

Working with UNICEF in Nepal

cont. ... from page 3



It was an extremely difficult task to try to convince the ex-Maoists about any differences of opinion. I was extremely careful in all of my conversations because I did not want to be misunderstood or misquoted. My strong listening skills were important assets as they really helped to build a rapport with the ex-Maoists and come to a consensus so we could do the work that needed to be done.

During meetings in the different villages, I tried to prepare the villagers

to welcome home children who had been involved in the fighting. However, in some villages, people were not ready to receive their children. They were confused and fearful.

Through my communication with the help of a Nepalese interpreter, I was able to convince community members that it was their responsibility as citizens of Nepal to welcome their children and reintegrate them into their community.

There are many challenges for children living in Nepal. Male children are often given special preference and favours by their families while it is common for families in rural areas not to send girls to school. Instead, many girls are forced into marriages at very young ages. Domestic violence is rampant and most incidents are silenced because the affected woman and children are afraid to speak up.

Since my time in Nepal, quite a number of former child soldiers have

been identified to return to their communities in Nepal, and some have already returned to their communities. A reintegration package is being implemented through the partner organizations, which includes formal and informal education, training skills and psychosocial support. However, there is a lot of work to be done to ensure that these former soldiers get to experience a normal childhood. These children should be encouraged to go back to school and should not be viewed as a burden on the community. My experience is hard to put in writing and needs to have been experienced first-hand to be believed. Having successfully completed the assignment, I returned to my previous position with CAS of Toronto at the end of October.

UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund, is a driving force that helps build a world where the rights of every child are realized. UNICEF upholds the Convention on the Rights of the Child and works in 191 countries through country programs and national committees. For more information about UNICEF and how you can get involved, please visit www.unicef.org

Communicate

Meet the new Executive Director!

The Importance of a Powerful Vision

By David Rivard, Executive Director



“I say to you today, my friends, so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream.

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed:

“We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men [people] are created equal.”

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be

judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

I have a dream today . . . ”

(Excerpt of the “I Have a Dream” speech, Martin Luther King Jr., Washington, D.C., August 28, 1963)

On the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, Dr. King evoked the name of Abraham Lincoln in his famous “I Have a Dream” speech, which is credited with mobilizing supporters of desegregation and ultimately prompted the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The next year, Dr. King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. He clearly demonstrated how a powerful vision can move a nation.

Any individual, organization, or nation contemplating its future, must take the time and energy to develop a shared vision. This vision clearly tells one and all where they are headed and what part all will undertake in making the vision become a reality.

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The Importance of a Powerful Vision

cont. ... from cover

The child welfare system in Ontario is going through a period of unprecedented change and transformation. As a result, it is imperative for organizations like ours to spend the time and energy developing a vision for the future.

As the newly appointed Executive Director of CAS of Toronto, I pledge to work with all key stakeholders to come forth with a vision, which will reflect where this organization needs to go in the future.

In organizational life, a powerful vision can be a source of inspiration and can help our work become more meaningful. Many organizations have developed lofty vision statements that are often posted prominently in their buildings. Unfortunately, my experience has been that for most people, these statements are only words with little or no meaning, unless they can clearly see what part they play in the change process.

In essence, values are the collective principles and ideals which guide the thoughts and actions of an individual or a group of individuals. Values define the character of an organization. Values measure the rightness of a vision.

On the other hand, a mission statement specifies an organization's purpose or "reason for being." Overall, a mission is the primary objective toward which an organization's plans and programs should be aimed. A Mission is something to be accomplished, while a Vision is something to be pursued.

The Children's Aid Society of Toronto has developed a set of principles embodied in a Value and Mission statement.

Our Mission

We...

- Protect abused and neglected children and youth
- Strengthen and support families and communities
- Provide safe and nurturing care
- Prevent situations that lead to child abuse and neglect

Our Values

We...

- put the child's best interests first
- champion enduring relationships for children and youth
- advance equality, diversity and human rights
- promote partnerships and teamwork
- demonstrate professional excellence, leadership, innovation and advocacy

It is my sincere hope that we will not lose sight of the many tasks before us on a daily basis, but we will be guided by our shared values, experiences, self-reflection and organizational wisdom, to plot a powerful vision for the future.

Please Dare to Dream BIG Dreams!

Keeping it in the Family...The Children's Aid Society's Kinship Care Program Places Kids in Familiar Surroundings

By Sarah Green, SUN MEDIA

*Reprinted with Permission from the Toronto Sun

To the outside world, they are grandma and grandpa.

But to four Toronto boys, who have lived with their grandparents for most of their young lives, they are simply mom and dad.

Their own children, a son and a daughter, have grown up and it's a time when most couples would be adjusting to the echoes of an empty nest.

But the grandparents' clean, picture-filled home is bustling with the busy lives of four boys, aged 12 to 3 months.

"Your parenting never stops," said the grandmother, 51, after ushering her 5-year-old grandson to the basement to watch Treehouse on TV. "It feels like you're young again."

The arrangement began informally following the birth of their first grandson, now a 12-year-old, straight-A student who is shy and quiet, yet loves the drums.

Their daughter, now 30, lived with her parents through her pregnancy and the birth of her first child. Three years later, a second son, now a 9-year-old adventurous boy, affectionately called a "toothache" by his grandfather, 59, followed.

Their daughter tried living out on her own with the kids -- usually for no more than six months at a time -- but always returned to her parents' home, overwhelmed by the demands of motherhood.

MOTHER USING DRUGS

It was during one of these periods when the boys' mother was on her own with the kids -- shortly before the birth of her third son, now a 5-year-old whirlwind who is gifted at school and basketball -- that the Toronto Children's Aid Society (CAS) stepped in.

"They weren't going to school on a regular basis," their grandmother explained. The boys' school was also concerned about their cleanliness.

The boys' mother, who was 25 at the time, was using drugs. The grandparents struggled with their daughter's addiction, yet they opened their arms to her, just as they have to their grandchildren. She's "a pretty good kid" who respects her parents, the grandmother said. Drugs have turned her into a different person.

After a brief stay in foster care, the boys returned to live with their grandparents with the blessing of the CAS. The daughter also returned home to live with them shortly before the birth of her fourth baby, a son born in early September.

"Flush yourself, make yourself a new start" is the grandmother's hope. "We're there 100% behind you. Here's a safety net."

The grandparents expect the boys to live with them until they're adults. Although it involves daily compromising and juggling, the grandparents can't imagine life without the boys. They call their grandparents mom and dad, their mother by her first name.

The grandmother recalled returning home one Friday afternoon to find the normally busy home empty. "It feels so lonely. It felt so weird," she said with a laugh. "You really, really miss them."

The grandparents' arrangement is part of a growing shift in child welfare emphasizing kinship care, which sees relatives taking in children who have been removed from their homes.

"Historically if children had to be removed from their family because there is a safety issue, we tend to put them in foster care," said Nancy Dale, Associate Executive Director of the Toronto CAS, who has been with the agency since 1979.

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An Adoption Story

By Catherine Snoddon, Communications Coordinator

“There are so many of my own black community’s children without a home. All I need to do is open my home and my heart to a child who is wanting and waiting for a home.”

When Ewan Walker talks about his family’s experience with adoption, you start to feel that sometimes life unfolds just as it should. Back when Ewan and his wife Carole met, they were pleased to learn that they held similar views on adoption. Ewan says, “My dream has always been to have some of my own children and then to adopt.” Carole was also interested in the idea of adoption.

When the Walkers decided they were ready to adopt, they attended an information session at the Children’s Aid Society of Toronto, where they were pleasantly surprised to learn that there were no fees involved, no waiting list and, as CASs are usually involved with families before children are placed for adoption, parents are able to receive social and medical history. The Walkers realize the importance of having more people know about adopting through a Children’s Aid Society. “We need to do a better job of getting the message out to the black community that there are children who need homes.”

Right from the beginning, the adoption journey was truly a family affair. Ewan and Carole’s two children, Nathan and Lauryn, were involved in the entire decision-making process. They made it clear they wanted a little brother for their family. After completing a mandatory homestudy, which helped the Walkers become more aware of what adoption involves and how adoptive parenthood differs from biological parenthood, the Walkers were ready to meet a waiting child. When Ewan and Carole attended the Adoption Resource Exchange, an annual event where families in Ontario can learn more about children available for adoption, they agreed to split up, take a look at all of the children needing homes and then discuss their choices. Both Ewan and Carole picked their adopted son as their first choice.

They had the opportunity to meet their son first as a couple, and then the whole family met him on Christmas day. “His foster family was absolutely fabulous to open their doors to our family during such an important holiday,” says Carole. “It really meant a lot to us.”

Ewan and Carole were happy they received such excellent support from CAS’s, which helped to make the adoption an easier transition for everyone involved. Now several years later, their son is an integral part of the family and no one in the family can imagine life without him. Ewan says, “I really feel like now that we have him, our family is complete.”

There is currently a need for adoptive families from Caribbean backgrounds in Toronto. To learn more about adopting a child from Toronto CAS, please call us at **416-924-4646**.

The Inter-Agency Committee for the Recruitment of Black and Biracial Adoptive Families was started in June 2006. Staff members from Catholic Children’s Aid Society of Toronto, Peel Children’s Aid Society and our Agency have come together to find families for black and biracial children. The Committee is sharing ideas to try and recruit more families for our waiting children. A focus group was held with black and biracial adoptive parents from the three agencies and we will be implementing some of their suggestions on networking with ethno-specific communities.

Healthy Kids, Healthy Teeth...Introducing CAS of Toronto’s Dental Clinic



Proper dental care is very important to our overall health. The mouth often provides a snapshot of what is happen-

ing in the rest of the body. Everyone, but particularly children and youth, should see a dentist regularly. However, the high cost of dental care often prevents this from happening. Frequently, children and youth who must come into our care have not been able to regularly visit a dentist. This can lead to serious oral hygiene and health problems. In fact, a recent study by the Faculty of Dentistry, University of Toronto and our Agency’s Dr. Deborah Goodman, revealed that abused and neglected children have higher levels of tooth decay than the general population of 5 year olds in Toronto. The study also found that our dental services meant children in our care experienced improved oral health.

Our dental clinic is there to provide dental care to any child and youth in our care, although children do visit dentists in the community as well. Last year, over 1100 children and youth were seen by our six part-time dentists and our orthodontist. All of our dental staff are paid at a fixed salary which means they are earning substantially less than they would at an outside clinic.

The clinic is housed in a cheery, family-like environment which helps to ease children’s typical fears about visiting the dentist. Every young person who visits is given special treatment with dentists taking the time to explain exactly what they are doing in each procedure and about the importance of looking after your teeth and gums. Many young people who come to our clinic are happy that they can have their teeth looked after.

One young visitor was especially happy that she would be able to have braces as she had been feeling very self-conscious and unhappy about her teeth.

To help your child with their oral hygiene, here are some tips from our dentists:

- Children should have their teeth or gums brushed after breastfeeding as breast milk contains sugar.
- Although it might be soothing, children should not go to bed with a bottle as it can lead to tooth decay.
- Children should visit a dentist for the first time as soon as they have teeth.
- You should help your child brush their teeth up to the age of 7 depending on the child’s dexterity.
- Children and youth should be encouraged to brush for 2 minutes, twice a day.

Celebrating Judy Fister

By Beth Markle, Health Services Coordinator

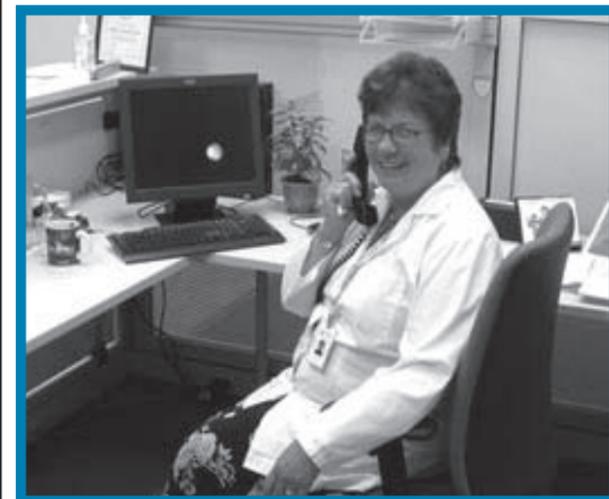
Judy Fister, Dental Services Administrator, recently retired from our Agency after 15 years of service. Judy experienced this past summer what so many of us can only dream about. She won the lottery!

Our dental clinic has been in very capable hands for the last 15 years. Judy has extensive knowledge of orthodontia and restorative dentistry, which is critical to the day-to-day operation of the clinic. Under Judy’s leadership, several dentists have been recruited that have stayed for years, and she has forged links with the dental school at U of T so we now have additional paediatric dentists helping to staff our clinic. Judy loved her work at CAS of Toronto and was always available for consultation for our children, youth, staff and foster parents.

However, Judy was more than our capable Dental Administrator. She also enjoys painting using water colours and more recently oils.

Congratulations on your retirement, Judy, and thanks for all of your hard work on behalf of our children and youth. We wish you all the best on your many new adventures that lie ahead.

You will be missed.



Keeping it in the Family...

cont. ... from page 1

"Families often have solutions to the problem. Families absolutely want to help."

The Toronto CAS launched its kinship program in June, 2003 -- the first in Ontario -- and have since placed more than 300 children with extended family members, even neighbours and teachers.

"We've always done it, but not as large scale," said Kathy Murphy, Kinship Supervisor with the Toronto CAS. "For parents, it's kind of nice to know the child is with a sister or mother -- someone you know. It's better for the kids to go with someone they know."

The emphasis on kinship care doesn't diminish the crucial role of foster parents, Dale said. But as former child and youth minister Mary Anne Chambers noted last year at a symposium on kinship care, the average child in foster care moves every 22 months.

"At the end of the day, the goal here is to provide children with a sense of place and permanency," Dale said. "Uncertainty is not something they want for their kids."

When a call comes into the CAS, it's one of the first questions asked: Are there family members who can take the children? The agency even has two part-time workers assigned to finding extended family. Murphy said relatives already share a history and cultural background, giving a sense of stability to a child during a time of upheaval.

"It's so much better for the child," Murphy said. "It's got to be the most traumatic thing in the world to be taken from your home. No matter how bad it was, it's still home. That's where they want to be."

Children aren't simply handed over to extended family. They're subject to a police check, a review of any history with the CAS and a home safety check. There's also the intangible qualities.

"The worker will get a sense of you, (whether) your heart is in the right place and you really want to love this child and make her part of the family," said a Toronto uncle, who, with his wife, is caring for his 10-year-old niece, a ward of the Toronto CAS. "It's a real commitment."

The girl's mother died suddenly a year and a half ago and while still living with her father, she lost touch with her uncle and aunt. The CAS stepped in when red flags were raised about the girl's school attendance and her hygiene.

"It was really sad," her aunt said simply. It took several months before the girl, initially placed in foster care, was able to stay with her aunt and uncle, first for weekends, then for good. The couple have two teenaged children, aged 16 and 19, yet they were required to take a nine-week parenting course. They joke about the irony, yet say the course was helpful.

The girl's father resisted the placement and the CAS also conducted an extensive probe of the aunt and uncle, even surveying the couple's children.

'NOT PARENTING SAINTS'

"At the time, it seemed frustrating and intrusive. But they're doing their job and doing it well. They don't know us. They're finding out about us," the uncle said. "We're not parenting saints, but we knew we had the basic skills to give her the life we knew she deserves."

The girl, who has special needs, has been living with her aunt and uncle for several months now and she is thriving after some initial growing pains.

She's socializing well and she's gradually understanding she doesn't need to hide food, her uncle said. The fridge will always be full and there will always be meals on the table.

It's been challenging and enriching, "all part of family life," her uncle said.

While quick to praise foster families, her aunt noted, "they're strangers for a little while." There's a deeper connection in a family home. There are pictures of the girl's mother around the house and there's a standing offer to create a scrapbook when the girl is ready. There has also been a visit to the mother's grave to lay flowers.

"You get this child and there's not thought (that) if it doesn't work out, you'll give them back," her aunt said. "It's family. You'll make it work."

Working with UNICEF in Nepal

By Nithi Sellappu, Family Service Worker, Toronto East Adolescent Team

In March 2007, Nithi Sellappu, a Family Service Worker on the Toronto East Adolescent team had a rare opportunity of working in a different aspect of child protection with the Re-integration of Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups (CAAFAG) with UNICEF, Nepal. Considering Nithi's child protection experience with the CAS of Toronto as well as with Save the Children (Norway) in war-torn Sri Lanka, the Danish Refugee Council recruited him as a Child Protection Officer and he was sent on secondment to Nepal for a six-month period. Having completed the assignment, Nithi returned to his previous position with CAS of Toronto at the end of October 2007.

After watching the live telecast from Sri Lanka on that ill-fated Christmas day about the aftermath of the tsunami disaster, I was highly moved and a strong urge developed within me that I should help the affected communities. I ended up working in Katmandu, Nepal, because of my experience working in child protection at the CAS of Toronto. I was given the assignment of working in Nepal for a six-month period to help with the reintegration process of Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups (CAAFAG). Since a peace agreement was signed between the Nepal government and the Maoists, both sides have agreed to protect the rights of women and children and not to have children who are under the age of 18 be part of

any army. The peace agreement means that children who have been part of armed forces should be rescued and given the support they need to return to their communities.

The ongoing armed conflict between the security forces and Maoists rebel groups during the past 11 years in Nepal has severely affected children of all ages. Children are used as fighters, but also act as messengers and spies. Many girls are recruited for sexual purposes including being forced into marriages. Children have been tortured because of their role with the Maoists and named as traitors in their communities, which makes it next to impossible for them to return safely to their homes.

Approximately 1,500 children have been killed or injured and many children have been separated from their families because their parents have been killed or their family has been displaced. Needless to say, a great number of children are being deprived of having any sort of safe environment or access to human rights.

During my assignment, I was deployed in the central region of the country where I was first given the responsibility to conduct district assessments in order to identify the magnitude of the issues within the districts and to select a local community organization as an implementing partner to work with UNICEF in the reunification and reintegration process.

My experience in this official assignment has been an interesting and an unforgettable one. Meeting with the Maoist ex-rebel local leaders was a great challenge.

cont. ... back cover



Nithi Sellappu, accepts thanks for his work with UNICEF.

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Clients' Rights to Housing are Being Violated

The housing rights of Toronto CAS's clients are being violated. This was the subject of a thorough presentation to the United Nations housing envoy, Miloon Kothari, last fall. CAS of Toronto community worker, Ann Fitzpatrick, partnered with Homes For Kids Board Vice-President, Elizabeth Anacleto, to highlight the difficult situation faced by our youth between 18 and 21 who are leaving care, children, and families.

For decades, the CAS of Toronto has recognized the important preventative role that safe, adequate, affordable housing plays in supporting the healthy development and well-being of families and children. Ann Fitzpatrick said, "We know that lack of affordable housing, overcrowded conditions, homelessness, insecurity of tenure/evictions and unsafe housing conditions have a detrimental impact on children, youth and their parents."

Indeed, housing is a factor for one of every five children admitted to CAS of Toronto's care. Close to one in 10 children have their return home from care delayed due to housing problems. The Society works with families that are at high risk for poverty and vulnerability to high market rents in Toronto. There is a severe shortage of affordable social housing. These three factors mean that families are more likely to face insecure housing tenure, homelessness, frequent moves, or unsafe or unhealthy housing conditions.

A growing number of youth wards who are leaving care are experiencing a housing crisis as they cannot afford market rents. With provincial funding,

the CAS of Toronto provided approximately \$730 a month to eligible youth aged 16 to 21, a rate well below the poverty level.

So what are the solutions? CAS of Toronto recommends that the federal government:

1. Create new affordable housing

Long-term annual investment in new, truly affordable housing with annual targets is needed to reduce and eventually eliminate social housing waiting lists. Priority should be given to particular groups at risk of homelessness: low-income families, abused women, youth leaving care and other groups vulnerable to homelessness. (Truly affordable rent should be equal to less than 30% of one's annual income.)

A minimum of 20,000 units per year should be created across Canada annually over the next 20 years. Housing funding should include capital grants and rent supplements, and should be sufficient to create healthy communities with community space, green space/parks and sufficient staff to support tenant and community development.

2. Create a long-term, deep rent supplement program that is flexible but ensures affordable rents.

Develop long-term rent supplements for the private rental market and co-op non-profit housing. These rent supplements should be sufficient to ensure rents are not more than 30% of household incomes. Organizations developing housing should be able to combine capital housing grants with rent supplements to ensure affordability of new projects. Current housing allowance programs do not provide adequate support and require tenants to change addresses after a five year time limit.

3. Commit nationally to preserving existing rental housing in the private sector and social housing supply.

Existing rental housing and social housing across Canada and in Toronto is aging and deteriorating in condition, leaving many households living in unsafe and unhealthy conditions and putting affordable housing at risk. Local municipalities cannot afford to maintain and sustain this housing without federal and provincial capital repair funds. In Ontario alone, there is a \$300 million backlog in repairs. Private landlords may also need resources to rehabilitate older, private rental buildings to ensure that rents can stay affordable and housing preserved.

CAS of Toronto's recommendations are in keeping with those of the UN envoy. In addressing the media, Mr. Kothari said that an ambitious national housing program and a strategy to combat poverty are urgently needed, if Canadians wish to avoid the situation facing the United States. He had harsh words for politicians, saying the crisis had been caused by governments' deep funding cuts in the mid-1990s to housing programs and social assistance that were of help to Canadians. "You have had a history of very progressive housing policies which were summarily abandoned in the mid-90s, and the consequences of that are here tragically for all of us to see," he said. "I hope there is a radical shift in government policy."

Request a Speaker

Confused about the role of the CAS of Toronto in our community? Not sure when to call the CAS of Toronto? Need some help learning positive ways to discipline children?

Get the answers to these and many more questions by booking someone from our Speakers Bureau to visit your organization.

The CAS of Toronto Speakers Bureau is a group of 100 people, made up of our staff. We routinely visit organizations to explain our role within the community and your responsibility in helping us protect kids from abuse and neglect.

We talk about:

- 1 Physical, sexual, emotional abuse and neglect
- 2 Positive discipline
- 3 What to expect when you call
- 4 Changes to our work
- 5 Child protection investigations
- 6 Kids in care
- 7 Rights of kids and parents
- 8 Duty to report suspected abuse

We make hour-long presentations to:

- Teachers
- Students
- Daycare workers
- Police
- Camp counsellors
- Community centres
- Hospitals and many others!

We are happy to tailor our presentation to your group's specific needs.

Call 416-924-4640 ext. 1-2103 to book your presentation today.



Recently members of the Men's Group at the Pape Adolescent Resource Centre (PARC) had the opportunity to participate in hours of fun and excitement at paintball. Thanks to Karen Champagne and the staff at Next Paintball, members enjoyed hours of fun combat and also enjoyed a pizza dinner.

PARC's Young Men's Group was formed in the summer of 2004 to help young men with the issues of healthy sexuality, gang violence, being responsible young fathers, employment, housing, immigration and anger management. The Pape Adolescent Resource Centre (PARC) is an independence program serving youth in care and former youth in care of Toronto's CASs.

Introducing the Child Welfare Institute... Supporting the Society in Training Research, Program Evaluation and Consultation

By Debbie Schatia, Director, Child Welfare Institute



Because children depend on all of us

For many years our Society has contemplated how we can work together with our community service partners, colleges and universities and other CAS's to share our knowledge and skills across the child welfare field. We are

very pleased to announce that we now have a **Child Welfare Institute** which will offer training, research, program evaluation and consultation to these groups as well as providing this service to our CAS of Toronto staff.

The inspiration for the Institute came from our former Executive Directors, Bruce Rivers and Carolyn Buck, our senior executive, our Board and our Children's Aid Foundation, who together understood that there was a compelling need for our Society, and for our field, to establish stronger links between evaluation, research and training. The Institute has launched as an 18-month pilot project and would not have been possible without the financial support of the Children's Aid Foundation.

The Institute offers a variety of training opportunities for child welfare practitioners and students. We offer placements for BSW, MSW and PhD level students who are interested in developing research and program evaluation skills. Our training supports our Society and our field in continuing to improve the services and outcomes for the children and families we serve. Some of our upcoming training includes, "Program Evaluation in Not-for-Profit Agencies: From Start to Finish", "Out and Proud, Working with LGBT Youth" and a symposium on "Ethics in Child Welfare."

Our Training Institute will also offer consultations in the areas of research and program evaluation. We will work with outside community agencies to help them design, develop and write grant proposals and will also collaborate with universities and colleges on current and future research priorities. By expanding the research and evaluation capacity for our Agency we can continue to link evidence based research to the child welfare practice which will assist our field in achieving better outcomes for our children and youth.

For more information about the Institute or to learn more about upcoming training, please call 416-924-4640 ext. 2780.

Who's Who at the Institute

Debbie Schatia is the Director of the Child Welfare Institute and the Coordinator of the Peer Support Team. She has spent her career working in the field of child welfare. She has worked at CAS of Toronto for the last 15 years, in a variety of capacities including: Family Services Worker (front-line child protection worker), Volunteer Coordinator, Protection Supervisor, Manager of Training and Development and Assistant Director of the Toronto Branch. She has

experience in leading groups for victims and offenders of sexual abuse and was a Clinical Investigator for the Office of the Children's Lawyer. She attended the Certificate Program in Adult Training and Development at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) and has her Master's Degree in Social Work from the University of Toronto.

Dr. Deborah Goodman is the Manager of Research and Program Evaluation. She has worked, taught and conducted research in the Ontario child and family system as well as the child welfare system for over twenty-five years. She is one of the authors of the Eligibility Tool, mandated for use across all Ontario child welfare agencies. She is also an Assistant Professor at the University of Toronto, Faculty of Social Work, where she teaches program evaluation to graduate and continuing education programs.

Heidi Kiang is the Manager of Training and Development. She has over 17 years of experience in the social work field and has had clinical experience working with young offenders, children and families dealing with emotional, behavioural, and mental health issues. In her current position, Heidi is responsible for planning, organizing, delivering, implementing and evaluating a multi-faceted training and development program for the Society. She also acts as the Society's Educational Coordinator, identifying and developing field instructors in the agency to provide educational and learning opportunities for students at the universities and colleges.

Anne Kwok is the Senior Administrative Assistant at the Child Welfare Institute. She started with the Agency as an Administrative Assistant on our Training Team in 2002 and then moved to our Intake department, teaming up with the Domestic Violence Team in April of 2004. She has a BSc in Actuarial Science and Statistics and has been involved with Scouting since she was 14.

Myvonny Jelavic is the Training Assistant and started with our Agency in November of 2007. She has a Hon. BA from McMaster University and before coming to our Agency she worked in Quality Control and Assurance and Operations Management positions over the past 13 years in both small and large automotive and manufacturing firms. She has experience with developing and delivering training programs and personnel development programs and has acted as a facilitator for industry specific statistical, quality assurance/quality control, health and safety and operations workshops.

Celebrating Black History Month at CAS of Toronto

By Ken Sosa, Community Worker, Community Development and Prevention Program

Why Black History Month, sometimes referred to as African Heritage Month, and what does it have to do with the Children's Aid Society of Toronto?

The month of February provides an opportunity to showcase and celebrate the positive and significant aspects of Black History and Culture. It gives us a chance to attempt to dispel the negative myths and stereotypes related to the "Black" race. Also, it is a time to raise some ugly realities of the history of our development, namely bondage and slavery.

A valid criticism of Black History Month, apart from the observation that it happens in the shortest and coldest month of the year in North America, is as follows: It allows some elements of our society to acknowledge the presence of blacks, their history and culture for 28 or 29 days, then totally forget about them for the remainder of the year.

At the Children's Aid Society of Toronto, the month has been acknowledged and celebrated ever since it was proclaimed as Black History Month by the City of Toronto in 1979 and later by the Canadian Parliament. However, the Black Education Awareness Committee (BEAC) of the CAS of Toronto has attempted, over the years, to acknowledge "Black" history and culture for 365 days per year. This is very important as our Agency serves a significant number of children, youth and families of African heritage.

In 2008, there will be celebrations in departments and branches throughout the Agency. As well, thanks to the support of the Children's Aid Foundation, a mentoring project for youth of African descent is being started. The BEAC also has plans for a second "Soul Journey", a trip to Halifax where some of our children and youth can learn more about their past.

To learn more about Black History in Canada, visit http://www.blackhistorysociety.ca/BH_Month.htm.

Child and Youth Services Holiday Party

By Mary Hutchings, Assistant Branch Director, Child and Youth Services



The youth holiday dinner was another great success. Young people aged

16 to 21, living independently or on Extended Care Maintenance, were invited to celebrate in a brightly decorated room at the Estonian House. Ninety youth, their guests, twenty children and fifty staff were treated to a turkey dinner with all the trimmings, donated for the third year in a row by Mildred Pierce restaurant.

The holiday dinner is truly a CAS of Toronto family affair. Our MC, as always, Sharron Richards, is the Manger of the Community Development and Prevention Program. Year after year, one of our volunteers, Marina Di Pancrazio, bakes over 250 specially decorated cupcakes for dessert. Nancy McAlpine, Volunteer Coordinator, and her incredible volunteers helped with wrapping, set-up and clean-up. Every year, Child and Youth Services staff donate the extras to make the party really special. Ferdinand Herrera from Adoption Services continues as our official photographer. This year our colleagues from Legal Services decided that, instead of giving each other gifts at their holiday get-together, they would make a financial contribution to the party.

The youth in attendance truly appreciated the evening. For many, this would be the only Christmas that they would have.



Marina Di Pancrazio, our volunteer "Cupcake Lady".

The Children's Aid FoundationCorner

Teddy Sings the Blues at the 2007 Teddy Bear Affair

On Saturday November 17, Teddy sang the blues at the 21st annual Children's Aid Foundation Teddy Bear Affair. The Metro Toronto Convention Centre was transformed into "Teddy's", a blues-themed supper club and lounge. This year \$1.7 million was raised in support of Canada's abused and neglected children.

To begin the evening, guests were transported into a bustling streetscape reminiscent of Memphis' Beale Street. Buskers, palm readers and caricaturists entertained guests "street side" upon their arrival. Then doormen guided guests through an elaborate entrance into Teddy's, the exclusive blues club for the evening.

Once again this year, the Teddy Bear Affair was co-hosted by Ken Shaw of CTV Toronto News, and Dina Pugliese of BT-Breakfast Television.

Guests were entertained by some of Canada's brightest stars. Dinner kicked off with a performance by Canadian Idol finalist Toya Alexis and Canadian Idol house-band Kollage. Fifteen-year-old blues artist Alex Tintinalli and Juno award nominee vocalist Sophie Milman added their extraordinary talents to the evening and sang the blues beautifully. Finally, Teddy's came alive as legendary rocker Tom Cochrane and house-band The Carpet Frogs performed favorites such as "Life is a Highway" and "Big League".

As always, the silent and live auctions were a highlight of the evening. Many guests were heard saying "shaken not stirred" at the martini bar, situated inside the Silent Auction area, that was decorated to look like a bluesy cocktail bar. There were more than 270 items for auction ranging from jewellery and fashion items to technology and one-of-a-kind experiences. The live auction, always a crowd favourite, offered up some amazing trips including packages to China, New Zealand, Antarctica and Ireland. A deluxe poker package, complete with the opportunity to play with MoneyMaker Millionaire winner Quillan Nagel, was also in high demand. Larger items included a Chrysler Town & Country luxury minivan and a condo from Cresford Developments.



From left to right: Sharron Richards, Manager, Community Development and Prevention Program, and Mary Hutchings, Assistant Branch Director, Child and Youth Services.

The evening would not have been possible without the dedication and support of an amazing steering committee, 200 tireless volunteers, a talented production team and all of the generous sponsors. The Children's Aid Foundation would like to thank everyone involved for their contributions to the 2007 Teddy Bear Affair!

An annual and award-winning event, the Teddy Bear Affair has raised \$17 million to date for some of the most disadvantaged children in our communities. One hundred per cent of the proceeds go to education programs, enrichment opportunities and the prevention of child abuse and neglect. For information on the 2008 Teddy Bear Affair, please contact Paula Arscott at **416-923-0924 ext. 236** or by e-mail at parscott@cafdn.org.

Follow-up of 2006 Audit of CAS of Toronto

CAS of Toronto has achieved considerable progress on the procedures and expectations set out by the Auditor General in his 2006 recommendations.

As the Auditor has noted, it is unusual for an organization to be audited again within such a short time frame. We are in agreement that it takes considerable time to fully implement new policies and procedures, and therefore we are pleased that our progress is consistent with the AG's expectations.

As a child welfare agency, our goal is to help to create stable, loving family homes for children, free from abuse and neglect. When that is not possible, we find that home within the child's extended family or the children's aid community. We help in the most sensitive of situations when children and families are at their most vulnerable. The families and children we serve are usually affected by one or a combination of poverty, mental illness, homelessness or inadequate housing; they may also be unable to reach out for help. Our professionally trained staff use clinical judgment, expertise and tools based on extensive research and more than 100 years of experience.

One of our challenges is that this clinical work and the needs of children and families might not always allow us to strictly adhere to policy and procedural expectations of the Auditor General. Short timelines and urgency in life threatening situations dictate a different priority than fully adhering to spending policies; a child's emotional stability, well-being and healthy development aren't always consistent with inflexible adherence to policies or the timely completion of front line staff's heavy administrative workload.

We take both our fiscal and service responsibilities very seriously. On the occasions where we must put the child and family's interests ahead of fiscal considerations, we know that the resources spent outside these strict policies today may mean considerable savings of provincial dollars 10 to 15 years later.

While implementing the AGs recommendations, CAS of Toronto has also been thrust into significant province wide changes that have been developed over a six year period. These include a more customized approach to our intake services, alternatives to court such as family group conferencing and mediation, as well as formal opportunities for family involvement such as kinship care.

We are confident that as we move forward, we will continue to demonstrate that we are providing the best service to the children and families who need us and spending taxpayer dollars very prudently.

CAS Retirement Corner

Celebrating Joyce James



Joyce James recently retired after working with the Agency for the past 45 and a half years. Joyce was originally hired as a Dictaphone Typist at our Central Branch, but went on to have many different jobs throughout our Agency. In 1976, Joyce became the Secretary to the Director of Central Services, later known as Internal Resources, before moving into the Executive Wing as the Assistant to the Director of Services and working in concert with the Executive Director's Secretary. In 1995 Joyce became the Executive Assistant for both the Executive Director and the Associate Executive Director, a position she held until her retirement. She was also a member

of the Executive Team and the Strategic Leadership Team.

Joyce's incredible work ethic and commitment to the Agency is strongly demonstrated by her holding the Executive Assistant position that was actually two different jobs before Joyce took on the role and following her retirement, has now returned to two different roles. Joyce's outstanding organizational abilities have been noted by everyone who has ever been her supervisor. Joyce's attention to detail has the ability to make those she works with always look their best.

As well as working at our Agency, Joyce is also an active Agency volunteer and has been since 1975. In that time she has devoted countless hours to the Agency's Central Toy Room and the Holiday Donations Program, ensuring that our children and youth are remembered during the holiday season and throughout the year. Apart from this, Joyce is an avid player of sports, playing on the Agency's baseball team for many years, an activity she plans to continue.

Joyce James is truly one in a million and she will definitely be missed. Congratulations and thank you, Joyce, from everyone in the Agency for 45 and a half years of dedicated service.



From left to right: Kimberley Hnatko, Foster Care Intake/Recruitment, Joyce James and Kerri Conte, Child Welfare Writer.

Gail and Richard Sweet Retired This Year After 35 Years of Fostering

By Wilma Cannon, Foster Care Resource Worker



From left to right: Gail Sweet, Wilma Cannon, Foster Care Resource Worker, Don Wilkins, Foster Care Supervisor and Richard Sweet.

It was a call for help that began their career as foster parents with our Agency over 35 years ago. Doug Barr, former Executive Director, called because a young lady in their community was in need of a home. Gail and Richard Sweet graciously opened their home to her, and this young lady continues to be part of the Sweet family along with many other former foster children.

Over their 35 years of fostering, the Sweets have shown great care and commitment to the children in their home. All children who stay with them are shown love and compassion. Gail, Richard and their family have demonstrated time and time again their commitment and dedication to children.

On behalf of everyone at the Agency, we wish the Sweet family all the best and thank them so very much for all the hard work they have provided to us. They have made a difference in the lives of many children and their families.

In Memorium



Barry Brace



Recently Barry Brace, an integral member of both the CAS of Toronto and the Children's Aid Foundation, passed away.

Barry served on our Board for six years and was also our

Board President from 1989 to 1990. As well as serving on our Board, Barry was also on the Foundation's board for six years; two of those years as chairman. Barry was the Foundation's liaison to our Real Estate Committee and played a major role in the development of our new central office.

In addition to his work with the Foundation and CAS of Toronto, Barry was a partner at Deloitte Touche and an active community volunteer.

Barry will be missed. Our condolences go out to his wife Dorothy, daughter Anna and his beloved grandchildren.

Bob Collins

By Theresa Collins, Administrative Assistant, Child and Youth Services

Recently, Bob Collins passed away. Bob started working at the CAS of Toronto in 1992 in our Maintenance Department at 15 Huntley Street. After a few years, Bob transferred over to 33 Charles Street East. He worked there until he retired on February 29, 2000, after eight years of service.

Whenever you asked Bob if he would fix something for you, he would reply, "No problem, I'll get right to it." Bob always had a joke and a smile for you and he enjoyed working at the Agency.

When Bob retired from the Agency, he became a Volunteer Driver for us. When he was not able to drive for the Children's Transportation Centre (CTC), he accompanied his wife, Susan Collins, who is also a volunteer driver for the CTC.

Bob is survived by Susan, his wife of 43 years, his children Theresa, Lorie, Letitia and Jeff, and grandchildren Tara, Arik and Zachary.