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Connections

This newsletter is published by the CCAS Communications Department. We welcome your comments and story ideas!

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Give Children A Voice

Report suspected child abuse and neglect. As stated in law, you do not have to be certain that a child is being abused. If you have any concerns about a child, call 416-395-1500, 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week.

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# Connections

The Quarterly Newsletter of The Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto, Winter 2011



**MIRA**  
Child Protection Worker -  
Foster Care

# TTC Bus Driver and SickKids' Psychiatrist Lauded as Local Heroes for Children

*Stand Up for Kids Awards Conclude October's Child Abuse Prevention Month Campaign*

*By Anne Rappé, Manager, Communications*

**I**t was a routine day like any other for TTC bus driver Chris Paulson. He had been driving his bus along a busy downtown route midday one Saturday, when suddenly he noticed a very young child who appeared to be wandering unsupervised on the street, wearing only a diaper. Pulling over his bus, Paulson stepped out of the vehicle to further investigate. He picked up the child to ensure he was out of harm's way. The police arrived and took the child into their care until a Children's Aid Society of Toronto worker arrived. It is likely that other people noticed this young child, as he was wandering alone on a Saturday morning in a busy neighbourhood, but only Paulson chose to do something about it.

Chris Paulson was one of two deserving winners of this year's Tenth Annual Stand Up for Kids Awards held on November 8, 2011. The awards were presented by Toronto's four Children's Aid Societies, along with special guest, Dr. Eric Hoskins, Minister of Children and Youth Services in his first official appearance since being sworn into his new position.

According to Mary A. McConville, Executive Director, CCAS, recognizing Mr. Paulson's actions goes to the heart of what Child Abuse Prevention Month is all about. "Mr. Paulson's keen sense of observation and his decision to take action to protect a child embody both the spirit of the Stand Up for Kids Award and our Child Abuse Prevention Month Campaign: keeping kids safe is everybody's business," she said.

Toronto's Children's Aid Societies also honoured the achievements of Dr. Johanne Roberge, who has dedicated her career to helping children and adolescents who are at risk of hurting themselves or someone else, or who are in crisis. As the Director of the Psychiatry Emergency and Crisis Service at The Hospital for Sick Children, Dr. Roberge has made an enormous, positive contribution to the health and well-being of at-risk children and youth who have expressed suicidal thoughts and is able to successfully connect with them to address these thoughts. Dr. Roberge also provides direct



Howard Hurwitz, Director - Children Services, Jewish Family and Child, David Rivard, CEO - Children's Aid Society of Toronto, Dr. Eric Hoskins, Minister of Children and Youth Services, Dr. Johanne Roberge, Director, Psychiatry Emergency and Crisis Service - The Hospital for Sick Children, Chris Paulson, Driver - TTC, Mary A. McConville, Executive Director, CCAS.

consultations with child welfare workers, providing them with practical guidance and clinical advice to help achieve positive outcomes for children and families.

"Dr. Roberge is a solid, committed individual whose expertise in the children's mental health field has greatly assisted child welfare workers in their efforts to keep children and adolescents safe. Her professional knowledge paired with her willingness to educate, assist and collaborate with child welfare workers set her apart as an exceptional individual and

one who has contributed to positive outcomes for the families that we serve," added Mary.

"Both Mr. Paulson and Dr. Roberge have demonstrated their strong commitment to not just our community but to looking out for the well-being of the children in our community. My hope is that others will hear their stories and become inspired to get involved when a child, young person or family needs help," said David Rivard, Chief Executive Officer, Children's Aid Society of Toronto.

## Child Abuse Prevention Month A Social Media Success

*By Krista Lamb, Communications Specialist*



During the month of October, CCAS joined Toronto's other three Children's Aid Societies to launch a Child Abuse Prevention Month campaign using Facebook and Twitter. Our goal was to donate 200 Webkinz toys to children once we received 1,000 'likes' and 'follows'. On October 27th, we reached this goal – and then we surpassed it!

By the end of the month more than 1,200 people had clicked the 'like' button on our Facebook page. Our page impressions were even more impressive - during the month of October, our Facebook page was viewed more than 100,000 times. This means that people who "liked" our page saw valuable information about the signs of child abuse and neglect and how to report it.

The campaign included awareness materials from all four agencies, as well as OACAS and the Ontario Government, including videos, reports, information sheets, statistics, personal stories, articles and other important information. Every day, we circulated material that informed our followers about the ways that they could protect children.

Thank you to everyone who supported our Child Abuse Prevention Month Campaign. It is so important that people learn the signs of child abuse and neglect and how vital it is to report suspected abuse. We couldn't have done it without you!



Jo Michaels, Manager, Marketing and Communications - Jewish Family and Child, Howard Hurwitz, Director - Children Services, Jewish Family and Child, David Rivard, CEO - Children's Aid Society of Toronto, Mary A. McConville, Executive Director - CCAS, Rob Thompson, Director of Communications, Children's Aid Society of Toronto, Anne Rappé, Communications Manager - CCAS pose with the stuffed toys which were given away to children.

# Reflections on the Career Journey of a Former CCAS Chief Counsel

By Marv Bernstein, B.A., J.D., LL.M.

**I**t is an honour to be asked to contribute a piece to CCAS Connections, particularly because of: my affection for the Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto (CCAS) where I had the privilege of serving for 20 years as its Chief Counsel; and the close proximity of the writing of this article to National Child Day.

Throughout my professional career, which now spans almost 35 years, I have held many roles, but the common theme has been a primary desire to advocate on behalf of the well-being and rights of children and a secondary desire to continue to expand my knowledge and sphere of advocacy on behalf of children and youth, and where the opportunity has presented itself, on behalf of the child welfare sector.

These motivating factors led me to first serve as in-house Counsel to the Children's Aid Society of York Region in 1977. At that time, court cases were being presented by court workers and there were only three or four in-house Counsel in the entire province. There was also much resistance to lawyers being integrated into the everyday work of CAS's.

After gaining my first exposure to Ontario child welfare, I felt the need to move to a larger centre, where the career opportunities would likely be greater if I wanted to continue to be engaged in child welfare law. It was around that time that the position of Chief Counsel opened up at CCAS. When I accepted that position, I had no idea what an incredible experience this would turn out to be. Those two decades provided a rich learning experience and were foundational to everything I have done subsequently in my career.

During the time I spent at CCAS as its Chief Counsel (1980-2000), I worked with many respected colleagues whose influence remains with me to this day. In fact, my professional responsibilities at CCAS allowed me to work closely with the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS) and brought me into contact with Mary McConville, the then Association Executive Director. Her advice, wise counsel and personal courage over the years has provided me with a leadership and ethical compass that has guided me in making, in most cases, the correct professional decisions.

It was difficult leaving CCAS after so many years, but I was ready for some new challenges, and by that time, had developed a deep interest in taking a broader look at Ontario child welfare policy development and not purely from a legal lens. This led me to accept the newly created position of Director of Policy Development and Legal Support at OACAS.

During my tenure at OACAS, I learned the importance of balancing the needs, interests and representation of all CAS's, as well as the strategic art of government relations. I expanded my circle of child welfare colleagues and I came to realize that I did not have to know everything myself in order to be an effective catalyst for systemic change. I could tap into the impressive bank of knowledge that rested with so many other knowledgeable and committed child welfare professionals across the province.

After spending almost 5 years at OACAS (2001-05), I was



Marv Bernstein, former CCAS Chief Counsel and Mary A. McConville, Executive Director, CCAS.

interviewed for, and was appointed, the Children's Advocate for the Province of Saskatchewan. That position was one of only eight such positions in the country and presented a unique opportunity to advocate for the rights, interests and well-being of all Saskatchewan children and youth. One of the major advantages of this role was the ability to serve as an independent officer of the Provincial Legislature, where I could elevate the voices of children and youth in discussions with government officials, the media and the public at large, without fear of censorship. The move to Saskatoon also gave me a better sense as to whether children's rights and needs were being consistently met across the country.

After completing my five-year term of Office as Saskatchewan Children's Advocate, I returned to Toronto to assume the newly created position of Chief Advisor, Advocacy for UNICEF Canada. In establishing this position, UNICEF Canada decided to supplement its strong international advocacy on behalf of disadvantaged children in developing countries with a stronger emphasis on domestic advocacy in support of the rights and well-being of all Canadian children, and to work with all levels of government in fulfilling their obligations to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

While most Canadians know about the sufferings of children in war-torn countries and in developing countries that have experienced natural disasters, not many Canadians realize that despite being an affluent country, Canada has an unacceptably high rate of child poverty (with one in ten children living below the poverty line and one in four First Nations children experiencing the same fate). In a 2010 UNICEF study, Canada ranked 17th of 24 industrialized countries in ensuring equality of basic resources and conditions necessary for child

development, such as adequate family income.

Solutions that could address these problems and form part of UNICEF Canada's domestic advocacy priorities include: establishing a national Children's Commissioner; using child rights impact assessments for proposed laws, policies and programs; and improving co-ordination across government departments and jurisdictions. Such actions, if taken, would encourage the expansion of good practices, prevent children from falling through gaps in services, and result in children being treated more equitably across the country.

November 20th is National Child Day. Proclaimed by the Canadian government in 1993, National Child Day celebrates two historic events involving children – the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child in 1959 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the UN General Assembly on November 20th, 1989. When we celebrate this momentous day, it is important to remember that communities, organizations, businesses and all levels of government should be encouraged to pay greater attention to the state of Canada's children today. The vulnerable children we are leaving farther and farther behind are children in low-income families, Aboriginal children, children in government care, migrant children and children with disabilities.

National Child Day also provides me with an opportunity for one final reflection - If we will ultimately be defined as a society by how well we have treated our most vulnerable citizens, then CCAS will score a grade of the highest order and will have left an indelible legacy by ensuring the protection and well-being of our children and by promoting respect for their fundamental human rights.



# Calvin is Ready to be a Part of a Loving Family

**M** eet Calvin. Calvin is five years old and he is available for adoption. A handsome boy, Calvin is slightly taller than average for his age. He is Black and is of African heritage. He wears corrective glasses on a regular basis, which make him look older than he is. He is a happy child who smiles readily and his laugh is contagious.

Calvin is a curious, loveable child who has a friendly disposition. He has a funny sense of humour and he enjoys entertaining other children who take delight in his antics. He loves having other children around him and thrives on the attention he receives in his foster home. Calvin enjoys dancing to African music. His foster mother has a book about Kenya and he enjoys looking at it with her. She has also given him some Kenyan foods and he has enjoyed them. He is a big eater and food is very important to him.

Calvin started Kindergarten this year and he takes pleasure in music, singing and dancing. He loves playing with his toys, especially his model horses, and enjoys colouring with crayons. Calvin's expressive speech is delayed and he needs assistance with his daily routine. His fine and gross motor skills are developing age appropriately.

He is a special needs child and, despite many gains, he will require outside resource supports as he grows up. Calvin will require a caregiver who will be able to advocate for him in order to ensure that he receives all of the specialized services that he may require.

To find out more about Calvin or adoption, call 416-395-1500 or visit [torontoccas.org](http://torontoccas.org).



## Celebrating Our Foster Families

*By Krista Lamb, Communications Specialist*

**O** n Saturday, October 22nd at the Bayview Golf and Country Club, CCAS celebrated the important role played by our caregivers. Foster families and kinship families sat down to lunch and enjoyed the opportunity to meet and mingle, before receiving thank-you gifts in honour of their years of dedicated fostering.

The afternoon included several speakers who highlighted how

the entire family contributes to the experience of fostering. We often think of foster parents, but it is also important to acknowledge the brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins and other extended family who welcome children and youth into their families. Fostering is truly all about families helping families and that message was one that came up again and again.

This joyous celebration of the families who open their hearts

and homes to foster children was also bittersweet, as it marked the retirement of several of our foster families. Each year a number of our caregivers retire. This event is an opportunity to honour them for the time they have spent fostering children in our community.

The entire CCAS community thanks our caregivers for their hard work and commitment to our children and youth.



Mary A. McConville congratulates foster parents, George and Sylvia Claridge for 35 years of service.



Long-time foster parents, Nellie and Bernie Desroches.



Adrienne Conroy, President, Foster Family Association and Child Protection Manager Louise Galego



Thank you to Kevin Crux from Au'some for donating candy for this event.



The Resource Services Team.

# Nurturing Great Outcomes by Supporting Our Foster Families

By Donna Harris, Communications Specialist

**F**or more than 27 years, Mira Hamat has been an important member of the CCAS team. As a Child Protection Worker in Resource Services, she is part of a dedicated team who provides support to our foster parents.

Foster parents are an integral part of the CCAS community, providing short-term and long-term, loving homes to our children. When children are no longer able to safely live in their own home and are admitted into care, CCAS immediately begins planning to establish permanence for them. This can mean an adoption, a kinship placement, or a return to their home if it can be made a safe place for them. In most instances foster care bridges that gap. Sometimes, if it is considered in the best interest of the child, he or she may even grow up living in foster care.

“By the time children come into care the majority have had unmet needs for some time,” explains Mira. “The responsibility we have is great. We are there to help make the foster care experience a positive one.”

Out of the more than 24,660 children CCAS served last year, more than 23,000 of those children were served in their own home.

When children and youth are in foster care, child protection workers like Mira provide support and guidance to both foster parents and the children in their care.

“We do what we can to give children a wonderful experience in care. We help the foster parents understand the standards of care and the complexities of providing excellent foster care. We make sure that foster families are equipped with the skills, knowledge and resources to meet each child’s needs. It’s challenging to manage the complex standards involving foster care and we help to mediate that,” says Mira.



Mira Hamet - Child Protection Worker, Foster Care

Foster families can often be quite large. In Ontario, foster parents can have a maximum of four foster children in their private residence and six foster children in a licensed residential property. These large families often include children with complex needs who are in need of various types of support.

Each child has a team of professionals working together to meet his or her specific needs. Depending on the situation, a child may receive support from an adoption worker, foster care worker and child protection worker as well as their foster parents. “Great outcomes happen when there is great teamwork,” says Mira.

For CCAS Foster care workers, it can be the achievement of

those great outcomes that makes the job so worthwhile. “When I see kids do well despite unbelievable odds and I know I had a small part in making that happen, it makes me proud,” says Mira. “Especially, when I hear about kids graduating from high school, I don’t think we appreciate how difficult that would be for someone who has survived trauma.”

Mira also has great respect and admiration for foster parents. “Ultimately it is the foster parents that do the work to ensure great outcomes for children. It’s their care, support, hard work, long nights and tireless efforts that make the difference for our children. It also requires huge sacrifices. Most people leave work at 5:00 p.m., but for foster parents the work is constant – a never ending job. Yet, they love to make a difference in the lives of children,” she says.

Foster parents also develop close bonds with the child’s biological parents. “One foster parent had an infant placed in her home and two days later she noticed that child was not drinking enough and took her to the hospital. Her judgment probably saved this child’s life. The foster parent contacted the child’s biological parents and although the foster home was not in the GTA, she picked up the biological parents from the GO Station every day and drove them to the hospital to see their child,” said Mira. “This foster parent also stayed in a hotel on another occasion so that the adoptive parents could get to know their child in the foster home where she was most comfortable,” she added.

Working with foster parents has been an incredibly rewarding experience for Mira. “I think that I’ve gained a lot of professional confidence and compassion in my work with foster parents. I have a really good idea of the struggles people face every day and it’s very humbling. To make a difference in the lives of people who need support is an incredible thing. People here really care about the work they do. They really want to make a difference for kids. People here really, really care about kids.”

## Foster Parents Made the Difference for Former Youth in Care

At the age of two I was placed in foster care. To most people this is a foreign concept, to me it was my life, and it was real. My parents were addicted to drugs. I was a crown ward with access to my parents until the age of nine, at which point my mother fought with the courts for years to regain custody of me and she won. The court had set requirements for my mother, which she had to meet and maintain in order for me to be back in her care. The first three to five years were great; I was still young and didn’t have much of an understanding of what these unusual living circumstances were. At the age of twelve, I began experiencing things that were horrific and they really took a toll on my emotional well-being. I began to develop serious behavioural issues and I had a problem with authority.

As the years went on I became worse. I put my mother through a lot of stress, so we decided that it was best if I went back into care for one year to try to turn my life around. After six months in, I realized that I could not live without my mother, again. I had to make changes.

I turned my defiance into positive energy and my grief into forgiveness. I became the person I wanted to be. The odds were not in my favour, but I did it.

Today, I look back and I can say with every inch of my heart and soul that I am happy to have learned such difficult lessons early in life. It has made me the best person, and I realize what is really important in life.

I was placed into the most wonderful foster home a young girl

could ever ask for. Only good things happened. I now have two moms, two sisters, two brothers, two dads and a whole lot of cousins! Some people aren’t even fortunate enough to have even one.

Being a part of The Catholic Children’s Aid Society has instilled in me the ability to not pass judgment, the strength to overcome any milestone, and most importantly, the ability to love unconditionally.

I wanted to share my story because, I thinking it’s so important for children to understand that while what you may be struggling with from your past is difficult, it can only make you stronger. Judgment may forever haunt us, but all that matters is the depths you go to in life to make things right. So, keep your eye on your goals, don’t lose focus, and appreciate the little things in life.

Sometimes when I am alone, I start thinking about my past: graphic images of my mother doing things that she shouldn’t let her daughter see. Negative thoughts soon follow. These thoughts cause me to question my ability to succeed and to wonder if I am just going to be another statistic bound for failure. Then something wonderful happens - with the grace of God and the love I have inside, I pull through.

I will love my foster parents forever. I am the happiest and most thankful person for all the things my experiences have taught me, and for never giving up on myself. So this is my thank you to the Catholic Children’s Aid Society for doing all that

you do, shaping the lives of the young and allowing us to have equal opportunity; for instilling in me a sense of compassion, understanding, and love; for giving me the right tools I needed in order to accomplish what seemed impossible.

You don’t get to choose the family you’re born into, but you do get to choose how to live your life to the fullest and turn all your negativity into positive thinking. To be able to share my challenges with CCAS has been a life-changing experience, for which I will forever be grateful .

*Living one day at a time;  
Enjoying one moment at a time;  
Accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;  
Taking, as He did, this sinful world  
as it is, not as I would have it;  
Trusting that He will make all things right  
if I surrender to His Will;  
That I may be reasonably happy in this life  
and supremely happy with Him  
Forever in the next.*

Amen.

*Angela M.*

# CCAS Thanks Long Serving Staff and Bids Farewell to Retirees

**O**n November 23, CCAS held its Long Service Recognition event where we thanked more than 100 employees for their long-term dedication. We also said goodbye to seven retirees. We wish all of our retirees good health and enjoyment as they pursue other personal interests.

*Below are brief tributes to each retiree in recognition of their invaluable contributions to CCAS:*

## Ellen Cowan

Ellen joined the Society in 2004 as a Child Protection Worker - Emergency After Hours (EAH), a role which she held until her retirement earlier this year.

Ellen was seen as an asset to the EAH team given her previous experience as a front-line child protection worker from the Children's Aid Society of Toronto. She was always flexible and supportive of team members during their busy shifts. She also provided occasional coverage during the day for Centralized Intake Department.

Ellen was respected by her team members, had good assessment skills and was skilled at dealing with clients in crisis. She approached her work with a positive attitude and pleasant demeanour, which was appreciated by the EAH team.

Ellen was clear and concise in responding to callers, and in the way she consulted with her peers and supervisors, making the job easier for everyone.

One of the most remarkable events in Ellen's life was the birth of her first grandchild. She quickly became a doting grandmother; her co-workers loved listening to Jada stories. In retirement, Ellen is looking forward to spending as much time as possible with her family, especially Jada.

## Helen Dietz

Helen began working at CCAS in 2003 as a Child Protection Worker - Ongoing, at the Etobicoke/City of York Branch. She was an enthusiastic addition to the Branch and soon became a strong team member.

Helen made excellent use of community resources and worked collaboratively with community partners to ensure that children's needs were met, and that families received the services they required.

She was recognized by the Child Development Institute for her collaborative work with their agency in 2006. She was nominated by Samantha Cumberbach, from the Girls Connection group, who worked very closely with Helen on a number of cases. This honour signified how well Helen worked with community resources and how well she was respected by these resources.

Helen was also an active member of the Branch Health & Safety Committee for many years. She often wore her Health & Safety hat to ensure that all of us were protected as we went about our day!

## Elaine Ho

Elaine joined CCAS in 1984, as what was then called a Social Worker IV at the Scarborough Branch. In 1990, she transferred to Outside Resources - Long Term Care (which later became Child & Youth Services).

Elaine had the commitment needed to provide children and young people with the best care and support. She worked very quietly and independently, and knew the ins and outs of her job. She was always available to staff; both new and experienced.

Elaine worked with most of the children and youth on her caseload for many years. She was steadfast in preparing these youth for eventual independence, but never lost sight of the young person's need for support, advocacy and healthy relationships.

Elaine's colleagues will remember her as a committed, professional social worker who did her job in a quiet and thorough manner.

## Gerard Lepine

Gerard joined CCAS in 2002 as a Child Protection Supervisor after having worked in child welfare for more than 25 years. Gerard's many years of child welfare experience were an asset to the agency. He ably identified critical issues associated with cases and assisted staff in reacting to crises and planning for children and families. His credibility with all levels of staff was established early on.

Gerard provided great clarity in communicating his expectations and did so in a manner where individuals felt valued. Gerard was very organized and focused and very respectful in his approach to others.

Gerard saw his work as a vocation and was dedicated to the children and families he served. He was also deeply committed to his staff.

## Enda McNeil

Enda began her career at CCAS in 1976 as a social worker. In 1978, she moved to the Special Treatment Foster Home Team and a year later transferred to Receiving and Assessment Homes. In 1988, Enda was promoted to a Supervisory position in Foster Care Services. In 2000, she took on the role of Placement Supervisor.

Child-focused, child-centered, child-centric, Enda steadfastly anchored her belief and practice with the children that she had the opportunity to work with.

Enda challenged us by her example, to be and do the best. The greatest gift she gave many people was her generosity - generosity of knowledge, spirit, time, and opinion.

Through her work, Enda positively influenced staff, supervisors, managers, senior management, caregivers, our families and without a doubt, above all, our children.

## Lucia Norcia

In 1973, Lucia, more affectionately known as Lucy to her friends, joined CCAS as a Clothing Clerk in the Accounting Department. While all of our financial records are now digital, in the '70s the Society's financial records and ledgers were beautifully hand-written using fountain pen and ink.

Very early on, Lucy's supervisor was impressed by her reliability, productivity and ability to provide courteous and efficient service. Lucy quickly progressed by taking on more responsibilities. In 1980, Lucy was promoted to Accounts Payable Supervisor, a position she held for 31 years.

Lucy was well known to agency staff as a team player who was responsive to her clients' needs, from management to front-line staff, foster parents and children in care. She was always there to help with a smile.

Most staff knew Lucy as a die-hard Maple Leafs fan. During the course of the hockey season, there was lots of excitement and animated conversation in the Finance Department.

Lucy lived up to the Society's Mission. For 37 years, she provided exemplary service to the children and youth in our community.

## Ann Westlake

In October 1989, Ann joined the Society as the Manager of Long Term Care. Ann developed an expertise in the delivery of child protection services, and a thorough knowledge of child welfare legislation.

In 1994, Ann took on the role of Acting Director of Foster Care/Long Term Care and one year later she became the Manager of Child and Youth Services. Ann was instrumental in reviewing and implementing the Looking After Children model at CCAS. This model helps supervisors and front-line workers integrate tools and theory in their case planning to achieve better outcomes for children and youth in care.

In 2008, Ann became the Manager of Foster Care Services. She remained in this position until her retirement earlier this year.

In 2009, Ann supported the review of Foster Care, Kinship, and Adoption services. Through this review and her own orientation, Ann developed an objective assessment of the relationship between child protection staff, children in care staff and Foster Care, Kinship Care and Adoption staff.

During Ann's leadership, Crown Ward Reviewers noted improvements in the Society's Plans of Care and the timeliness of documentation.

Ann's staff viewed her as a caring and capable leader. Her personal and professional integrity inspired quality service. Her genuine caring and understanding of our youth served to inspire and motivate her staff.

Ann believes her retirement came at the right time. She has been able to dedicate her time to her elderly parents and to advocate on their behalf.



**Get involved:** find out how your participation benefits our children and youth

**Stay informed:** sign-up for our E-newsletter

**Donate on-line:** get your tax receipt instantly through our quick, secure and easy tools

[www.hopeforchildren.ca](http://www.hopeforchildren.ca)

## Our Donor Gives Back to Families at Christmas

*By Donna Harris, Communications Specialist*

**A**dopt-a-Family donor Michael Buckberrough relates all too well to some of the hardships facing families in need during the holiday season. When Michael was six years old, his mother was in a car accident, which left her with severe brain damage. She was admitted to a long-term care facility and Michael's father had to care for him and his siblings.

"My dad had to raise four kids on his own without any support from the government. He was too proud to ask for help. He should have," says Michael. "We had our water and heat turned off many times, but at least we always had some food."

Now, Michael is determined to help other families in need through Hope for Children's Adopt-a-Family program.

"I believe that charity starts at home and I see lots of need around me," he says.

For more than ten years, Adopt-a-Family has supported hundreds of families every Christmas by providing gifts, gift cards and food during the holiday season. These gifts provide families with much-needed relief during what can often be a



difficult time of year.

When donors register for the program, they are carefully matched with one or more families depending on the number of families the donor chooses to support. Donors receive a profile for each family they would like to sponsor, along with a special gift list which helps them to personalize their giving. Donors can decide how much they would like to contribute or how many items on the wish list they would like to purchase. Donors are asked to drop off their donations at one of the Adopt-a-Family locations across Toronto and volunteers and

staff ensure that the gifts are delivered to families.

Michael runs a car dealership and has also challenged his employees to spread the spirit of Christmas by Adopting-a-Family. To these families Michael is a hero.

He always drops his donations off without wrapping them.

"We don't wrap the gifts. It's not about us giving to the kids. It's about letting the moms and dads give the gifts themselves. When you leave the gifts unwrapped the parents have the joy of wrapping the gifts themselves," says Michael.

Michael and his family also support the Hope for Children Back-to-School program by providing new clothes, lunch boxes and other personal items to children.

"It's difficult when you're poor and you have to go back to school and you don't have a lunch box and you cannot afford new shoes," says Michael. "You'll never feel better about giving. If you can afford to give, you can't afford not to."

To learn more about the Adopt-a-Family program visit: [www.hopeforchildren.ca/adoptafamily](http://www.hopeforchildren.ca/adoptafamily)

## Hope for Children at the Scotiabank Toronto Waterfront Marathon

*By Krista Lamb, Communications Specialist*

On October 16th the Hope for Children team laced up their sneakers and ran or walked to raise more than \$15,000 to help support Hope for Children's many programs, including scholarships and emergency funds for families and youth in need.

Members of the team participated in both the 5K and half-marathon – running or walking along the Lakeshore and other areas of the downtown core. In addition, Hope for Children hosted a water station at Parliament and Front where 30 students from Bishop Strachan School and

Upper Canada College sported Hope for Children t-shirts as they cheered on the participants and made sure everyone stayed hydrated. It was a great opportunity to raise spirits and awareness at the same time.

A fun day was had by all and much-needed funds were raised. Thanks to everyone who came out to participate or who donated to one of our team members – we couldn't have done it without you!



HFC Volunteer, Sandrine Uwimama (left), stands with HFC Community Development Officer, Patricia Ward (right) and HFC Fundraiser Bonnie Fowler (middle) at the Motor Speedway in Innisfil, Ontario. Bonnie raised more than \$2,600 for HFC.



Connie Cam and Hilda Huynh from the Finance Department and Child Protection Worker, Patricia Williams pose after participating in the 5K walk.



*For many of us the Christmas season can be a challenging time. When our families are broken or relationships strained; when we are far from home or have no home at all, Christmas can simply be a painful reminder of what is missing. Mary, the mother of Jesus, would have understood this. She knew what it meant to be turned away from the inn, to give birth alone, without family or friends to support her. Jesus, too, was rejected by others. And yet, it is precisely among those most rejected that Christianity makes sense; for the message of Christ is a message of unconditional welcome.*



*Christmas celebrates Jesus, who showed by his life that our God embraces humanity fully. At this time Christmas cheer abounds. Can we, too, embrace the lost one, the wounded one, the hurting one? Can we be a source of gladness to those who feel most rejected? May the reign of love be born through us.*

## CCAS is Recognized as a Top Employer

CCAS has once again been named one of Canada's Top 100 Employers, as well as one of Canada's Top Family-Friendly Employers for 2012.

Canada's Top 100 Employers recognizes companies and organizations that lead their industries in attracting and retaining employees. While Canada's Top Family-Friendly Employers recognizes employers who offer the most progressive and forward-thinking programs that help employees balance their work and family life.

"These awards are a testament to the progressive Human Resources practices that help define CCAS and to the work of our staff representative groups (ACE, CUPE and MAC)," says Mary A. McConville, Executive Director. "They have all played a vital part in this achievement."

"Congratulations to everyone at CCAS – it is your commitment to professional success and development that makes these awards possible. It is a wonderful achievement to be a leading employer in our sector," says Mary.



## CCAS Clothing Drive - A Big Success



**C**ongratulations! We collected approximately 5,000 pounds of clothing for the St. Vincent de Paul Society of Toronto. This was the fifth year that we participated.

The clothing will be sorted by St. Vincent de Paul and most will be distributed to their community stores in Etobicoke, Toronto, Oshawa, and Port Credit. Clothing is offered to persons in need through a voucher system; no one is turned away for lack of funds. Revenue from the stores helps to fund St. Vincent de Paul Society programs such as women's emergency housing, housing for those with mental illness, transitional housing for people recovering from addictions and the developmentally handicapped. Some of the clothing is also offered directly to residents of these programmes.

Thank you to those of you who donated clothing. Special thanks to the Supervisors, Administrative Services, property and administrative staff who assisted with the collection.