
Volunteer Newsletter

The Children's Aid Society of Ottawa

Issue # 01 April 2012



Words of Wisdom:

Volunteers have the tenacity of mountain goats, the gentleness of lambs, the strength of oxen, the speed of impalas (but please not on the 417!), the dependability of work horses, and the eagerness of new puppies. If we're comparing them to animals, we must also note they are a breed apart. Volunteers can cram amazing amounts into an hour with little effort. They can raise funds, lower costs, spread enthusiasm, reduce workloads, ease pressure, and warm hearts. They are pros at soothing, cajoling, explaining, describing, convincing, and adapting. Volunteers often arrive just when the stress is greatest, the moment bleakest, the work hardest, the light in the tunnel the farthest away. Then, when the work is finished, try to say "Thank you" to a volunteer and he or she is apt, instead of the perfunctory "You're



Welcome", to say, "The pleasure is all mine!" From the book *Lightgivers*

On behalf of the staff and children/youth of The Children's Aid Society of Ottawa we want to say -- **Thank You** and we very much appreciate your time, energy and work.

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Child Access Program

2011 was a great year for Child Access and the now **35 volunteers** who are integral to the success of the program. Child Access volunteers are responsible for supervising visits between children in care and their families. They ensure the safety of the child and provide support before, during and after the visit. The feedback the volunteer provides is essential to the family's case planning. Our volunteers allow for children to maintain valuable ties to their family throughout what can be a very difficult process.

This past year, **3 training sessions** for new volunteers were held. Our most recent one in November trained **12 new volunteers** (the largest group yet!) who are now matched up with assignments and this allows us to increase our capacity to provide service to more families. In total, our volunteers are averaging over **185 hours of service a month!**

2011 also saw the first full year of the Group Access Program, providing opportunities for parents to practice parenting skills and techniques in a group setting, with the assistance of staff or volunteer. Group Access, that started as a pilot project twice a week, **has grown to five times a week** serving families with children ranging in age from infant to school aged/pre teen. This would not have been possible without the supervision and support provided by our volunteers. **A huge thank you to all volunteers who have helped to make the past year so successful!**



Drive Program

2011 was another busy year in the Drive Program.

27 Volunteer Drivers transported our children/youth through rain, snow, sleet and more. The volunteer not only drives the kids to and from their access visits but serves as a consistent person who is there for them.

The volunteer can also lend a listening ear prior to and after an access visit, which can be a sensitive time.

Our volunteer drivers logged over **410 drives per week**, driving a total of **270 children per week**, covering **753,733 kilometres**. All told, this means **18,236 drives** in 2011! These numbers show that our volunteer drivers play a vital role in helping to keep families connected. **An enormous thank you for all those drives and keeping our kids safe.**



Headstart Program

The Headstart/Bon Dept Nursery School was founded by volunteers in 1968 and the school continues to rely on volunteers to assist the Early Childhood Educators to offer an enriched environment to children. Volunteers are valuable members of the team and help the teachers and children in endless ways. In 2011 we had **13 volunteers** helping in our preschool programs. **We want to say a big thank you to all of our volunteers from the bottom of our hearts.**



We would like to highlight our volunteer **Bert Elder** who is celebrating **25 years of volunteering** at CASO. In 2007 Bert started in the Special Friends Program where he was matched with a 10-year-old boy and continues to this day. Bert is like extended family to this young man and his mom. Bert has been coming to the Headstart Program on Wednesday afternoon for the past 15 years, that is, when he is not traveling the world. Each year a new group of children get to know Bert and often excited children can be heard to exclaim: "Bert, Vert, Bert is here!" Bert worked in the Federal Public Service for 25 years. He has often said: "I worked for 25 years and my goal is to volunteer for 25 years." **Congratulations Bert!** You have met another goal! Here's to the next 25 years!

Holiday Gift Program

The 2011 Holiday Gift Program (HGP) was a huge success! This is mainly due to all of the hard work the team of **14 volunteers** (elves) contributed. They donated a total of **750 hours** over a period of three weeks to help our staff provide the families we work for with the best gifts and great memories for the Holiday Season. Because of them, we were able to distribute a total of **8440 gifts to children** and also **sponsor 143 families**, supplying them with everything they need for this special time of year. **Thanks again to the entire team, you made a lot of children and parents smile over the holidays.**



We would like to recognize one volunteer in particular, **Bill Leshien**. He has been volunteering with us since **1992**, and has become a vital member of the HGP team. Every morning during the program, Bill arrives before anyone else and ensures that all is in order. He is often the last one to leave, wanting to make sure that no one is left empty-handed. He understands how important it is for the children to get that gift they really want and to feel special, like all children at this time of year. He also goes above and beyond on a regular basis, whether it is by creating floor plans, making display cases, or even shopping on his own time for a child had made a special request. His dedication to the Children's Aid Society of Ottawa and to the youth we work with is unwavering and we could not ask for more from a volunteer. Thank you, Bill!



Tutor Program



Volunteer tutors are an integral component of the wrap-around services offered to support our children and youth in achieving success in life. We received project management support from October 2011 to February 2012 to revitalize the Volunteer Tutor Program and address the challenge of appropriately matching children/youth to volunteer tutors. Through this project, we understand that our volunteer tutors would benefit from collaborative engagement for case planning increased training opportunities, peer-mentoring supports, web-based tools, ongoing evaluations and annual feedback. Our **28 volunteer tutors** have tutored over **30 children/youth** with a combined **total of 6,798 hours**. **We want to say**

thank you to each of you who in your own way is making a difference in a child/youth's life.

A Few More Words

It feels like spring is in the air, changes within our Volunteer Services are happening:

- Isabelle is off for a year and she and her new addition are doing well.
- We welcome Renée back from a year off.
- We welcome Tarrah at the Drivers Desk.
- Tyrone from the Drivers Desk is off for the next month and we wish him and his family well.
- We are saying good bye to Kim Graveline and wish her well.
- We are also saying good bye and congratulations on Suzanne Desjardins on her retirement. She has been working with us for the last 38 years. She has brought her wonderful sense of commitment and dedication to the children, youth and families we serve. A special thank you goes out to her and may she enjoy and savour every moment in her well-deserved retirement!
- I, (André Fontaine), am pleased to be joining the team as a supervisor for the next year. I bring many years of experience in recruitment, program development and community partnerships, both as a Foster Care/Adoption Family Recruitment Worker, through my other Community Development positions, as well as being a foster parent for 11 years and adopted my son who was 16 years old at the time and now is a young adult.

I am looking forward to meeting all of the volunteers. My door is always open. Please come by to meet with me if you have a chance. I am delighted to have the opportunity to work with you. Volunteers play such an important supporting role for the children, youth and families that the Children's Aid Society work with. **Thank You!!!**

Literacy and numeracy are much more than “reading, writing and arithmetic”!

An Interactive Workshop for Volunteer Tutors

May 26, 2012 at 9:30 – 11:30
The Children's Aid Society of Ottawa
1602 Telesat Court, Gloucester Room

Come find out the latest techniques and information to be even more effective in making a difference in the lives of the students you work with. This interactive workshop will provide the tools and techniques to help you build literacy and numeracy skills into your weekly tutoring sessions.

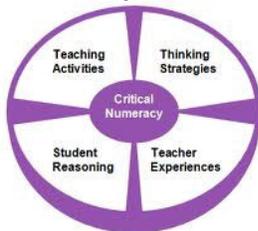


Today our understanding of literacy encompasses much more than reading and writing. Literacy includes the capacity to read, understand and critically appreciate many forms of communication including spoken language, printed text, broadcast media, and digital media.

Balanced Literacy Model



Numeracy is not limited to crunching numbers, to adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing, but encompasses the ability to use mathematical understanding, concepts and skills to solve problems and meet the demands of day-to-day living in complex social settings.



A Social and Holistic Approach to Numeracy

Join your co-tutors:

To improve the lives of children/youth,
Aspire to develop and apply literacy and numeracy, and
Have the ability to change lives.

To register please contact:

Sylvie Prud'Homme at 613-747-7800 ext. 2805

On a broader level, literacy and numeracy are essential ingredients for effective communication and participation in all aspects of adult life. They have been linked to social outcomes such as community participation, engagement in lifelong learning, and health (OECD & Statistics Canada, 2000; Roberts & Fawcett, 1998).