

Recognizing the strength, bravery and resilience of children and youth in care

May 14 is the first annual Children and Youth in Care Day in Ontario

TORONTO - To mark the first official **Children and Youth in Care Day** in Ontario on May 14, the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS), YouthCAN and Children's Aid Societies across the province are celebrating the strength and determination that children and youth in and from care demonstrate in the face of adversity, and recommitting to support them.

The initial focus of child welfare work is on ensuring child safety while keeping kids with their families whenever possible. If it is unsafe for children and youth to remain at home due to [physical, sexual or emotional abuse or neglect](#), these young people come into the care of Ontario's Children's Aid Societies. When a child comes into care, Children's Aid provides support so that the child can be reunited with their family, if and when possible.

Children who come into the permanent care of Children's Aid find homes with either extended family, members of their community, through adoption or in foster or group homes. These young people come into care having experienced the trauma of abuse and neglect, and demonstrate remarkable resilience in light of a unique set of challenges.

In November 2011, youth in and from care shared their experiences and stories growing up as Crown wards of the province during the Youth Leaving Care Hearings at Queen's Park. The final report of the Hearings, '[My REAL Life Book](#)' identified the difficulties these young people experience growing up in care, including vulnerability, isolation, unpredictability and aging out of care before they are ready. Issues with mental health, completing high school, homelessness and involvement with the justice system were also identified.

The creation of the Children and Youth in Care Day was one of the key recommendations provided in 'My REAL Life Book'. In response, a private member's bill was introduced in the legislature by Soo Wong (MPP for Scarborough-Agincourt) to designate May 14 each year as Children and Youth in Care Day. In late March, 2014, the bill was granted royal assent.

Ontarians are standing up in support of children and youth in care. The declaration of this important day is one of a number of initiatives recently announced to support these young people to reach their full potential. These [include](#) the creation of 50 Youth-in-Transition worker positions across the province to help young people ages 16 to 24 connect with key services, a new Aftercare Benefits Initiative to provide young people leaving care with access to health, dental, vision and extended health services, and [increased financial supports to help young people pursue post-secondary education](#).

Mary Ballantyne, Executive Director of OACAS, shared: "The creation of Children and Youth in Care Day is a tremendous step forward in publicly recognizing children and youth in care, and the enormous potential for success these young people hold. Children and youth in care should have every opportunity to succeed and this day is one more way to show that we support and value these young people."

We are making strides in recognizing, honouring and supporting children and youth in care, but there is more work to do. To learn more about OACAS advocacy priorities for youth, click [here](#).

To learn more about Children and Youth in Care Day, please visit [the YouthCAN website](#). Contact your [local Children's Aid Society](#) to get involved.

About the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies: Since 1912, OACAS has represented Ontario's Children's Aid Societies in Ontario and provided service in the areas of government relations, communications, information management, education and training to advocate for the protection and well-being of children. <http://www.oacas.org>

About YouthCAN (Communication, Advocacy and Networking): YouthCAN is a multi-component program for youth in care of Children's Aid Societies across Ontario, and the staff who work with them. The functions of YouthCAN are facilitated by OACAS. <http://www.ontarioyouthcan.org/>

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