."

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chair	Jenn Wilson
Vice Chair	Filomena Nait
Secretary	Christine LeClair
Treasurer	Mohamed Abu-Shaaban
Director	Julie Cheah
Director	Nawin Mutti
Director	Afnan Shahid

STAFF

Executive Director	Ruth Fernandes
Office Manager	Cate Downey
Coordinators	Kristen Carhart
	Paige Deeth
	Antonia Heer
	Ella Jenkyn
	Nusrat Motala
	Anne Murray
	Michelle Pervin
	Salvatore Rocchese
	Kim Southern-Paulsen
	Marissa Wolicki



Terry, who is in his kitchen surrounded by ingredients and food, is preparing a vegetable wrap.

Table of Contents

Interconnectedness.....	1
Board of Directors.....	1
Staff.....	1
Who is Extend-A-Family?.....	2
Call For Submissions.....	2
Message from the Board Chair.....	3
Message from the Executive Director.....	3
Vision.....	4
Mission.....	4
Values.....	4
Sexuality and Healthy Relationships.....	5
Annual General Meeting.....	5
Celebrations Through Journeys.....	5
Springing Into Possibilities.....	6
Information sessions.....	6
Safe and Secure Future Networks.....	7
What is Rebecca doing today?.....	7
Learning to Cook with Terry.....	8
What we did Last Summer with Nicholas and Matthew.....	9
Connected Virtually Through a Love for Games.....	9
Welcome.....	10
Farewell.....	10
Acknowledgments.....	11
Support.....	12

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.



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

Extend-A-Family celebrated its 45th anniversary last year. We are proud to share that over these number of years, the journey to build friendships, invite participation, grow community and embrace interconnectedness are values that have continued to resonate among families. These principles provide the vision that guide the work of Extend-A-Family. Through this time, admittedly, families and our young people have been our greatest teachers.

During the past couple of years, we have been fortunate that our world has been able to connect virtually, despite the barriers of distancing. One common theme that has echoed during this time of change is the collective need for relationships and staying connected. So, while the pandemic has no doubt challenged us, it has helped us learn to cope and grow to be more resilient than we may have realized.

We are hopeful that 2022 brings a return to some of the normalcy we once knew; meeting in-person, participation at the local library, skating at the community center, baking together, travelling the TTC, biking with a friend, learning in class together, etc.

Recently I met with up with a longtime family friend. It felt great to meet in person after close to two years. It reminded me of the simple joys of sharing a meal together, enjoying the camaraderie and being able to share in the delight of being a first-time grandparent. Dinner ended with an insightful quote from my fortune cookie: "it is better to light one small candle than to curse the darkness". May we each try and be that light that takes the initiative to stay connected, say a kind word, offer a treat to the crossing guard, check in on a classmate or greet our neighbour.

I wish you a happy and peace-filled 2022!

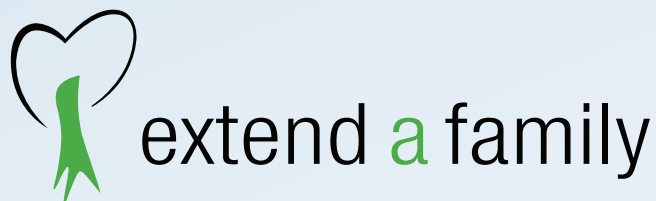
Message from the Board Chair - Jennifer Wilson

Hello, Extend-A-Family Members and Community!

I can't believe we are here in year two of the pandemic. We have watched as the world has twisted and turned, navigating so many corners and unforeseen obstacles. Extend-A-Family is among the incredibly fortunate organizations that have survived the pandemic. This comes in large part due to strong leadership, a clear mission, and dedication to the young people and their families whom we serve. We are extremely proud to be present in the community today, continuing to provide young people with intellectual disabilities and their families, with an abundance of resources, supports, and most importantly, friendship.

The organic friendships that are the foundation of Extend-A-Family's work, create transformative change in the lives of young people when they need it most. Encouraged by connection and supported to thrive, the young people we serve continue to amaze us every day. No one has gone unscathed throughout this pandemic, but when we turn to some of our most vulnerable populations, it is here where we see incredible strength, resilience, and courage.

Thank you to our Extend-A-Family community for your continued support and encouragement and supporting us to help young people with disabilities thrive.



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.



Vision

Engaged and inclusive community where everybody belongs.



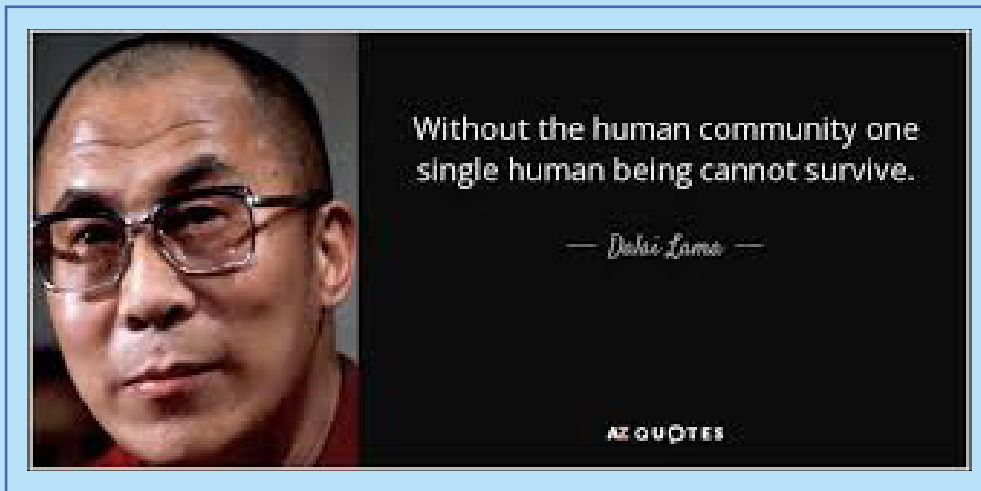
Values

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

Sexuality and Healthy Relationships

Due to COVID-19, our Sexuality and Healthy Relationship Workshop was held virtually this year and it was a huge success! The workshop is geared towards children/youth with developmental disabilities from 11 to 15 years of age. It is a five-week series, offered once each week, that is designed to provide parents and their children with practical learning opportunities.

Included in the workshop are discussions about feelings, relationships and sexuality. Families have an opportunity to learn with other families who are interested in supporting their children in this important aspect of learning. Extend-A-Family will be hosting another series of this workshop in the Spring of 2022.



Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting was held on Monday, June 7, 2021 via our online portal. Last year, Extend-A-Family celebrated 45 years since its inception. Wendy Arnold, founding Extend-A-Family member was able to join us for our special evening. The Annual General Meeting provides our membership with an update to our financial statement and elects the board for the upcoming year! Thank you to all of those that attended, and we look forward to having you participate again next year.

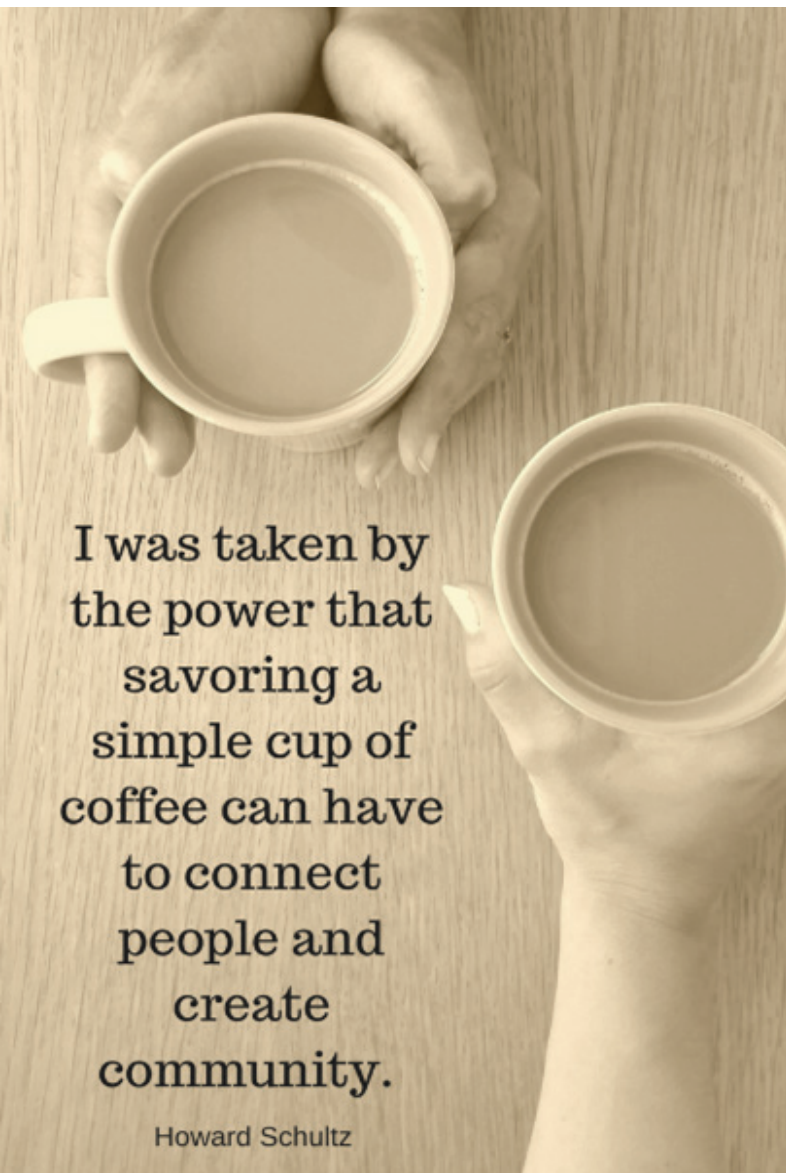
Celebrations Through Journeys

Our inaugural event for Celebrations Through Journeys was held on Thursday, March 4, 2021. This interactive evening delivered via Zoom showcased videos of community connections, families, friends, loved ones and colleagues. The evening was held in honour of celebrating stories and successes. With meaningful stories comes hope and with hope comes unlimited journeys. Thank you to all who participated and to all who were able to join us from across Canada!

Springing Into Possibilities

Spring 2021 found Extend-A-Family partnering with Durham Family Resources and Supports to create a mini-series for families with young and school-aged children. The three-part series allowed parents to re-imagine what is possible in our neighbourhoods.

Participants heard stories from parents on how they have supported their loved ones with continued exploration, connection and growth.



Parents shared,

- All of this has really got me thinking about what is possible and how and where do I start. The stories gave me hope. -AA

- There are so many avenues to discover and get our kids involved in community. I was impressed with the number of parents who are finding so many ways of connecting their kids and their successes. Just look at all the ways people are finding ways to get involved and they are included and accepted. WOW. - JC

- I have lots of ideas how to connect our kids to other children. Neighbourhood to connect to other people her age while focusing on her interests. Since we moved, we will be getting to our neighbourhood and exploring the parks, library, and trails. - AS

Watch for our invitation to join the Springing into Possibilities series in the Spring of 2022! Expect to walk away with ideas, strategies and the know-how needed to begin planning for a spring and summer full of discovery and inspiration for future possibilities. We look forward to learning with you!

Information Sessions

Extend-A-Family hosts Information Sessions to share information about Extend-A-Family to families, community members, professionals, and potential hosts. We share stories of success and hopes along with the resources and supports that are available. If you know of anyone who wants to know more about Extend-A-Family, please connect with Salvatore at 416-530-0272 or sr@extendafamily.ca

Safe and Secure Future Networks

Safe and Secure Futures Networks bring together caregivers whose loved ones are adults or transitioning into adulthood. The Network has temporarily moved their monthly meetings to a virtual platform.

Safe and Secure Futures Networks continue to promote the importance of supporting families who have adult children with developmental disabilities. The network has done this by developing and nurturing circles of support, financial planning, addressing challenges of caregiving, promoting self-care, nurturing community inclusion and assisting families to navigate developmental services. This is a safe and open space for networking, mutual support and resource sharing.

As our world has changed since March 2020, the Network has moved their monthly meetings to a virtual platform.

We are all searching for some form of family or foundation - for a place we can feel safe and secure.

-Mr. Printer

What is Rebecca Doing Today?

Though I longed for my home, I realized that she had been instilled within me. Wherever I went and whomever I became, her remnants would always remain.

HOME STRATOSPHERE

My name is Rebecca, Alumni Member of Extend-A-Family, I am a daughter, sister, friend, neighbour, student, video game player, gardener, singer and church member. Some of these roles were assigned to me and some are based on my interests. I will be sharing my role as a church member.

I have been attending the Scarborough Chinese Baptist Church since I was very young. I have been attending church with my family every Sunday for service. Over the years, I started to get involved with my church outside of Sunday service.

When I was kid, I would attend all the programs and activities that church had to offer for young children. I remember attending the Pioneer Club. This was full of fun activities, games, and bible study which I enjoyed.

As I started to get older, I was able to be more actively involved in the church. Some of my interests include art and singing, so I decided to sign up for a volunteer

continue reading on page 8

position as an assistant to the Kids 2 Knight program. The Kids 2 Knight program was for children. In this program I organized and prepared all the materials which were needed for each activity. I also volunteered as a leader for the Stephen's fellowship program. I lead the kids arts/craft corner. I really enjoyed working with children, I think it is because I am a very calm person. Children at the church looked up to me as a role model. This made me feel like a leader.

During the summer, my church had Summer Fun which is a day camp for children. Summer Fun was accepting volunteers for their counselor position. I had to apply, attend an interview, and orientation to be accepted for this position. Many teenagers had applied for this position, it was a good way to get our volunteer hours for high school.

I was a team player and worked with the staff and other counselors to create a fun experience for the kids.

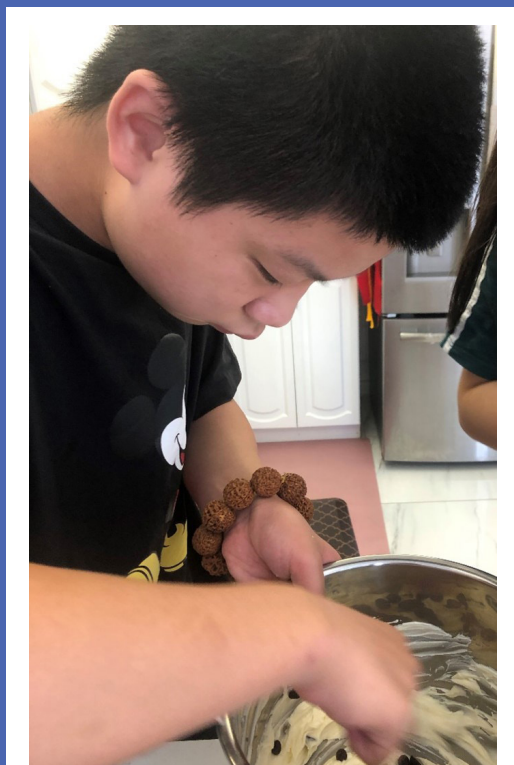
I am good at organizing, so I had prepared most of the arts/crafts activities. I'm also a good singer

so my team relied on me and other staff to lead the songs with the children.

As a church member there are many ways to stay involved. I worked with a group of people on our community garden project. I am really into horticulture and gardening, so I knew I had the knowledge and talents. In the community garden we watered and harvested the crops. The food was then used to provide to the homeless people. I also took part in many charity events that our church host, such as Hunger No More.

Aside from my contributions to the church, I am also a student learning about my faith. I am currently taking part in the Young Adult Ministry.

The pandemic has shifted all my church involvement to online. I like that I am still connected to people in my church, I can see their faces on zoom, and I am also in touch with some of the people through social media. My church involvement continues to evolve, and I hope to apply for an internship position in the near future.



Picture description: In his kitchen, Terry is intently mixing batter. Looks yummy!

Learning to Cook with Terry

Terry really enjoyed his summer; he really liked the cooking class and was really excited to start cooking.

**I want to thank
Extend-A-Family for the support.**

What We Did Last Summer -with Nicholas and Matthew

Nicholas - I participated in two summer experiences with the assistance of Matthew, my support person, thanks to the EAF Summer Support Partnership grant. Together I volunteered at Sunnyside Up Camp for two weeks, helping 4–5-year-old kids attend summer camp.

I also took my puppy, Murphy, to training classes with Matthew's help. I am outgoing, and it has been really hard not being able to go to school or see family or friends for such a long time. I felt more safe and confident participating in activities around my community having Matthew there to support me. He may come with me on outings with my friends in the future.

Matthew - I really enjoyed being Nick's support person this summer. It was easy to see how much he enjoyed being out and about especially when working with the kids at summer camp. As sociable as Nick can be, there were times when he can be quite shy. This is where I usually come in and often it is just a matter of initiating a conversation or steer the conversation to a subject that Nick knows well. I rate this experience a 4 out of 5! It was a pleasure working with Nick and I hope to reconnect with him in another activity soon.



Picture description: Nicholas and Matthew are standing outside of a house, by the sidewalk, arm in arm, dressed in warm clothing and face masks

Connected Virtually Through a Love for Games

-by Judy Chau

Being a host for Extend-A-Family has been a big honour. As someone who adores meeting new people, learning from them, and fostering strong connections, I could not be happier to be a part of such an amazing space as a host.

During lockdown, I spent a lot of time self-reflecting. During my self-reflection, two important questions came to mind – who am I, and what do I want to accomplish? Hence, with that thought in mind, I was drawn to being a host to foster an environment of inclusion for all, regardless of age, social status, gender, race, and sexuality. This is where I came across Extend-A-Family.

In early 2021, I had the pleasure of connecting with a wonderful, bright, future star named Aiden for the first time. Although meetings have been moved on ZOOM due to the pandemic, that did not stop the instant connections that Aiden and I had through our common interests. Sharing a common love for games, our time on ZOOM has been Aiden and I traversing the creative verse of online games. Through our meetings, we have played games such as chess, checkers and a platform called Roblox. Even through a computer screen, the moments of laughter, happiness, and discussions have been deeply engraved in my heart, and our friendship has never been more connected despite it being through a screen.

It is now the beginning of November, and Aiden's family and I are planning to take our online connection even further to an in-person meeting at the Ontario Science Centre. I could not be any more excited to meet Aiden and his family, and I am blessed that they are a part of my life.

Here's to many more memories that will last a lifetime, and a connection that will never end.

Welcome

Board

Afnan Shahid came to Extend-A-Family first as a host and now graciously volunteers on the Board of Directors. Thank you for your continued commitment, Afnan.

We welcome Julie Cheah who has recently joined the board. Julie brings valuable experience to the table in inclusion and community engagement.

Staff

A big warm welcome to Paige Deeth, Antonia Heer, Ella Jenkyn, and Daniel Persaud who joined Extend-A-Family as Coordinators and have been learning their role, partnering with families and community members.

Jessica Janes

Extend-A-Family would like to congratulate Jessica, her husband, and daughter as they welcomed a baby girl in August of 2021. We wish her the best as she begins a new and exciting chapter in her life. Jessica will return to work with Extend-A-Family in January 2023.

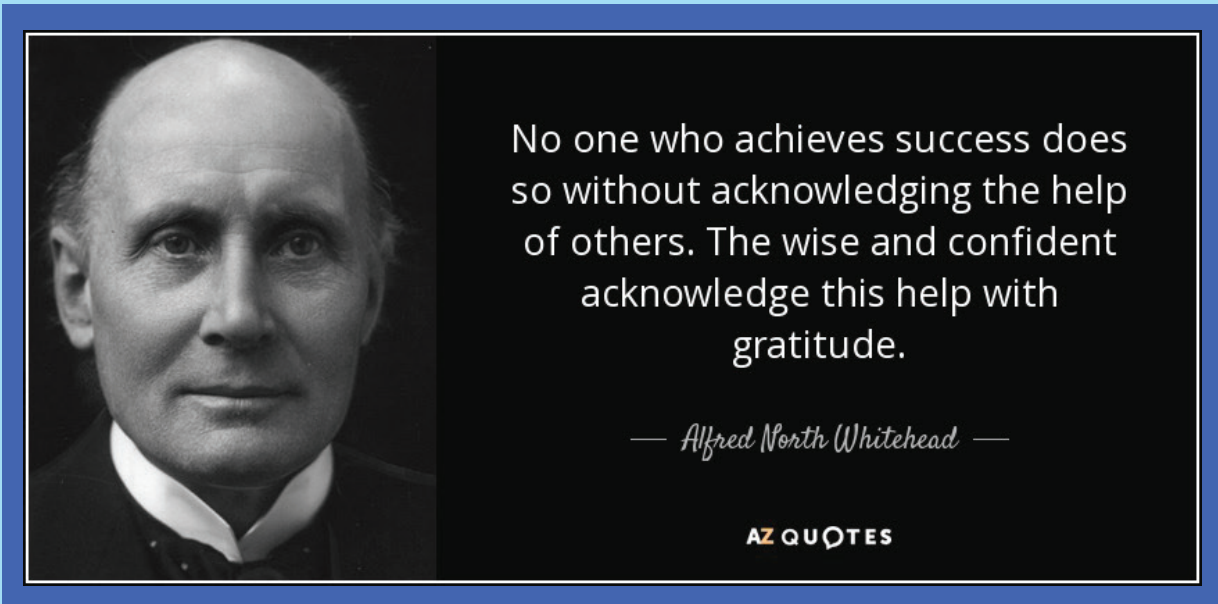
Farewell

Board

It is with regret that the Board accepted the resignation from Tricia Klunder as she moves forward with her son to a sunny future. Tricia provided the organization with a wealth of information and consultation and valued input. We wish Tricia all the best.

Staff

With time comes change, and with that, Ahmad Jabbir, Alyssa Marshall, Daniel Persaud and Rachael Wallace have left the employ of Extend-A-Family, for foraging new and exciting futures. We thank them for all the connections they helped to discover and cultivate. We all wish them wellness and success in all their accomplishments.



Acknowledgements

Thank you to the members of the Extend-A-Family Board of Directors who continue to contribute their time, talent, expertise and provide guidance to the organization.

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

Thank you to Matthew Lee, our Program Supervisor, for his genuine support, enthusiasm and guidance to Extend-A-Family.

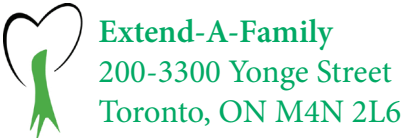
Extend-A-Family is very appreciative to all the schools and community centres that kindly provide space with an opportunity to build new skills, foster friendship, and support inclusive school communities.

Thank you to Community Partners: Annette Community Centre, Community Living Ontario, Durham Family Resources and Support, and The Southern Ontario Training Group.

Thank you for your contributions!

Registered Charity Number 11890-4846-RR0001

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



For Charitable Receipt purposes, we require the following information:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Mailing Address: _____

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: Virtual

Time and Day: 6:00pm-7:00pm, once a month on Wednesdays

Contact: Michelle Pervin 647-220-9412, mp@extendafamily.ca

DADS' GROUP

Location: Virtual

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

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

EAST EVENING PARENT GROUP

Location: Virtual

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

Contact: Antonia Heer 647-292-5144, ah@extendafamily.ca

WEST/CENTRAL EVENING PARENT GROUP

Location: Virtual

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

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

SAFE & SECURE FUTURE NETWORKS – WEST

Location: Virtual

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

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

SAFE & SECURE FUTURE NETWORKS – EAST

Location: Virtual

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

Contact: Nusrat Motala 437-335-2180, ssfnw@extendafamily.ca

ACT SUPPORT GROUP (ACCEPTANCE AND COMMITMENT THERAPY)

Location: Extend-A-Family office

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

Contact: Lee Steel 647-324-9491, lee.steel@extendafamily.ca