

Youth celebrate Children and Youth in Care Day on May 14 while continuing to push for changes to the child welfare system

(TORONTO, May 12, 2015) – On Thursday, May 14, the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS), YouthCAN and Children's Aid Societies across Ontario will be paying tribute to the children and youth in their care on the province's annual Children and Youth in Care Day.

"As a former youth in care, May 14 is particularly meaningful to me," says Brian Van Du, who leads the Ontario Youth Communications Advocacy Network (YouthCAN), which represents youth in care. "The day reminds us that children and youth in care are unique, valued, and important. It also reminds us that the stigma for youth in care needs to be challenged."

On May 14 approximately 100 youth-in-care will be traveling from across the province to celebrate Children and Youth in Care Day at the Ontario Legislature. OACAS is hosting a "Youth Civics Day" that will allow youth to witness the process of drafting and debating legislation, meet with their local MPPs and take part in other interactive activities related to active and informed citizenship.

Youth in care are playing an increasingly important role in influencing child welfare and how it works. They are involved in peer support and give advice to their Children's Aid Societies (CAS) on projects and programs to improve the lives of all children and youth in CAS care. Increasingly they are also helping to change provincial policies and even laws. "Influencing policy and legislation matters to us. We live it and experience it. Who better to ask than those impacted by it," says Van Du.

Youth have influenced change related to financial support, post-secondary options, and the extending of services to older youth and young adults. They scored an important win last year with the Aftercare Benefits Initiative, which offers benefits to youth aged 21 to 25 who don't have care through another plan. Since August of this year over 690 youth and 150 of their dependents have registered for extended health coverage. "YouthCAN has been advocating for better outcomes for youth leaving care for many years," says Van Du. "I am thrilled that former youth in care are now able to access health, dental, and counselling services."

On May 14 we will be celebrating the great successes of the many children and youth in CAS care. We look forward to the ongoing support of the government, community partners and public as we work together with youth to make positive changes.

For more information:

Christina Campbell, Advocacy and Media Relations Specialist
(416) 987-6042 or ccampbell@oacas.org

To learn more about Children and Youth in Care Day please visit the [YouthCAN website](#). You can also contact your [local Children's Aid Society](#) to learn about how they are planning to celebrate the day.

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.