

# JOURNAL

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## SPECIAL EDITION: OACAS 2004 CONFERENCE AND AWARDS

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*Xavier Sagar, Grandson of George Leck, OACAS Director of Information Services, and Louise Leck, Director of Education Services at OACAS.*

**On the cover:** *When the time came, Caelan Lipford, the face of the OACAS Conference, was old enough to help at registration!*

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# Message from the Executive Director

*By Jeanette Lewis*



This edition of the *Journal* reports on the 2004 OACAS Conference – *the* foremost event in Ontario for addressing and discussing child welfare issues.

The Conference ran from Sunday May 30 to Wednesday June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2004. During these four days Children’s Aid Society staff, and others working in child welfare and related fields, gathered both information and inspiration from speakers with expertise in many areas. The tagline “*in the best interests of the child*” was attached to the conference as a theme that appropriately reflects the work of Children’s Aid Societies, and the legislation that governs them.

Throughout the eighteen months of planning we aimed to create an event that would inspire, rejuvenate and motivate child welfare practitioners, Board members, foster parents and volunteers – something there hasn’t been much time for in the last five years. We wanted to provide new tools and skills and, perhaps most importantly, renewed hope for the future.

The Honourable Dr. Marie Bountrogianni, Ontario’s Minister of Children and Youth Services, opened the Conference, further demonstrating her commitment to improving the child welfare system. We look forward to working with the Ministry on the implementation of the recommendations in the *Child Welfare Evaluation Report* – a major step towards positive change.

A concurrent youth conference was offered for young people in the care of Children’s Aid Societies with sessions that targeted their interests and issues. The youth were also welcome to attend any adult session that appealed to them.

The keynote speakers were talented and invigorating but all the presenters had important knowledge and experience to share. With over 40 sessions to choose from, there was truly something for everyone.

Inspiration, however, did not only come from the conference speakers. The Clark Bursary and OACAS Achievement Awards dinner was held on Monday evening. It was, as always, a very special and touching event that underscores the purpose of child welfare work – to improve the lives of children.

This *Journal* will focus on some of the highlights – and there were many – from those memorable days in May and June.

## Worth Remembering: Recapping the 2004 Conference

by *Teresa Pitman*

*Teresa Pitman has worked as a Communications Coordinator with Halton CAS and Peel CAS, and now works as a freelance writer and communications consultant.*

### *The Conference Committee*

Jim Carey  
Gail Vandermeulen  
Jeanette Lewis  
Teresa Pitman  
Corrane Lipford  
Brenda Nichol  
Cathy Dyer  
Suzanne Piers  
Louise Leck  
George Leck  
Genevieve Edmonds  
Marv Bernstein  
Jayne Patterson  
Debbie Schatia  
Fernando Saldanha

What can a province-wide conference do for Children's Aid Societies? What is the value in bringing people together every two years to hear about current research, innovative programs, the ideas of experts in child welfare and related fields? At OACAS, we believe the value of these conferences is potentially very significant – but achieving that value requires considerable planning and preparation.

Early in the planning process for the OACAS 2004 Conference, the steering committee gathered to discuss their vision for this event. The goals that came out of those early meetings, under the direction of Conference Coordinator Gail Vandermeulen, eventually set the tone and theme for four very special days at the end of May and beginning of June, 2004.

#### What did we hope to achieve?

- We wanted a conference that would focus on child welfare in Ontario. With all the changes and challenges the field has faced in the past few years, we felt there was a need for an opportunity to look at where we are and where we want to go.
- We wanted to bring in speakers who could truly motivate and inspire people, and we wanted as many people as possible to hear them.
- We wanted agencies that had created innovative and successful programs to be able to share them with others, and we wanted to bring in researchers to share their most recent studies.
- We wanted to provide opportunities for people to meet and talk informally with people from other agencies around the province.
- We wanted to make it easy for people to register, and easy for people to share the information they gained at the conference with their co-workers. We felt that technology could help us with this.
- We wanted to fully integrate the youth into the conference and support them in attending regular conference sessions that interested them, as well as providing separate youth-only sessions.
- We wanted to find a way to offer some in-depth sessions for groups who find the regular conference sessions don't always meet their needs.

After nearly eighteen months of planning, the final result was everything we had hoped for!

With the help of Kristine Kofoed, OACAS website designer, we were able to add full conference information to the OACAS website. This saved on the costs of printing a multi-page registration booklet, and meant that people could access detailed biographies (sometimes with links to their websites) and session descriptions on-line. The on-line registration program went smoothly for most people and OACAS offered registration by fax or phone for those people who found their computer systems did not cooperate. The final total was 810 adults and 80 youth registered, some from as far away as California.

We also used technology to enhance information-sharing. All presenters were asked to provide electronic copies of their presentations and handouts. These were put onto CDs that each participant was given at registration. This means that everyone who attended had information from all the sessions – no more begging co-workers to pick up an extra set of handouts. (Some extra CDs are still available – contact Carrie Reid at OACAS if you are interested.)

One disappointment for the organizers was that while sessions in French were planned and scheduled into each time slot, low registration for these sessions meant that they had to be cancelled.

## *Sunday May 30*

Two Pre-conference Sessions were offered on Sunday, May 30<sup>th</sup>; one on Treatment Foster Care and one on Advanced Training Skills. The Treatment Foster Care session was organized by Kevin Sullivan of Tri-Agency Treatment Foster Care Program and his team; the Advanced Training Skills session was put together by Bev Reilly, OACAS Supervisor of Training Delivery. Both were well attended; the Treatment Foster Care workshop, in fact, had to turn away some people who wanted to register because there was not enough space. Both also received rave reviews in the evaluations.

The youth began arriving on Sunday for the parallel youth conference and were involved in a day-long conference preparation session with Cathy Dyer, Project Leader of Youth in Care Connections Across Ontario, and Christina O'Brien, Youth Project Assistant. Some of the Toronto-area youth had, in fact, been preparing for several weeks prior to the conference, working with Cathy and the VOICE theatre group to plan a unique theatre production for the evening of Tuesday June 1. (*See the following report on the Youth section of the Conference*)

## *Monday May 31*

On Monday, following a traditional Aboriginal opening ceremony celebrated by Tom White from Aboriginal Child and Family Services in Kenora, the general conference commenced with an address by the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Dr. Marie Bountrogianni described her vision of better services for children and



*Minister of Children and Youth Services, Dr. Marie Bountrogianni, speaking at the OACAS Conference.*

families in Ontario. She commended CASs for the good work they do to protect the children of Ontario and committed to work to create a better and brighter future for them.

Her presentation was followed by a series of outstanding speakers who brought the child welfare community together and offered new perspectives on our work.

## Keynote Speakers

Stephen Lewis



Former Deputy Director of UNICEF and currently the United Nations Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa, Stephen Lewis was the first keynote speaker of the conference with *The Rights of the Child*. Mr. Lewis' eloquence inspired pride in our work and hope for the future. He reminded us that we are the best advocates for vulnerable children because of our unique relationship to government and the good reputation we enjoy.

He had us laughing at his wit and humour and crying for the pain and suffering of children all over the world, but especially in Africa.

He talked about the toll that witnessing the unspeakable poverty and illness of young children takes and said it was meeting rooms full of people who cared about children that sustained him.

We were left shaken but at the same time, full of hope that we could change the lives of children.

Dr. Danie Beaulieu



Danie Beaulieu's presentation *Talk to Your Client's Eyes, Not Just Their Ears* provided some multi-sensory techniques for maximizing your impact on clients. Danie is the founder and President of *Académie Impact* and a much

sought-after communicator on psychology topics. She demonstrated, with enormous amounts of humour, the effectiveness of very simple techniques applied with knowledge and skill.

A wonderfully refreshing and engaging speaker, she taught us a whole new perspective on how to reach and communicate with even the most difficult children.

Dr. Margaret Wheatley



In her presentation on *Reclaiming Time*, Margaret Wheatley offered simple (though not easy) steps to regain time for what is important in our lives and to improve our effectiveness. Dr. Wheatley is President of the *Berkana Institute* and an international

consultant on systems organization and social policy. She reminded us of the critical importance of talking to each other. This is as important for relationships within organizations as it is for relationships between people.

Dr. Wheatley encouraged her audience, as the leaders of the child welfare system, to provide opportunities for staff within our organizations to talk and listen to one another.

On Monday evening the Annual Awards dinner took place. Always a memorable event, this year we celebrated the Clark family's fifteen years of funding the Clark Bursary Awards (*detailed later in this edition of the Journal*).

## Tuesday June 1

On Tuesday morning, Dr. Wheatley spoke about *Staying Together*. Her quiet eloquence left us hopeful that we could improve the culture of our organizations and the quality of our service delivery by using her simple techniques for enhancing communication.

Her presentation was followed by the first block of break-out sessions, which included topics ranging from Working with Gay, Lesbian, Bi-sexual and Transgendered Youth to Testifying on Behalf of Children. After this, all participants gathered for lunch and to hear Professor Alan

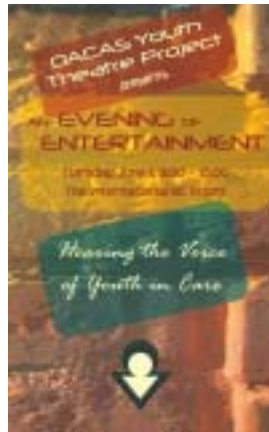


*Dr. Alan Leschied.*

While these sessions were taking place, Margaret Wheatley met with the youth for most of the day. She discussed with them issues of importance to them and helped them develop recommendations to present to the adults at the conference.

Leschied of the University of Western Ontario talk about the importance of research in child welfare.

Another group of break-out sessions followed.



Tuesday evening was another chance to learn from the youth at the conference as they performed a play that had been created by young people attending the conference. The actors presented scenes illuminating their lives as they moved from difficult situations at home to foster care or group care and on to independent living. The London-Middlesex

CAS Youth Choir also performed several beautiful and moving songs, and the VOICE theatre group showed some videos addressing issues of abuse and corporal punishment. The evening began and ended with Muhtadi and the World Drummers, who stayed late into the evening to teach the youth some drumming techniques and patterns.

## Wednesday June 2

The first session on Wednesday morning with Dr. Jim Cairns and Mary McConville included the release of the much-anticipated *Pediatric Death Review Report*.

This was followed by another group of break-out sessions. Margaret Wheatley and the youth, in a powerful series of skits, presented their recommendations to all the participants as the concluding event of the conference.

## Evaluations

Evaluation forms were prepared for all the sessions and distributed to participants. Using the on-line registration system, we were able to input them and have the results soon after. We really appreciate the feedback that people took the time to provide. The responses were almost unanimously positive. Seven questions asked for a rating between one and five: one is poor, two is below average, three is average, four is above average and five is excellent. An average was then calculated for all seven questions. Eighty-three percent of the evaluations had an average rank between four and five. The others rated between three and four.

Of course, when you bring together so many people who are committed to improving the lives of children in the province of Ontario, it's difficult not to have a positive outcome.

## *Our Conference Sponsors:*

- **Ministry of Children & Youth Services**
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## *Conference Exhibitors:*

*Parentbooks • IBM • Barnes Kinnear Associates • Project DARE • Bartimaeus • Microdea Electronic Document Management Solutions • Discovery Toys • Loyalist College Human Services Management Program • Moms on a Mission • Delrix International • Ombudsman Ontario • OACAS.*

## BOOK REVIEW

### **Residential Treatment of Emotionally Disturbed Children and Adolescents: An Integrative Approach** *By Don Pazaratz, Ed. D.*

Discusses evolution and growth of residential treatment in Ontario and examines the essential components of treatment – overarching rationale, methods of implementation and monitoring. Paperback, \$40.00 (includes shipping). Contact **Haydon Youth Services**, (905) 571-0731 or e-mail [haydon@bellnet.ca](mailto:haydon@bellnet.ca)

In our society, we are proud of the fact that our youth are our most valuable asset. Yet more than 60,000 troubled young people must live away from their families and reside in a residential care setting. These secure safe havens provide the young person with an opportunity to heal and resolve the turbulence that they have experienced.

In North America there are many thousands of residential workers working with these children and adolescents who provide the care and support for these youth who live away from their families.

There has been a great deal written about the role of the case worker, but writing of the significance of the direct care residential worker has been less extensive. I am pleased that Dr. Don Pazaratz has undertaken this mission. Don has a depth of understanding and an extensive scope of experience in the residential treatment environment. He has written a book that is based upon sound thinking, research and practice and deals with the social reality of both the young person in care and that of the residential care workers.

This book is of value to all residential care workers, human service workers, supervisors, educators and all who are interested in

providing care for young people in our residential settings. It provides an eclectic approach to residential care. It integrates theory with direct practice and creates a model for both the student and experienced youth worker to follow. Don provides the reader with an overview of the field of residential care and addresses important issues of the historical background and development, theoretical perspectives, problems and needs of youth in care, role for the Child and Youth Care Worker and management. This book provides an integrative approach designed to teach residential workers the skills that they need to manage inappropriate behaviours. It provides the front-line-worker with ideas and a direction for hands-on work.

In bringing together this material, Don offers an acknowledgement of the significance of the work of the residential care worker and most important to the young person in care, it is a reassurance of our continued responsibility to ensure that they are provided with the care that they deserve.

**Reviewed by Sheldon Reinsilber, Ed.D.**  
Adjunct Professor, School of Child and Youth Care  
Ryerson University, Toronto, Ontario

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# BEHAVIOUR PROBLEMS? EXPLOSIVE OUTBURSTS? WORKABLE STRATEGIES!

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*Author of the internationally acclaimed book,*

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Dr. Ross Greene will describe a **new, effective, practical, and research-based** approach that has proven to **decrease adversarial teacher-student & parent-child interactions, reduce hostility at school & home, and improve the child’s and adolescent’s capacities for frustration tolerance, flexibility, problem-solving, self-regulation and communication.**

Dr. Greene is one of the most highly sought after instructors and consultants on this topic. His other credentials include:

- **Harvard Medical School:** Department of Psychiatry; Associate Professor of Psychology.
- **Massachusetts General Hospital:** Department of Psychiatry.
- Leading authority on The Treatment of Inflexible, Explosive Behaviors, Long-Term Outcomes of Socially Impaired Children with ADHD and The Impact of Teacher Characteristics on School Outcomes for Students with ADHD.
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## The 2004 Youth Program is a Hit!

By Cathy Dyer

**“The best behaved group of young people we’ve ever seen.”** Those were the words the hotel manager uttered when he was describing the youth delegates at OACAS’ 2004 conference, *in the best interests of the child*. This group of young people came together and formed such a tight bond with one another that they were not interested in causing trouble, but in taking part in the many opportunities that awaited them at the conference. Not only were the young people focused but they truly added the heart to this provincial event.

For hundreds of professionals, OACAS conferences are opportunities to learn from experts and to share with colleagues what works and what doesn’t as protectors and sometimes parents of Ontario’s children. A youth presence at a conference like this reminds everyone of what their work is all about – children and youth. The

youth delegates added energy, creative input and thoughtful feedback throughout the entire event making it one of the best conferences ever.

Five reasons for such a successful youth program are:

- 1) Adult supporters who are willing to ensure that the youth are seen as integral and not token to the success of the event.
- 2) Youth who help to plan, organize and staff the conference who are competent leaders that can be relied on by the adults and related to by the youth.
- 3) A diversity of programming that invites youth to participate in adult-targeted workshops, youth-targeted workshops, and creative explorations like the OACAS/VOICE Theatre Project which allowed delegates to create and perform their own theatre skit about issues they are facing.
- 4) Team-building events and activities such as youth-only sessions, youth dances, dinners and a youth drop-in room, which were all built into the youth program.
- 5) And, most importantly, a great bunch of young people as delegates!

## Congratulations

to



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OF HAMILTON**

**on 50 years of dedicated service to Hamilton’s children and families!**

An Anniversary Mass and Reception will be held on  
**September 23, 2004 at 7:00 p.m. at Cathedral of Christ the King  
714 King Street West, Hamilton, Ontario**

Volunteers, staff, Board members, foster parents, adoptive parents, friends and supporters will be honoured at this special service. Please R.S.V.P. by Friday September 17 if you wish to attend: 905-522-2012 ext. 3377.

Mark Monette, aged 21, Youth Advocacy Committee member and volunteer at the conference, describes the event in the following way: **“This conference brought adolescents and adults together under one roof to talk about problems and issues that would help youth strengthen their up-bringing and understanding of how we can achieve a better way of being.”**

He goes on to say, **“I left the conference with a better understanding of what youth in care are going through and I have information that gives me a better way of protecting myself. I made some great friends who I still remain in contact with either by phone or internet. I wish more kids across Ontario, better yet, across Canada, would be able to share the same experiences that I have had. This conference has inspired me even more to further my career in becoming a social worker and helping youth in the younger generations.”**

Rachel Danielson, aged 19 and another OACAS Youth Advocacy Committee member and volunteer at the conference, has this to say about her experience: **“It was nice to be around people who understand some of the situations that I was in. My favorite workshop was the link between child and animal cruelty – half the stuff is right in front of your face and you don’t even realize it. All together, I really enjoyed my time there and I learnt so much from the workshops and teens around me.”**

The 80 teens that were in attendance learned many new things from the conference but they also gave a lot. They provided delegates with a heart-wrenching skit about the tough issues faced by youth in care such as alienation from peers and from foster parents, drug abuse, stigmatization and violence. They also provided the OACAS and the other delegates with an important policy paper detailing what they see as being problems in the

system that need remedying. The following are their recommendations for change for foster families, foster care services and social workers. They were presented on the final day of the conference and, in the words of Margaret Wheatley, honoured guest at the conference, “it is important for professionals to consider these recommendations carefully and not get overwhelmed by the sheer number of them. Instead, professionals should consider what one or two recommendations speak strongly to them and work on achieving them. Brick by brick is how any good structure gets built.”

## YOUTH RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE: FOSTER FAMILIES

### Recommendation #1:

Better matching of families with the child

#### Why:

- Will be able to stay with the family longer, less switching
- Will get along better
- Fewer personality clashes
- Alleviate tension
- Will be able to work on bigger issues
- Can function better with shared values, etc.

### Recommendation #2:

All youth have a pre-placement visit

#### Why:

- Be able to see if there’s a match
- Know what they’re getting into – rules, expectations
- Helps the transition from one family to another

**Recommendation #3:  
Involve youth in foster family training**

**Why:**

- Foster families will know what youth are looking for and meet those expectations
- Youth will be able to share their issues so that their families understand
- No one else can truly explain what youth experience
- Could teach foster parents about the importance of treating foster children fairly, as well as their own
- Youth could develop skills in parents so that when problems arise with the youth, they know how to cope with them, rather than throwing the child out. Youth would also grow from explaining how to cope with their problematic behaviors.

**Recommendation #4:  
Involve youth with who moves into the family (additional foster children)**

**Why:**

- Less clashing – youth will feel more welcome and part of family
- Allows youth to feel part of family decisions

**Recommendation #5:  
Do better screening and training of potential foster families**

**Why:**

- Currently, too many foster homes break down; too many kids are abused within the system
- It wears down youth to be moved around so much
- Parents lack knowledge about autism, ADHD, depression, behavioral problems
- Training needs to occur before placement, and in preparation for specific children

**Recommendation #6:  
Means to ensure that foster homes are kept to a standard of cleanliness**

**Why:**

- Some homes are not clean and are only cleaned for visits
- Cleanliness affects youth habits and also youth emotional state

**Recommendation #7:  
Have foster families instead of group homes**

**Why:**

- So youth can learn how a family functions
- Break the cycle of foster children unable to create their own stable families

**YOUTH RECOMMENDATIONS  
FOR CHANGE: FOSTER CARE SERVICES**

**Recommendation #1:  
More stability, fewer moves**

**Why:**

- Research validates that the more a child moves, the more problems and disorders they have (for example, attachment disorder)
- Lack of trust in the system
- Youth learn to expect the worst
- Placements don't work
- Lose good relationships: friends, jobs, school
- No memories of some homes (*"couldn't remember where I lived in 2002..."*)
- Have to readjust to rules, schools, friends
- Get sick of trying
- Lose self-esteem – feel like we're being hassled
- Youth withdraw – stay away from building friendships and relationships

**Recommendation #2:  
Raise "Age of Protection" from 16 to 18**

**Why:**

- Less runaways and homeless youth
- Not supposed to be grown up until 18 in eyes of government
- Youth still subject to abuse at 16. For example, an eight year old gets help while a 16 year old is stuck in a home without protection
- Youth not ready – drop out of school
- Impact on community – more homeless youth
- Sets a bad cycle in motion
- Destroys potential of youth for having a normal life

**Recommendation #3:  
Raise age for leaving care to 24**

**Why:**

- Agency, as parent, needs to support youth who are doing well and pursuing their goals.
- Need time to accomplish their goals and make plans
- Average age for leaving home in Canada is 26-27

**Recommendation #4:  
More thorough assessment as youth come into care**

**Why:**

- Need more consideration of specific needs of youth, emotionally, physically, in order to develop more stable placements. For example, one youth in 29 foster homes within first year of care
- To determine whether they should remain with siblings, or in familiar cities or surroundings
- Some youth need more time to confront and disclose their incidents or problems. If one child comes into care, an intense investigation should be conducted before determining what happens to other siblings

**Recommendation #5:  
More voice while in care**

**Why:**

- If youth had a voice in court they would be able to influence decisions, especially those involving siblings and themselves
- Youth already involved in PRIDE training for foster parents. They would like to participate in social worker training

**Recommendation #6:  
Different financial formulas for those in post-secondary education or living in different cities**

**Why:**

- Extended Care and Maintenance (ECM) according to school would encourage more of them to go to college
- Expenses are totally different than earlier. We need help planning for our future
- Could have a monthly budget that is administered by the worker
- Would lead to better financial planning
- It is discouraging to have financial problems when moving and going to school
- ECM should be provided based on what you need so if you live in Toronto, you receive more than if you live in North Bay, based on cost of living.
- Where else would the money come from?

**Recommendation #7:  
Jobs for youth within agencies**

**Why:**

- Gives youth money and more knowledge of the system
- Cultivates spirit of "giving back"
- Provides real capacity to the agency – youth know how to work with youth



# OACAS Conference

*in the best interests of the child* 2004



*OACAS Executive Director Jeanette Lewis speaks. Minister Bountrogianni, OACAS Board Member Jacques Prévost, and OACAS Past President Jim Carey are seated.*



*Minister Marie Bountrogianni opens the conference.*



*OACAS conference organizers Teresa Pitman and Corrane Lipford.*



*Jeanette Lewis, Minister Bountrogianni, Jacques Prévost, and OACAS President Joe Aitchison listen to Stephen Lewis speak.*



*Joe Aitchison thanks Dr. Bountrogianni for speaking at the conference.*



*Keynote speakers Margaret Wheatley and Stephen Lewis with OACAS' Jeanette Lewis and Joe Aitchison.*



*Dr. Alan Leschied speaks to a full room of attendees.*



*OACAS Trainer Allan Moyle and Teresa Pitman.*



*OACAS Director of Information Services, George Leck, and Web Designer, Kristine Kofoed, demonstrate the OACAS Members website.*



*Cathy Dyer, Project Leader of OACAS Youth in Care Connections with Christina O'Brien, Project Assistant and Clark Bursary Award winner.*



*Ron and Nancy Clark pictured with their good friends Dennis and Joan Vollmershausen at the OACAS Awards Dinner.*



*Dr. Shafiq Qadri, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Children & Youth Services, with Bruce Rivers, Child Welfare Secretariat at the Ministry.*



*OACAS Director of Communications and Quality Assurance receives congratulatory flowers for organizing a very successful conference.*



*It's all over...*

- Youth are working together to advocate for themselves and have voice
- Opportunity to show workers what youth are capable of, get to know adults on a different level
- Younger children identify better with and look up to older foster kids
- Prepare for potential careers in fields where more workers are needed
- Co-op programs would help us experience potential careers

## YOUTH RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE: SOCIAL WORKERS

### Recommendation #1:

Build relationships among youth and social workers

*How would you feel if...*

your life was based on a plan of care. That would mean meeting every three months to discuss what goals you met and everything you didn't do, as well as your bad behaviors. Sometimes it feels like a tag team – the worker and foster parent against the child. I felt like I didn't exist or that my explanation wasn't accepted. My good work or all the things I had changed didn't get discussed. Or, how would you feel if once you turned nineteen, your relationship with the worker diminished. You are an adult, so less time is spent helping you. It would seem like you no longer need support because you turned one year older.

**In my life I would like the opportunity of a positive and healthy relationship with my social worker.**

### Recommendation #2:

Provide funding for positive experiences between youth and social workers

*How would you feel if...*

you only saw your parents at plans of care, when you're in trouble or at court – in other words, only in negative

situations. Wouldn't it be nice to have a relationship built on positive experiences as well?

**In my life I would like funds to be available for my social worker and to develop a relationship through positive experiences, like going to the movies or having them come to my play or concert.**

### Recommendation #3:

Involve youth in social worker training

*How would you feel if...*

you had a social worker who was brand new and they had never met a youth in care before. They might be unaware of the reality you are experiencing and feeling.

**In my life I would like to be involved in social worker training and be able to share my experience in care with new social workers to create sensitivity toward my situation.**

### Recommendation #4:

Provide youth with stability in social workers

*How would you feel if...*

you invested in a relationship with your worker by building trust, sharing your secrets, and talking about terrible experiences you had, only to find out the worker is leaving. You have to start all over again with someone new. This doesn't happen once, it happens again and again and again.

**In my life I would like to have as few workers as possible so that I know I have someone to count on and so that I don't have to relive my experiences each time I discuss them with a new worker.**

**Recommendation #5:**

Use a matching process for social workers and youth and allow for youth evaluation of workers

*How would you feel if...*

you met a new person who you are suddenly told has become your legal guardian – your parent. You have never seen them before and do not know anything about them. However, they know you from a file. You are supposed to believe they know what is best for you. Or, how would you feel if you were a young woman who was sexually abused and you're assigned to a male social worker that you do not feel comfortable discussing your abuse with.

**In my life I would like there to be a gradual process when I have to change social workers. I would like to know their name before I meet them and would like to give some input to my social worker, and have an evaluation of my feelings of how they're doing.**

**Recommendation #6:**

Reduce the ratio of social workers to cases

*How would you feel if...*

your parents had to share their attention among 20 to 25 other kids, i.e., cases. And every time you needed their attention or something important happened, like your first hockey game, they were dealing with another kid.

**In my life I would like the ratio of social workers to clients to be lowered. I would like to know that my social worker is not so overwhelmed or dealing with other kids in crisis that my needs are not met.**

**Recommendation #7:**

Have a consistent back-up worker when on vacation

*How would you feel if...*

you called your worker only to find out they're on holidays for two weeks. After being passed to many different people, you finally get to talk to someone who

doesn't know you at all and suggests that you wait till your worker returns.

**In my life I would like to be able to know who I can contact when my worker is on vacation. This would mean that they know my case and about me and would hopefully be someone consistent.**

**About the Author**

*Cathy Dyer is the Project Leader for Youth in Care Connections across Ontario at OACAS, while attending University full-time. In this role, she plans events, creates and distributes a newsletter, and makes recommendations to OACAS and other groups on youth issues. Cathy has given presentations to Board members, youth, CAS staff, and Ministry staff, including the Minister. This year Cathy won the Child Welfare League of Canada Youth Leadership Award.*

## The Clark Bursary Awards: Celebrating 15 years of giving



*OACAS President Joe Aitchison presents Ron and Nancy Clark with the first Distinguished Service to Youth Award.*

The Clark Bursary Fund was established in 1989 through a generous donation by Ron and Nancy Clark of Caledonia. It was created to assist youth receiving services from Ontario Children's Aid Societies or former wards supported by Extended Care and Maintenance to achieve their academic and career goals.

Since 1989, the Clarks have made increasing financial contributions each year. The number of new bursaries awarded annually has increased from five bursaries of \$250 each in 1989 to 20 new bursaries and up to 20 new grants in 2004-2005. In addition, each person who receives a bursary for the first time is then eligible for up to three more years of funding, depending on the educational program.

Since 1989, **194** bursaries in the amount of \$1,014,000 and **105** one-time grants in the amount of \$63,500 have been awarded to help youth receiving services from Ontario Children's Aid Societies. The total contribution over the last 15 years, including the estimate for 2004-2005, amounts to **\$1,077,500**.

The OACAS *Distinguished Service to Youth Award* was established this year to celebrate major contributors to the well being of youth who are/have been wards of, or have received services from, Ontario Children's Aid Societies. It was presented to Ron and Nancy Clark on this commemorative anniversary to show the appreciation of the entire child welfare community for their continuing support in helping to finance the education of almost **300** youth since 1989 from Children's Aid Societies in every part of the province.

In accepting their award the Clarks graciously commented that they receive more from the Bursary Program than they give. They spoke of the joy it gives them to meet the award recipients every year and to hear their stories.

They were accompanied on this celebratory occasion by their children and friends who were invited to join us in honouring the Clarks.

## Making a Difference:

A letter of thanks from Karen McKinley, 1989 Clark Bursary Award Winner

*Dear Ron and Nancy Clark,*

*While I am unable to attend, I greatly appreciate this opportunity to personally thank Ron and Nancy Clark for their generosity and thoughtfulness. I'm not sure exactly how I can express my gratitude after fifteen years, except possibly to provide a glimpse of the path that I took after being in receipt of their support. In 1989, the Clark Bursary was presented to me during my first year at Queen's University in Kingston. At the time, I was considering a career in medicine. After a few twists and turns, I found myself with a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and a contract with a local agency that counsels youth as they search for employment. Along the way, I became a solo parent and discovered my true passion, birth. Combining my formal education with my experience in career counseling, teaching childbirth classes and supporting women/couples through the birth process, I was accepted to the Midwifery Education Programme at McMaster University. Since graduating with my Bachelor of Health Sciences (Midwifery) in 2001, I have worked full-time as a registered midwife in Kingston. Now I am about to embark on another adventure, as I have accepted a contract to work at an Inuit Birthing Centre in Puvirnituk, Nuvavik (Northern Quebec). As a practice partner, I will take a leave for one year and return to the Kingston community next summer. My daughter and I are greatly excited about this opportunity and look forward to the many experiences that await us in the North.*

*As I write this brief synopsis of my life over the past fifteen years, I am reminded of the now almost cliché adage that it takes an entire village to raise a child. Individual members of the village teach each child in their own way. Ron and Nancy Clark teach us generosity and the importance of reaching out to support others as they struggle to reach their goals. Do note the coincidence that my life passion is midwifery; being generous with my time and providing support for women/families as they welcome a child.*

*Thank you again Ron and Nancy for your generosity, past and present. While I am certain that there are many success stories that can be attributed to your support and encouragement, I do hope my story allows you a glimpse of your contribution in this little village.*

*With thanks,  
Karen McKinley*

## OACAS Achievement Awards



*Marie-Andrée Vermette accepts The Outstanding Service to Agencies/Leadership Award on behalf of WeirFoulds LLP. Pictured with Jeanette Lewis, OACAS Executive Director.*

The OACAS Outstanding Achievement Awards recognize the contributions of individuals and groups who help achieve the goals of child welfare in Ontario. This provincial recognition program identifies the deep commitment and strong leadership shown by the women and men who champion the cause of children who are cared for by or receive services from Children's Aid Societies.

The Ontario child welfare system can attribute its continued success to the dedicated army of staff, foster parents and volunteers who work with thousands of children and families in their communities. There are also many individuals and organizations external to CASs who have contributed to the progressive development of child welfare in Ontario.

That evening OACAS presented two Outstanding Achievement Awards for very special contributions to child welfare in Ontario:

- ▼ Greg Richards and the law firm WeirFoulds LLP in the *Service to Agencies/Leadership* category
- ▼ The Children's Aid Society of Toronto's Community Development and Prevention Program (CD&PP) in the *Community Service* category.

### Outstanding Service to Agencies / Leadership:

***Mr. Greg Richards and the law firm WeirFoulds LLP***

*Nominated by the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS)*

Greg Richards has provided *pro bono* legal representation to the OACAS in the Constitutional Challenge to Section 43 of the Criminal Code of Canada at The Superior Court of Ontario, the Court of Appeal of Ontario and the Supreme Court of Canada. He is also providing *pro bono* legal representation to the OACAS in the Aylmer Case at the Superior Court of Ontario. Greg Richards and

WeirFoulds have donated a significant amount of time to research, case preparation and court appearances.

Greg provides strong advocacy and legal support for these important initiatives on behalf of children; and his firm, WeirFoulds, fully supports his efforts, allowing him the time to devote to work on behalf of OACAS and children.

### Outstanding Community Service:

#### *The Children's Aid Society of Toronto Community Development and Prevention Program (CD&PP)*

*Nominated by the Children's Aid Society of Toronto*

The Children's Aid Society of Toronto's Community Development and Prevention Program (CD&PP) has created a legacy of long-standing programs that, for the past 36 years, have contributed to the prevention of child abuse and neglect. Some of these contributions include:

- Increased citizen participation in the civic life of their communities
- Creation of new organizations and the enhancement of existing ones to support local community building
- Supporting the capacity of communities to address the factors contributing to child abuse and neglect
- Enhanced skill development and learning for community residents
- Facilitation of leadership development among youth and adults
- Increased community resources to support children, youth and families
- Improved relationship between Toronto CAS and Toronto's diverse communities
- Influencing the development of public policies that are in the best interests of children, youth and families

The Program currently works with approximately 60 community projects and advocacy coalitions, and, unlike other community development programs, has always engaged in all three areas of community development

activities – locality development, social planning and social action.

The accomplishments of the Community Development and Prevention Program at Toronto CAS have resulted in a wealth of community resources in Toronto designed to support children, youth and families and break the cycle of poverty and violence that leads to child abuse and neglect.



*Members of Toronto CAS Community Development and Prevention Program accept their award for Outstanding Community Service. L to R: Ann Fitzpatrick, Cindy Himelstein, Sharron Richards, Doug Hum, Ken Sosa.*

### Long-Term Service Awards

Each year the OACAS recognizes those persons who have worked in children's aid societies for more than 20 years by providing them with a recognition certificate to be presented by the local CAS. This year 225 certificates from OACAS were sent to local societies for distribution to their staff members to recognize their long-term service to child welfare.

## OACAS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Chatham-Kent Integrated CS, Elgin F&CS

**Region 26 *Richard Newton-Smith***

Windsor-Essex CAS, Sarnia-Lambton CAS



*OACAS, in support of its members, is the voice of child welfare in Ontario, dedicated to providing leadership for the achievement of excellence in the protection of children and in the promotion of their well-being within their families and communities.*