



Links2Care

**Annual Report
2009 — 2010**



Links2Care 2009-2010 Board of Directors



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Vice Chair	Jeannie Collins-Ardern
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Board Secretary	Bev Heim-Myers
Director	Barry Emerson
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Mission

**To enhance the quality of life of people
in our communities**

**by providing a range of programs
and services that meet their needs.**



Chair's Report

Submitted by Rick Byers, Chair



The past year has again been a year of great accomplishment for Links2Care. Notable achievements

over the past year include:

- Substantial and continued service growth;
- Expansion of services into Mississauga, a new service area for the agency;
- Relative stability in funding for youth programs;
- Continued development of the excellent relationship with the Mississauga-Halton LHIN;
- Launching of an exciting new Strategic Plan for the Agency; and
- Welcoming two new board members, Linda Gordon and Assumpta Michaels to Links2Care.

The past year also included diffi-

cult decisions, none more so than the dosing of Links2Kids' child care centre. Links2Care had undertaken the amalgamation with Moore Place with the clear goal of expanding the business and improving the availability and quality of child care in Georgetown. However, over the past year, enrollment had not been expanding as was anticipated, notwithstanding the centre's hardworking and dedicated staff as well as investments in the facility. Many options for continued operation were considered, including relocation to a new facility. But after incurring a significant loss for the year and with the prospects of the same outcome for the upcoming year, the decision was taken to close. The Board thanks the staff and families for their understanding and will continue to actively consider options for revitalizing this service in the future.

I would like to acknowledge and thank Sandra Melhuish for her outstanding leadership of Links2Care over the past twelve months. The positive accomplishments of the

agency are due in no small measure to her dedication and stewardship as Executive Director. I would also like to thank the over 250 volunteers who enable Links2Care to have such a broad and effective reach throughout Halton. The outstanding office staff, Program Directors and front line staff have again provided excellent management of the many programs delivered by Links2Care, and continue to give our funders confidence to expand the scope and breadth of programs delivered. Thank you all for your outstanding work. Finally, to my fellow directors on the Board, thank you for your time, skill, and professionalism. Your dedication has put Links2Care at the forefront of governance standards for service agencies in Ontario.

It has been my great pleasure to serve as Board Chair of Links2Care for the past two years and I thank my board colleagues and senior management for the privilege of your support during my tenure.

Executive Director's Report

Submitted by Sandra Melhuish

Links2Care has had an amazing year. The number of clients served by the dedicated staff and volunteers continues to rise and shows no signs of slowing down.

Over the past year we increased our staff to meet program expansion in Mississauga. The successful year is a result of the remarkable work done by all our staff and volunteers under the direction of the senior management team; Allison Price, Director of Senior Services, Lisa Hoekstra, Director of Children & Youth Services, Kathy

Dorbeck, Director of Human Resources & Corporate Services, Julie Vail, Director of Employment Services and Community Engagement. We also welcomed Mark Spence to the senior management team as Director of Finance.

The success must also be attributed to our Board Members who spent countless hours on Links2Care activities. The involvement of these most important volunteers helped to move Links2Care forward. Thank you to all members for your insight and experience in helping to keep

Links2Care on a path of continued growth.

Increases in service delivery impacts all aspects of our agency including management, planning, coordination, front line provision, finance, policies, etc. Through the successful application to the Mississauga Halton LHIN Aging At Home funding, Links2Care, in collaboration with Storefront Humber, have been able to expand home help and home maintenance and repairs services to the Mississauga area. This collaboration with a partner agency

Executive Director's Report cont'd

came as a result of our identification of a gap in services in Mississauga. I wish to acknowledge the Mississauga Halton LHIN for providing funding to assist in filling this gap.

Links2Care continued to struggle to obtain sustainable funding for our youth programs. I would like to acknowledge the Region of Halton for providing Region of Halton Community Investment Funds to enable Off the Wall and Open Door Youth Centres to continue operations. The Community Investment Funding together with funding from the Town of Halton Hills and the United Way of Halton Hills has ensured the youth centres may continue to provide youth a safe environment for recreational activities and support for many issues that youth are presented with on a daily basis. The funding has allowed Links2Care to continue to operate the centres with limited hours in both Georgetown and Acton. We will continue to look for additional funding to expand our hours of service at both locations to offer more evening and possible weekend hours to accommodate the increasing number of youth visits.

In September, 2009 the amalgamation of Links2Care and Moore Place Day Care was completed. The child care centre operated as Links2Kids Early Learning Centre offering child care and before and after school programming. Links2Care has been actively searching for a new location for the Links2Kids Early Learning Centre and the Georgetown Ontario Early Years Centre over the past two years. It has not been an easy task due to limited new commercial and retail development. Enrollment at the child care centre continued to be low and Links2Care's board of directors and senior management made the difficult decision to close the child care centre on June 30th. All the children were placed in other child care centres. Links2Care will continue to provide before and after school programming. All the dedicated staff of the child care centre has secured employment with Links2Care or other service providers. I would like to thank the staff and families for their

understanding of this very difficult decision. We will continue with our ongoing search for a new location for the Georgetown Ontario Early Years Centre which must be relocated by September, 2011.

The contract with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities for the Acton Employment Resource Centre expired on March 31, 2010. The MTCU has extended our contract to March 31, 2011. Due to restructuring of employment centres, the MTCU is not prepared to offer contracts longer than one year at this time. The MTCU however has indicated that the Acton Employment Centre is vital to that community and Links2Care is achieving and surpasses all service targets. We are hopeful that the restructuring will include a long-term contract for the Acton Employment Resource Centre.

Links2Care has begun the process of accreditation of senior's services as required by the Mississauga Halton LHIN. Accreditation is an accountability and quality improvement process that includes a system of organizational and program standards, the operationalizing of standards to support an organization to deliver and continuously improve safety, effectiveness and efficiency of services. The benefits to persons served by an accredited organization include person centred planning, appropriate protections in place such as health and safety programs, ethics code, client rights, client outcome evaluation and everyone can expect the same good quality of service wherever they are served. CARF Canada has been engaged to assist us. It is our hope to achieve a three year accreditation of senior's services by 2012.

Links2Care has received corporate sponsorship from Amgen Canada Inc. Through Amgen Canada Inc.'s new community philanthropy initiative, *Holding Hands*, Amgen Canada Inc. is committed to supporting programs that help bring local families in need closer to wellness as they navigate a complex healthcare system through information, education and support. Amgen has donated \$20,000 to Links2Care's Community Support programs since December, 2009. Amgen has also stated that their holiday giving will be

directed to Links2Care's Holiday Hamper Program as well as volunteer support of their employees to assist with assembling the hampers. A special thank you to Mayor Rick Bonnette for providing the connection and his support of Links2Care to Amgen.

Links2Care was in the final year of our Board approved three year Strategic Plan. The Board and senior management have met with our consultant and we are now in the process of developing the Strategic Plan for the next three years which will be available in the fall. Thank you to all our stakeholders, partners and staff for your participation. We look forward to finalizing and implementing our new plan in the coming years.

I look forward to the coming year as we continue to serve our clients with limited resources and growing service demands. We will continue to focus and allocate our resources in key areas to best serve the needs of the community.

"As the Coordinator of the Our Kids Network – Acton Community Hub for the past three years, I have had nothing but support, advice and an interest in working together from all the Links2Care staff. The staff are all very passionate about what they do, and it shows in how they offer support to their community through their various programs. It's all about meeting needs. I feel very comfortable sending people to Links2Care. I know that the staff will be able to help. Acton is in good hands. My experience is that Links2Care is a ready and willing partner. "

Alison Hilborn,

Our Kids Network

Volunteer Report

Submitted by Patty Colautti

What a year it has been! Link- s2Care has been truly blessed with the most wonderful volunteers who continue to amaze us with the dedication and effort they show to us and our clients. Many have stepped up and assisted in programs on short notice with a smile on their face, happy to help.

The theme for this year's Volunteer Appreciation event was an English Garden Tea, as all volunteers deserve the 'Royal Treatment'. Some of our volunteers came with a decorated hat for the occasion, and we even had the 'Queen' herself complete with tiara. Many of our wonderful staff came out to assist in making sure that the event ran smoothly and to give back to volunteers who really deserve a great big Thank You! What would we do without them?

We recognized the special volunteers who have reached 5, 10, 15, and 25 year marks in volunteering at Links2Care. One of our volunteers attained the distinction of being a 25 year volunteer. Nancy Furness has helped with the Meals on Wheels program all these years. Her dedication is inspiring.

Our volunteers, who number 225 and growing, do many things to help us deliver great programs to the communities we serve. We have added new programs with their help, such as the Yoga Class in Supportive Housing, a Gardener and Greeters for the Early Years Centre in Georgetown and the Backpack Program. In this program, high school students volunteer with adult mentors by fundraising to help low income families who

"Volunteers give from the heart."

struggle to afford new backpacks and school supplies for their elementary school children. Some of the events the students are planning include selling food at school events, a Community BBQ and Community Raffle as well as getting corporate donations. Keep a look-out for these students at work in our community.

We have many other great volunteers active in the Region of Halton and we hold many events throughout the year to recognize the contribution that the different Links2Care volunteer groups do for us. Every volunteer deserves a heartfelt thank you each time we see them, and we strive to do this.

We hold training and information session

for our volunteers on a wide range of topics to assist them in providing the best service for our programs. We had a session on Aphasia in January which was both educational and interactive. In May there was an interactive session on Dementia where volunteers tried to complete tasks as if they had dementia. This is through the assistance of the Alzheimer's Association. Information sessions in the works for the fall and winter include First Aid and Hoarding.

These contributions are not measured in monetary numbers but are considered priceless by those who benefit by their involvement. Our volunteers rise to the many challenges presented through volunteering and continue to remain the most giving, understanding wonderful people you would ever want to meet. They are one of our strongest links to the communities we serve.

Volunteers are an important part of who we are as an agency, and by working with the many talents made available to us by these special people, our programs benefit immensely.

Human Resources & Corporate Services Report

Submitted by Kathy Dorbeck

The Links2Care Administration team has completed another productive and interesting year. I feel very fortunate to have such resourceful and dedicated staff supporting the work of the agency. They have continued to ensure we operate smoothly as an agency, to document the work we do in our programs, to find savings and efficiencies, to answer questions and

solve problems, to remain caring and concerned for our clients, to come up with creative ideas and much, much more. Thanks to all for your efforts over the past year.

2009/2010 saw the expansion of seniors' services into Mississauga, keeping us busy getting a new office up and running, and also hiring and training new employees to operate the programs. This required a highly coordinated effort

and I'd like to express appreciation to all who contributed their time and skills to turn a proposal into reality in a short period of time.

The past year also saw the formal amalgamation of Moore Place Day Care with Links2Care. We welcomed the former Moore Place staff on board with Links2Care and spent some time getting to know the staff and orienting


H.R. & Corp. Serv. cont'd

them to their new organization. The eventual closure of the day care was, as others have expressed, a very difficult decision, and one that saddened everyone.

On a happier note, the Links2Kids Before and After School programs are continuing to meet the needs of children and parents in our community.

One of the accomplishments over the last year was the development and approval of a new pay equity plan for the agency. Links2Care has contin-

2009/2010 saw the expansion of senior's services into Mississauga



ued to meet it's pay equity obligations to staff, but a new plan was required due to the amalgamations and changes of the past few years. We are pleased that the new plan is now

in place.

Another project was the updating of our human resources policies and procedures. With the combination of amalgamations and an increase in new staff it was particularly important that we have current and reliable information available to our employees for their reference.

Over the next year, we look forward to supporting the agency in it's mission of meeting the needs of the community.

Submitted by Mark Spence

Finance Report

Links2Care has a strong balance sheet. The majority of agency net assets are held in cash. Working capital is \$350,881 (2009 \$403,928) and the quick ratio (cash ÷ current liabilities) is 1.28 (2009 1.18). The net assets of the organization represent the excess of accumulated revenues and contributions over expenses at the balance sheet date. In total these funds provide liquidity and also a reserve from which to draw when unforeseen expenses arise. For greater transpar-

ency, the organization has subdivided net assets into three funds: the Lottery Fund, the Development Fund, and the General Operating Fund. The Lottery Fund consists of profits from Nevada lottery ticket sales and is to be used to support new or existing community programs. The Development Fund is to be used to provide for the establishment of new programs, the acquisition of capital assets, or such other purposes as the Board decides are in the best interests of the organization. The

General Operating Fund holds the remainder of net assets.

Revenue for the year totaled \$4,455,910 which was an increase over 2009 of \$671,346. The principal reasons for the increase are the increased utilization of the PSW Training Fund and the expansion of Home Help and Home Maintenance & Repair into Mississauga. Revenue comparisons are illustrated in the Revenue Growth chart below.



Revenue Growth Chart: 2009 and 2010 data are from our audited financial statements. The 2011 budget data is from the approved operating budget for 2010-2011. The further growth in revenue in 2011 arises due to increased utilization of the PSW Training Fund and more growth in Home Help and Home Maintenance & Repair in Mississauga together with a new Assisted Bathing program in Mississauga.

Finance Report cont'd

In September 2009, Links2Care completed an amalgamation with Moore Place Day Care. Moore Place consisted of a full-time child care centre and two school-age programs at neighbourhood schools. These three programs were re-branded as Links2Kids. This amalgamation has been accounted for in our audited financial statements by retroactively restating revenues and expenses as if the two organizations had always been one. In 2010, Links2Kids operated at a loss due to low enrolment and despite numerous efforts by management these losses persisted. At the end of June 2010 the full-time child care centre was

closed. Links2Care will continue the two school-age programs. For the year ended March 31, 2010, Links2Kids suffered a combined loss of \$85,913. An equal amount of \$85,913 has been drawn from the Development Reserve to offset an otherwise sizable operating deficit. At the time of the amalgamation, Links2Care recognized that there could be an operating loss and there was optimism that this loss could be eliminated by intensive re-marketing. The draw-down from the Development Fund is entirely within the purpose of that fund.

The outlook for Links2Care is good for a number of reasons. First, it can be seen in the forgoing discussion that the agency is on a solid financial footing. Second, the agency has sufficient size

that economies of scale are established in the areas of senior management, human resources, and finance & accounting. Thirdly, the agency has the support of the community at large evidenced in so many ways but in particular by the size of our volunteer roster. Fourthly, the agency is well positioned to participate in some of the important changes that the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care is advancing in regards to reducing wait times in emergency rooms, improving access to primary health care, and improving management of chronic diseases. And finally, the agency has just successfully completed its 2007-2010 Strategic Plan and will shortly release the new 2010-2013 Strategic Plan.

Seniors' Services Report

Submitted by Allison Price

It has been a gratifying year for the seniors programs. A new office opened in Mississauga last summer and in a very short time started the beginning of a solid client base that continues to grow. Over 3000 individuals across Halton and Mississauga received help through one of the seniors programs last year.

Through the amazing and dedicated staff who coordinate the various seniors programs and the volunteers who provide their time we continue to be the go-to agency for help.

There are thousands of stories that we are privileged to be part of every day and below are some of these stories as communicated by staff.

Home Help South Halton

With 22 extremely hard working Home helpers, our 332 Active Home Help clients are receiving the best service in town! We are busy each week visiting new potential clients and have seen an increase in Respite Clients over the past couple of months. "My Home Helper has replaced my eyes", was one of

the statements made by our client who was diagnosed with macular degeneration.

Home Help Milton & Halton Hills

Many Home Help clients have had the same Home Support workers for many years and have developed a warm relationship with them. Links2Care has played a huge role in keeping these individuals safe in their own homes and apartments. For me, relationships with the shorter-term clients are often the most rewarding. Recently several clients have needed a lot of extra help in the few weeks before moving to Long Term Care, and others received more time for palliative care at the end of their lives. Both the clients and the families are so appreciative at these stressful times and front-line staff has told me how good it felt to be there for comfort and support.

Mississauga Home Help

It has been a successful first year! Both clients and community support agencies are excited to finally have a service like this in Mississauga. There was definitely a gap in service for the seniors and disabled adults and Links2Care now fills

that gap. A Community Care Access Centre (CCAC) case manager said: "It is a great service. I have so much confidence with Links2Care. I recommend Links2Care to all my clients as I get very positive feedback." Our Home Help and Supervised Bathing service was able to provide care for over 270 clients in Mississauga in less than a year.

We were also quite touched by our very first client's effort in setting up a presentation for us in her church for her fellow seniors about our services. She found Links2Care is a great help for seniors to remain in their own home. At the end of our presentation, they surprised us by giving a donation to Links2Care and a pot of flowers in order to show their appreciation.

Mississauga Home Maintenance and Repair

The Mississauga office opened a year ago with much anticipation from the community. The Home Maintenance and Repair program was a much needed service in this area, which has provided assistance to enhance the

Seniors' Services cont'd

quality of life for our 258 clients to date. A lot of the clients are women living on their own, and this service has taken the worry out of finding a reliable and trustworthy person to help maintain their homes. My clients have mentioned that without this type of program it would be difficult for them to remain in their homes. The providers who have been with this program since inception find meeting the seniors' needs within the community to be very rewarding.

Client Intervention and Assistance

Have you heard it said that it takes a village to raise a child? Well, I maintain that it takes a village to support our clients! What stands out for me from the past year is the complexity of cases that CIA deals with. At-risk clients have many adversities, including physical and emotional challenges which are often exacerbated by financial stressors, social isolation, and alienation from family. Many clients become completely overwhelmed by their circumstances and their quality of life is certainly compromised. Just since May, it has been particularly rewarding to be part of the interagency

collaboration efforts that have facilitated the relocation of 3 such senior clients from desperate living conditions into supportive housing.

Friendly Visiting - South Halton

There is a special kind of bond that forms between volunteers who care, and clients who need some love. One of the best matches I've watched unfold with the Friendly Visiting program was a volunteer I'll call Margaret, and a client I'll call Vera. Margaret approached the FV program with a spark last April. Margaret, a Friendly Visiting volunteer, is bright, funny, full of energy and has a wonderful gift with seniors. Vera as a client was very different. Alone in Ontario, Vera was experiencing extreme depression, and isolation. She longed for company, and a companion who would help her see new life once again. Margaret was the answer to her prayers and now visits with her 2-3 times weekly. Vera has thrived with this support with a new meaning on life. All of our volunteers with the Friendly Visiting program give their time selflessly, and it's rewarding to experience the joy of clients and the satisfaction of volunteers when the two are paired together for friendship and support.

Friendly Visiting North Halton

The Volunteers continually make me proud to be Coordinator of the Friendly Visiting program. There are many matches that have been happening for years and the volunteers report that the client is almost like family. Many of the more recent matches are developing into successful relationships.

Cheryl who was matched with a young gentleman Joel, would tell me how much Joel made her laugh. She looked forward to Tuesdays, knowing that her friendly visitor was coming to break up her long, lonely day. One of her favorite pastimes was taking her dogs for a walk, which she could no longer do by herself due to her failing health. Joel provided Cheryl with the sense of security that together they could walk the dogs. This relatively simple task allowed Cheryl to get reacquainted with her neighborhood and the exercise increased her appetite which helped her to tolerate her medications and helped her to sleep better. Cheryl moved to Alliston in June and was sad to say goodbye to Joel. Joel is taking the summer off and thankfully wants to enrich the life of another senior starting in the fall.

We are a group of 7 seniors assisted by a Links2Care staff person. We attend monthly meetings and work in liaison and advisory to Links2Care.

Our group's strength is enhanced by connections to partner groups, allowing us to share in assessing senior experiences and needs. Sometimes we are involved in implementing a helpful plan to meet a need, or providing an opportunity for discussion and education for seniors, care givers and partners in senior care, to live in a healthy and safe community. The SWPEAC membership is made up of a diverse group who also belong to other committees including S.A.L.T. (Seniors and Law Enforcement Together), N.H.I.P. (North Halton Injury Prevention), another member has expertise in driver training (senior issues) Our members belong to Acton Senior Centre and five local churches.

An example of how well a community can interact and work together for senior's welfare was a very successful Walkability Workshop and study of walking areas in our town. The accessibility committee also took part and senior and disabled walked together. This was an initiative of SWPEAC and we linked with Regional Health who had already been involved with a Walkathon and in promoting seniors to be active and mobile. We found interest and leadership in meeting with a member of their Health Promotion department. NHIP gave us full support to do the Walkability Workshop along with Halton Regional Police, Halton Transportation, Acton and Georgetown senior centre's and Links2Care. Many seniors participated in a planned walkabout, excellent data was collected and processed, and this will be used to improve active living for seniors and people with disabilities in our community.

It becomes very clear to our committee and any projects we become involved in how Links2Care staffers, management and volunteers show strong leadership and devotion to improve the lives of our seniors and disabled. Their work makes a difference.

Shirley Broostad, SWPEAC Chair

Seniors' Services cont'd

Home Maintenance and Repair North Halton

About a month ago I had a phone call from a lady whose husband was having a hard time recovering from a bout of pneumonia and at 79 years old would have to give up cutting his grass. This lady expressed to me that it felt like they were old because they couldn't do the chores around the house like they used to. They spent a lot of time in their backyard and were hoping I would have a Home Maintenance and Repair provider who would be able to cut the lawn to their standard. I referred them to the provider I know who cares for his own lawn meticulously.

2 weeks ago I received a phone call from the same lady. Her husband had ended up in hospital and on one occasion when she was visiting him, she fell in the hospital parking lot and broke her hip. She was admitted to the hospital and sadly, not long after her hip surgery, her husband passed away. She is back at her house, grieving the loss of her husband and trying to sort out how she is going to manage around the house. The provider is helping her with tasks that her husband always did such as filling the water softener, emptying the dehumidifier, staking plants, and doing the lawn. She is very grateful for the assistance and while she does have a caregiver staying with her to do her personal care and housecleaning until her mobility returns she feels most satisfied that Links2Care offers the Home Maintenance and Repair service enabling her to stay in the home she shared with her husband for 52 years.

Home Maintenance and Repair South Halton:

"Friend's to the Rescue"

In January 2010 I received a call from one of my Home Maintenance and Repair provider's best friends. He told me "Mike" had been in a horrific ski accident was not expected to live. His

Letter from Lakeview Villa's
visiting doctor

"I would like to thank you and the staff at 17 Elizabeth Drive for their great kindness and care of (client's name) and providing a sort of homeless soul with a home and comfort during her time at Elizabeth Drive, during the final days of her sad illness.

Despite her suffering her quality of life that you all gave her was far greater than she would have received in a hospital setting. I would like to add that over the past years I have been visiting Elizabeth Drive I have been greatly impressed with the care and dedication of all of you towards the people there, a wonderful blessing for them."

friends offered to take over his snow removal duties for him while he recovered. It took several months and many scary hours, but Mike has made a full recovery and is back working harder than ever. The clients never went without service and Mike is back!

Supportive Housing Acton

"I couldn't live on my own if it wasn't for your program. It keeps me safe and allows me to remain independent, even with my disability. I simply love living here" . Supportive Housing Client.

It's comments like this, which I hear frequently, that touches me and inspires me to be the very best I can for our clients. I find it very touching that one of the tenants at 17 Elizabeth Drive, although she does not attend our congregate meals, takes the time to set the tables and makes them look as pretty as can be, to be enjoyed by her friends and neighbors. There is no greater feeling than to be needed and lending a much appreciated helping hand.

Congregate Dining Halton Hills

With the help of our volunteers, we have a great Congregate Dining Program at four main locations, with a new one starting in the fall. There will be four in Georgetown and one in Acton. Clients really enjoy the social interaction and get quite a kick out of the many jokes and activities we plan. Sharing the many stories that come out of talking about current events and remembering 'how things used to be' for some of our clients makes running this program very entertaining and worthwhile. We are going to be trying some new menus with some different suppliers and look forward to the feedback from the participants as they are very good at communicating to us their likes and dislikes. They certainly keep us on our toes! We always look forward to meeting new clients, and with a new location coming soon it should be a very good year.

Meals on Wheels Halton Hills

Our Meals on Wheels program continues to provide support to seniors in the community of Halton Hills. We currently provide approximately 85 clients on a monthly basis with hot or frozen meals.

After 23 years, the care and dedication of our volunteers never ceases to amaze me. We have a few clients who need a bit of extra TLC and the volunteers certainly step up to the plate. One client in particular would never be able to live on her own without Meals on Wheels and the support it provides. Sometimes the volunteer is the only person the client will see in a day, so the personal contact is extremely important. I also look forward to the chats with the volunteers after their delivery because there is always a story to tell!

Times are challenging, and we are now having to compete with the private sector, but knowing that our service provides a senior with help to live independently and also brightens their day makes the challenge worthwhile!

Children and Youth Services Report

Submitted by Lisa Hoekstra

Children's Programs

The Ontario Early Years Centre North Halton is best known as a place for children from birth to age 6, accompanied by their parents and caregivers, to take part in our programs and activities together. Our Georgetown and Acton Satellites have enabled parents and caregivers to receive information about services available to them in our community, learn about their children's development and get answers to their questions. Overall, our OEYCs have focused on helping families give their young children the best start in life.

The Ontario Early Years Centres continued to offer the Adult and Child Time Together drop-in programs at both the Georgetown and Acton satellites. The Adult and Tiny Tot drop-in program was offered on Monday mornings. We were also able to offer this program at our Acton Satellite. The program focused solely on serving our younger population, children 0-2½ years of age. The Muffins to Magnets and Writing to Rulers program has continued to be offered as a drop-in program with planned activities such as cooking and hands on science. These programs have been successful in providing an opportunity for parents to interact with their children while having the opportunity to network with other participants.

Our Mother Goose program was one of the most popular Early Years Programs in both Georgetown and Acton. The focus of the Mother Goose Program is to offer parents the opportunity to strengthen the bond between themselves and their child. The research behind the Mother Goose program shows that shared words, actions, images and feelings from rhymes and stories enhance the relationship between parents and their children. Networking Together was a ten week program that offered parents and caregiv-

ers a variety of workshop topics that included Raising Resilient Children, Kids and Stress; and Children's Health and the Environment.

Back by popular demand was the Caregiver's Connect program. This program in Georgetown continued to be offered over the lunch hour on a monthly basis. Our Early Years staff supported caregivers by providing lunch to the caregivers and their children along with their own play time. Due to the success of this program in Georgetown we were able to offer it last fall to Acton caregivers. Our Acton Caregivers Connect was offered in a breakfast format and provided the caregivers and children in the Acton community with breakfast and exclusive play time at the Acton Band Hall. The Hour Time Lunch and Learn continued to be offered in Acton and gave parents and caregivers the opportunity to enjoy their lunch while attending workshops.

In partnership with Our Kid's Network, Stay and Play was offered at the Acton Hub located in McKenzie-Smith Bennett School. Stay and Play gave families in the Acton community the opportunity to drop-in and play while accessing information from our community partners.

Our Discover French program was offered at the Georgetown Satellite. The program ran Monday afternoons from 4:30 p.m.-6:30 p.m. with our French facilitator implementing creative activities, stories and songs.

During June, staff at the Ontario Early Years Centres once again planned an Annual Picnic in the Park. Our Family Resource Program offered four Summer Fun Mini Camp sessions to preschool children. We had a total of 56 children participate in this fun-filled program. These camps were a big success with camp-goers and offered children between the ages of 3 and 6

The primary goal of Halton's Early Literacy Specialist is to strengthen, support and promote effective literacy, numeracy and language development for children from birth to 6 years of age and for their parents or caregivers. The ELS partners with the Ontario Early Years Centres to offer concrete demonstrations of effective strategies for nurturing literacy and numeracy development and to lead workshops for ECE's, parents/caregivers on strategies that work in developing a love of books, reading and numbers. The ELS also works with the OEYC's to offer literacy and numeracy programs according to community need, age, skill-level and the special needs of the children. The "Esso Family Math" and the "You Make the Difference" are examples of such programs.

Involvement and enrolment in workshops and programs offered or facilitated by the ELS remains high. Feedback from participants is also positive. As the ELS for Halton I feel confident that the information provided to teachers and parents is making a significant impact. They are more aware that the first three years of life set the base for competence and coping skills for the later stages of life, that parents are their child's first and most important teacher and that rich experiences and interactions build a healthy environment in which all learning, including literacy occurs.

Sharon, Literacy Specialist

Children & Youth cont'd

years of age a planned program that consisted of art, music, stories, science, cooking activities our ever popular buffet lunch.

Our Ontario Early Years staff enjoyed meeting and interacting with families at our Playtime in the Park program. Staff had the opportunity to meet with families and bring Early Years programming to a variety of predetermined parks throughout Georgetown and Acton during the months of July and August. Our Family Resource Library which consists of the Resource Library and Toy Lending Library supported families with a variety of resources for loan in the Georgetown and Acton Satellite locations. This year the Libraries had 135 members.

The Ontario Early Years Centres continue to meet the needs of the community through the variety of programs and services offered to families in both the Georgetown and Acton communities. During the 2009/2010 year we served approximately 2200 individuals, with approximately 24,000 visits between both our Georgetown and Acton sites. Over the next year it will continue to be our goal to offer exceptional programs and services to the families in the Halton Hills community.

Links2Kids Early Learning and Child Care Centre

If I had to sum up this year in relation to Links2Kids Early Learning and Child Care Centre I would use two words to describe it. They are 'successes' and 'misfortunes'. We were successful in completing the amalgamation of Moore Place Daycare with Links2Care in September of 2009. We were also successful in being able to continue to provide quality care for the families and children that were enrolled.

Links2Care was also successful in being approved by the Alcoa Foundation for a grant in the sum of \$15,000.00. This grant was to provide new furniture, toys and equipment to both Link-

s2Kids and the Ontario Early Years Centre. I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the Alcoa Foundation for their very generous grant donation.

As the year progressed our enrollment did not increase as we'd hoped it would, and we were not fortunate in finding a new site to re-locate our toddler and preschool program to. It was in the late spring that Links2Care's board of directors and senior management made the difficult decision to close the main child care centre site. However, as we move forward into a new school year we are fortunate to be able to continue to offer the Before and After school Programs that are currently operating out of Park Public School and Joseph Gibbons Public School. We were successful in retaining some of our Early Childhood Educators and Assistants to work within our school-age programs. The Children's Program is pleased to continue to have the School-Age program under its service umbrella and is looking forward to a successful year at the school-age sites.

Youth Program

Links2Care operates two youth centres in the Halton Hills community. Open Door Youth Centre is located in Georgetown beside Georgetown District High School and Off The Wall Youth Centre is located on the main street of Acton. Open Door Youth Centre services youth between 12-19 years of age.

The highlight of our Youth Program last year was receiving notification of sustainable funding for our centres from a variety of funders. In July of 2009 Links2Care received notification from the Region of Halton Community Investment Fund that our grant proposal had been approved. The Community Investment Fund would be funding our youth programs in the amount of \$60,000 for 2009 and \$75,000 for 2010. Links2Care was and remains grateful to the Region of Halton for their funding which has allowed us to keep the doors open at Off

the Wall and Open Door Youth Centres. We were also pleased to receive word from the United Way of Halton Hills confirming that we had been approved to receive \$36,500 in funding for our youth centres. We are once again thankful to the United Way in Halton Hills for supporting youth in our

I try to drop in to the Acton Youth Centre at least a couple times a week, I make myself available if anyone has questions, need advice or need assistance, and sometimes I'll play some pool or ping pong with the kids. I have given my phone number to the staff if they require any assistance with questions or problems. I have had several phone calls with questions and concerns, and was able to deal with the problem quickly.

The staff you have on hand are excellent. They are always looking out for the needs of the youth, they have rules and enforce them. When youth attend the centre they know they have certain requirements and that the area is for them and they respect that area, as well as the staff that work there.

I have seen the youth come in complaining of problems with dating, concerns about drugs, and various other issues. I've seen first hand (your staff) working things out with them, assisting them in job searches, and sitting down with them one to one to work on a proper and all inclusive resume. On top of all they do there they still find time to organize fundraising initiatives and road trips. The most recent being to Canada's Wonderland.

*Constable Moreen Smith #8393
Community Support
Acton Village Constable*

Children & Youth cont'd

community. The Town of Halton Hills also continued to be a valuable partner, providing our youth centres with \$12,000. in funding. Without the support from our funders, Links2Care would not be able to offer the scope of programs and services that we do to youth in Georgetown and Acton.

Open Door and Off the Wall Youth Centres continued to provide youth the opportunity to engage in free educational and recreational activities in a safe, supervised environment. Our youth team adopted a flexible youth programming schedule this year which allowed youth attending the centres to provide input on the days/evening activities. Youth individually or collectively as a group decided to play pool, video games, foosball, host a movie night or participate in cooking a meal together. During these youth programs our youth workers continuously

answered questions and supported youth in decision making around current youth issues that they were dealing with. This new approach to our programming was based around the feedback from our youth surveys and has significantly increased our participant numbers at both Off the Wall and Open Door Youth Centres.

In January 2009 we implemented a healthy snack program at Open Door Youth Centre. This program continues to be extremely popular with many youth whose nutritional needs are not being met on a daily basis. We were very fortunate to once again receive funding for the 2009/2010 school year in the amount of \$1,500. In addition to this amount a third party fundraiser raised \$1,000 for the program which enabled us to expand the program to Off the Wall Youth Centre in Acton. Now youth in Acton can attend the centre after school and have access to a healthy snack during program hours. This program is now available to all

youth two days a week at both centres.

Links2Care is pleased to report that our fundraising efforts raised a total of \$6,800 in funds for our youth programs. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Alberto Gregori and Halton Homes for hosting a golf tournament with the proceeds going towards our youth programs. This event raised approximately \$3,500. Our own Youth Golf Tournament was hosted in August, raising \$3,254 for both Open Door and Off the Wall Youth Centres.

Last year Open Door and Off the Wall Youth Centres served 861 individual youth with a total of 20,059 visits. Links2Care Youth Programs continued to support youth in the communities of Halton Hills.

Employment Resource Centre Report

Submitted by Julie Vail

The Link2Care employment program assists individuals seeking employment at the Employment Resource Centre (ERC) in Acton. The ERC offers free resources to job seekers including; use of computer workstations; access to a phone, photocopier and fax machine for job search; employment and job search media including, books, magazines, newspapers and brochures; as well as up to date local job postings and links to popular job bank sites.

Knowledgeable ERC staff remain current on the latest labour market information and employer recruitment trends and continuously network with local employers to help clients access the hidden job market. The Centre

hosts regular information sessions and workshops for Job Search, Networking, Resume and Cover Letter Writing and Interview Preparation as well as themed sessions on recruitment and local labour market trends.

This past year the Employment Resource Centre has continued to be consistently busy, surpassing all targeted statistics for client support and workshop participation. As in other communities across Ontario, many individuals in North Halton found themselves out of work for the first time and for a long time due to the instability in the global, national and local economies. With thousands of individuals out of work, labour markets were saturated with job seekers and competition

for jobs was strong. As a result of increased competition, a client's average time spent on job search expanded from several days or weeks to several months. In the 2009/2010 fiscal year, the Centre received more than 3,500 client visits, of which 3,099 were repeat client visits.

ERC staff continued to be challenged to develop and coach creative and effective job search and self marketing strategies to help clients stand out above the competition and "land interviews". By encouraging a client to try a different job search strategy or to make subtle changes to the wording or layout of a cover letter or resume, it often made all the difference in that client obtaining an interview call and

ERC Report cont'd

getting a job. ERC staff also provided motivational coaching, encouraging clients to keep positively focused during difficult times.

Besides the resources and support offered within the Centre, ERC staff provided information and referrals to other employment and community services in Halton. Last year's successful Employment Ontario marketing campaign spiked referrals to the government funded Second Career retraining program. Referrals to educational institutes for high school credit completion and skills/education upgrading were also up. Noticeably increased were the referrals to the Links2Care Community Support program and other social services as many job seekers required first time assistance with food, Christmas needs, utility payments, housing, and other subsidized supports.

What makes the Links2Care Employment Resource Centre unique from other Employment Ontario service providers is its small town approach to customer service. ERC staff have a keen ability to develop a personal rapport with each client and spend the time "getting to know" them. Having such a personalized, caring and compassionate approach to service has enabled staff to better understand client needs and thus provide the support, advice and solutions to meet those needs.

I continue to be proud of the Employment Resource Centre team who regularly go that extra mile for clients who require more than job search support. Their caring and compassionate approach to customer service, encompassing the core values of Links2Care, has positively enhanced the delivery of our employment program. That, combined with the ability to provide a variety of wrap-around services to clients, distinguishes the Links2Care employment program from all other employment programs in the Region.

With that in mind, I'd like to share a sample of comments from our clients this past year:

- "I was feeling lost when I came in (staff) made me feel very comfortable and at ease"
- "I was surprised to receive personal friendly help that made me feel good about myself"
- "I'm overwhelmed by the staff's sincerity in helping all who walk through these doors"
- "I find when I am at the centre job searching I feel more positive and the support is awesome"

As the Employment Ontario network continues to change to better serve clients and improve access to services, Links2Care will be there to meet the many needs of job seekers!

Community Support Program Report

Submitted by Cathy Gerrow

The Community Support Program provides general support, assistance and advocacy services to people in Halton Hills. The majority of clients are lower income individuals and families and our objective is to provide them with the assistance and support that they require in order to access services independently. Some clients need support to access services independently due to mental health, substance use and literacy issues. Most of the requests for services are related to financial and housing issues.

One full time Community Support Coordinator oversees this program and provides support services to clients in

Georgetown and Acton. Over the past year, general support and assistance has been provided to 145 clients in our community for a total of 189.25 hours. In addition, 63 unique seniors and adults with disabilities, for a total of 432 contacts, were assisted in Acton and Georgetown, with those statistics counted in the Client Intervention and Assistance (CIA) Program.

Each year we are fortunate to be able to provide free income tax services to lower income individuals and families through our Volunteer Income Tax service. The volunteers receive training from the Canada Revenue Agency, and generously donate their time to

complete tax returns. Most of the clients who receive this service would not be able to afford to have their tax returns completed so this program meets a real need in the community. A total of 224 income tax returns were completed by 4 volunteers.

Office space is available to community agencies to provide services locally. This is especially important in Halton Hills due to the lack of public transportation. Agencies that use space in our Links2Care offices, include ADAPT (Alcohol, Drug Abuse Prevention and Treatment), Job Connect and Probation and Parole.

Community Support cont'd

Our Needs Coordination Program matches those who have household items to donate, with those in need of items. We also have a cupboard in the Acton office with items that people can help themselves to including toiletries, magazines, dishes and food. Donated grocery store gift cards are also given to clients through this program. Last year 91 matches were made in the Needs Coordination Program.

During the 2009 holiday season, 172 families, including 354 children, received hampers of new clothing and toys through our Holiday Hamper Program. Businesses, churches, individuals, schools, and community groups generously support this program by purchasing requested items and by donating funds to support the program. The number of applicants increased over last year but fortunately so did the number of sponsors (121) who assisted with the shopping for the families.

Subsidized housing units are available for homeless families through our Transitional Housing Program. Two units in Acton and one in Georgetown, provide temporary, affordable housing for families who are in crisis and have no other place to go. The two bedroom units are furnished and provide a place for homeless families to live while they search for permanent housing. From April 2009 to March 2010, 6 adults and 8 children were housed in the apartments.

From December to June each year a program called Winter Warmth is offered to assist with utility arrears. This program is delivered by Links2Care in conjunction with the United Way of Halton Hills and Union Gas. If people are at risk for having their gas service disconnected and they meet the financial criteria, a payment of up to \$450.00 is made to their account to prevent disruption of service. A total of 9 individuals and families received financial assistance from the Winter Warmth Program. The total amount of

assistance paid out was \$3,559.02 for the year.

In the fall of 2009, we started planning a new program to support our lower income families. Prior to the start of school we would hear from many families who were struggling with the cost of school supplies and shoes. In response to this need, we created a Backpack Program that will ensure that children from lower income families will have backpacks filled with school supplies and shoes for the beginning of the school year. For the upcoming school year, the program is available to elementary school aged children and hopefully will be available to high school students in the future. This program is unique in that it involves high school student volunteers and adult mentors in almost every aspect. Students will learn how to successfully create a program with the help of adult mentors. They will learn how to market a program and how to organize a fund-raising event and will receive credit for their mandatory high school volunteer hours. As with our Holiday Hamper Program, we will also appeal to the community at large for donations of school supplies, gift cards and financial support to help with the program.

The Community Support Coordinator is a member of the Halton Hills Canadian Tire Jumpstart Chapter and is responsible for verifying the Jumpstart applications from clients for financial eligibility. Jumpstart provides financial support to lower income children between the ages of 4 and 18 so that the children are able to participate in sports and recreational opportunities. During the 2009-2010 fiscal year, 74 Jumpstart applications were processed.

The Acton Links2Care location is a drop site for the Halton Fresh Food Box Program. Each month, community members pay a nominal fee for a box of fresh fruits and vegetables. This program provides a great benefit to the community, as it makes it easy to purchase fresh produce at a reasonable cost.

The Community Support Program provides a comprehensive wraparound service to individuals and families in the Halton Hills community. In addition to the services listed in this report, we have the opportunity to direct clients to other services within the Links2Care umbrella as well as to those services offered by other community agencies.

"Your coordinator's intervention was invaluable. She was able to relay information and better explain it to the client, as our communication with the client is usually through written correspondence and can sometimes be difficult for clients to understand. This was a perfect opportunity and example of how agencies can network towards success.

Working with your coordinator, who acted as an intermediary, helped make the situation less stressful for all parties involved. She was very informative and kept me current in regards to the challenges the client was facing ... this insight helped me to better understand the client's needs and allowed me to make more informed decisions...which in turn helped us to successfully plan together the steps towards a resolution that was acceptable to both the client and Halton Community Housing Corporation.

I have continued to work with your agency and appreciate the efforts of all your staff of whom I have had the pleasure of working with and look forward to many more successful outcomes."

Roxanne Atchia, HCHC

LINKS2CARE FUNDERS

Mississauga Halton Local Health Integration Network

Ministry of Health and Long Term Care

Ministry of Children and Youth Services

Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities

Halton Hills United Way

United Way of Oakville

United Way of Burlington and Greater Hamilton

Milton United Way

Region of Halton

Region of Halton Community Investment Fund

Town of Halton Hills

Town of Milton

Town of Oakville

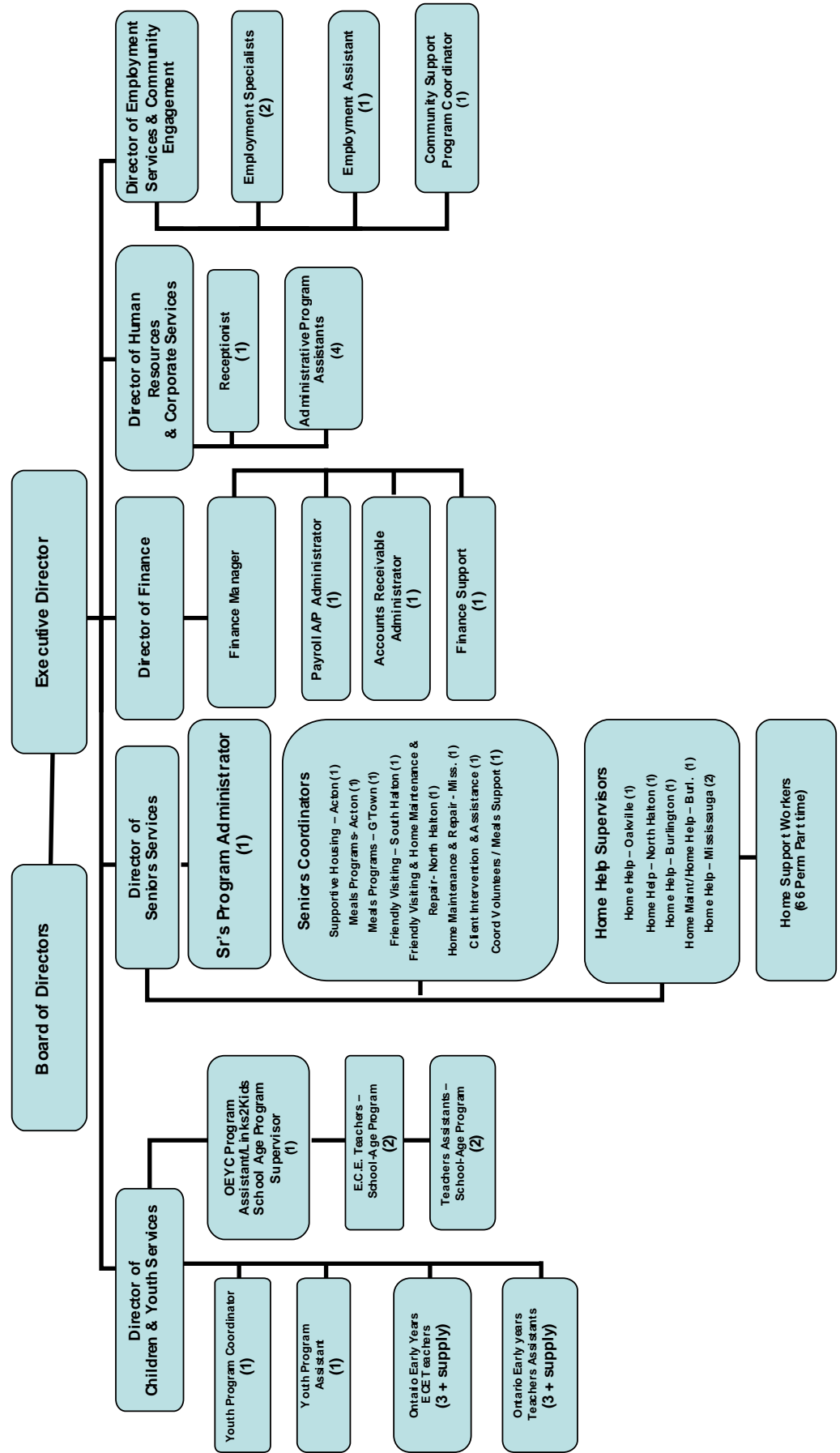
The Ontario Trillium Foundation

Alcoa Foundation

Halton Food for Thought

Links2Care is sincerely appreciative of our funders, our community partners and the many donors who make it possible for us to carry out our mandate.

Links2Care Organization Chart



LINK2CARE SITES

