

Between Friends

The Newsletter of Extend-A-Family Celebration of Circle of Friends Spring 2002



Quotes from some Circle of Friends members...

Shannon, age 11 said, "I like circle of friends because you meet different people and you play different games. Circle of friends is really fun [plus my best friends (are) in it!] and Mathew is in it and he is a lot of fun. Circle of friends is the BEST!"

Branka, age 11 commented, "I like circle of friends because you get to play with Mathew. You get to meet different people and do different things with Mathew. I'm happy I am a part of circle of friends. Mathew loves numbers. Mathew is 11 and you can have lots of fun with him."

"I meet new people," reported Jessica.

"It's a good experience that everyone could learn from," added Lisa.

Klansi commented, "We get to know people who are different from each other."

"I feel happy because we learn from each other," observes Jade.

Iris exclaimed, "I get to meet other people!"

"It's fun to make friends," Diana shared.

"There's a feeling of excitement when I know it's the day when the circle of friends meet," said Jessica.

Cassie, age 12 said, "It is fun to work with Caroline and to play with her. Circle is a good way to communicate with her."

"Caroline and I have been in the same class ever since she came to the school. We have been friends ever since. Circle of Friends has made us better friends," added Natalia, age 12.

"You have to have friends to succeed," remarked Alanna, age 11, nearly 12.

Aida, age 11 ½, concluded, "Friendship is the medicine of life."

We couldn't have said it better, Aida! Welcome to Extend-A-Family's celebration of Circle of Friends.



Circles: an introduction

Circle of Friends focuses on full inclusion of students with a disability in their school community. Students with a disability are given an opportunity to become involved in natural peer groups. The Circle of Friends is formed to help support a student with a disability, and at the same time, provide an opportunity for other members of the group to know each other better.

Circles may start very structured and may appear artificial. In time, the structure breaks down and the natural friendships are able to form. It is essential to have full parental support and participation. Parents need to encourage their sons and daughters to become active and responsible members of the group.

To introduce students to the Circle of Friends concept, an informal presentation can be given to the neighbourhood school. The presentation could include an open discussion on the importance of friendship, differences and disabilities. Permission letters are sent home with the students and if they are interested in joining the group or learning more about the circle, he or she is asked to return a completed form to their teacher. The final decision to join should be up to the child.

Once a group of children are interested in joining the Circle of Friends, a meeting is set up at lunchtime. A Coordinator from Extend-A-Family will be present at the initial meeting and all other meetings as a circle facilitator.

All group members discuss and compare their interests and hobbies. Once common interests are known, a monthly calendar of events is made. We plan what activities we will do during our lunch hour and will also plan playtime with the student during certain lunch hours and recess time; the goal being that students will play with the student on their own volition. We also exchange telephone numbers thereby the circled student starts receiving calls from some of his or her peers.

Every circle is unique. Some activities may vary.

Circle of Friends: things to do and ideas

<http://www.makingfriends.com/concraft.htm> This website has an alphabetical listing of crafts with columns that mention age appropriateness. This is a really thorough list of crafts.

http://www.gameskidsplay.net/frame_alphabetical_listing.htm This website has an alphabetical listing of games, including indoor and outdoor games.

<http://www.dltk-kids.com/> Printable crafts for kids.

Board Games (These are the games that we have at EAF): Bingo (regular, shapes, colours), Jr. Pictionary, Jr. Scattergories, Jr. Trivial Pursuit

Other ideas include creating Friendship Journals/books, photo frames filled with pictures of friends, check out games and craft books at your local library.

What does Circle of Friends do?

Rebecca Abbott

A creative thinking cap is what all coordinators search for when preparing for their Circle of Friends groups. Each group of kids is different from the other, and the type of activities at a circle group greatly impacts on goal of establishing natural friendships in the group.

Energy is never lost and there is always an abundance of it at each circle, and so it should narrow down our search for activities; but it is evident that what will work for one group of kids, is not exactly what will work for another. Maybe I should revisit our passion and goals in running circle of friends.

I think to myself each week “what kinds of activities does this group of kids need to help them to see the wonderful values and abilities of the child that this “circle” is for?...” “what activities will create unity within the group and provide opportunity for their friendships to expand outside of school?” With these questions in mind, I develop each program for each group.

I would like to share with you some of the activities that the groups have experienced. In many of the younger (and extremely energetic) groups, I focus on laughter and fun. These elements create such a wonderful atmosphere that is playful and positive. This is achieved through a number of ten minute games such as Who’s the DJ?, making creative sculptures out of bubble gum and sharing with the group the story behind it, joke and story telling, and many other group activities that focus on fun. Some of the older groups focus on projects. I find the team building aspect in these activities really provide each child with confidence and reliance upon each other. One group this past winter put together a bake sale, hosted the bake sale, and raised an enormous amount of money. With this money, they decided to go shopping and buy a bunch of toys to donate to a toy drive. While at the shopping mall they made funny faces in the photo booth and had a blast!

And of course keeping our vision in mind as all these activities are going on, we are observing the friendships that are developing. When the groups are ready we will sometimes do out of school activities such as swimming, bowling, trampolining, and going to the baseball game. It is incredible to see the energy and excitement in the kids to want to hang out, outside of school. Perfect. Who knew that friendships could be established so easily? However, it goes much deeper than this, and becomes much more exciting.

At this time, the coordinator has an idea of the relationships in the group and will work with the parents and some children in the group to further the relationships. There are usually a few kids in the group that will take a special interest in the child the circle of friends is for. It is now key to nurture those relationships. Some ways I have seen this blossom are by the parents inviting those few key kids over to play, or inviting them to come on a family outing. This is when the more intimate part of the friendship is developed.

I am delighted to have been a part of this process. I have seen wonderful relationships develop from the Circle of Friends’ groups and I now support some parents who independently arrange activities with their child and their new friends. It is such a delight!



Report from Sue Petko, Co-Chair

Another newsletter, another spring just around the corner and another greeting from your Board of Directors. Your Board is composed of four parents who support and appreciate the mandate and the work of Extend-A-Family. We also have two members of the community who support our organization and generously commit time and energy to Extend-A-Family.

The work of the board is made light by the excellent work of our Executive Director, Anne Marie Cole, and our capable staff. In order for Extend-A-Family to exist, it requires a board of directors to oversee the activities of the organization. Whenever an invitation goes forward for new board members through this newsletter...I am sure many eyes glaze over and people quickly drop to the next article. Please don't be **Boardaphobic**time marches on and board members will need to be replaced, new blood is always necessary, parents must sit on the board and contribute. Identify yourselves...tell your coordinator or call the office...don't wait for someone else to do it. In all honesty, you will not be overburdened, rather it is a learning and growing experience, one in which you can make a solid contribution.



Report from Anne Marie Cole, Executive Director

Here we grow again!

We are delighted to welcome Tabea Vincent into our Extend-A-Family family. Tabea was born early in January to Bobbi and Mat Vincent. Bobbi will be on parental leave until September.

Rebecca and Bill Abbott are also expecting a new arrival in May. Rebecca will be on parental leave for a year.

Carol Chung will be leaving Extend-A-Family in April to pursue other endeavours. We will miss Carol and wish her luck in her new position.

Because of these changes, we are in the process of hiring new Coordinators.

Summer is looming on the horizon and we urge families to register for camps and programs early as lack of space is usually an issue. This year Toronto Parks and Recreation has new registration procedures and have sent out packages to last year's registrants. The deadline for registration is April 1 so poise your pens. If you have any questions, the number is 416-394-8533.

Extend-A-Family is working on a website and will keep you informed when it is up and running.

We at Extend-A-Family wish you a warm, glorious and safe summer, filled with sunny days and lots of fun.

Celebration of Friendship February Party

reported by Rebecca Abbott

The winter party celebration was a tremendous success! It was great to see smiling faces as people enjoyed pizza and other wonderful treats that families kindly brought to share. The room was full of energy as people mingled. Some were still drying off and sharing fun stories from the swimming pool. The room was cozy and everyone had an opportunity to be involved whether they were colouring, making friendship pencils, painting a clay pot, stringing together a yummy necklace, showing off their new temporary tattoo, or working with each other to put together a very “happy” puzzle. The atmosphere was full of energy and delightful experiences. The wonderful magician worked his magic and added laughter and excitement as he entertained throughout the room. Oh, and we cannot forget the McDonald certificates that each child was clutching in their hands just waiting to be used. We are happy and thankful to all families who came to enjoy the fun. We couldn’t have had such a good time without you.

A very special thank you to all the donors that helped to make this day so wonderful: McDonalds, Scarborough Optimist Club, Sam Spataro, Store Manager of Loblaws Supermarket at Don Mills and Finch, Tony Positano, Store Owner of Tony's Food Basics at Victoria Park and Sheppard and Joe Sottosanti, Store Manager of Galati Food Stores at Leslie and Finch.

Thank you to all the coordinators for your help and great ideas. We hope to see you all again at the fall picnic!

“A Human Future”

by Ruth Fernandes

Staff at Extend-A-Family were treated to a workshop by speakers Jean Vanier and Nuala Kenny, chaired by Mary Jo Leddy, in December of 2001 entitled “A Human Future.”

Jean Vanier, who founded L’Arche, is a widely respected spiritual leader and an advocate of adults with developmental disabilities. In 1964 Canadian, Jean Vanier invited two men with mental challenges to live with him in an old house in the French village of Trosly-Breuil. He named the house L’Arche after Noah’s Ark and gradually welcomed not only more men and women with developmental disabilities but also the assistants who would live and work with them. Since then, L’Arche has grown into an international federation of more than 100 communities in nearly 30 countries.

Sister Nuala Kenny, from Nova Scotia, is the former Head of Pediatrics, Dalhousie University, a founding member of the National Council on Bioethics in Human Research, Chair of the Values Committee of the Prime Minister’s National Forum on Health and now is on the Science Advisory Board of Health Canada.

Here are some messages the two speakers communicated that captured the spirit of day.

- ♥ A person who is not loved does not feel lovable. A person who does not feel lovable does not feel good about himself / herself; and so there are feelings of depression and guilt.
- ♥ **Compassion** is a movement of response where one enters the situation of the other. It is different from sympathy. We need to have a fundamental faith and belief in ourselves; then compassion will follow. We need to straighten out the justice movement before we understand compassion; we need to be more vocal/verbal about the virtues of compassion.
- ♥ Move from repulsion of people with disabilities to compassion. Ask people with disabilities for forgiveness for being harsh. People hurt people because they are hurt themselves.
- ♥ Be nourished by people with disabilities.
- ♥ Move to a movement of touching, compassion, wonderment. You will find a capacity to give and receive love. Be in contact with somebody crying out for your love; you will discover what it means to give love.
- ♥ The fundamental idea of life, is to give life.

- ♥ If we approach the world as suspicious, it becomes suspicious.... if we approach the world as trustworthy, it becomes trustworthy.
- ♥ While Sept. 11 could be a wake up call for America, unless we raise our voices for the many children in the well (of suffering) we will not be recovered.
- ♥ We have seen the enemy and the enemy is ourselves; the enemy is within us.
- ♥ We lack the stimulation of our **moral senses**. Do we purchase a multi-million dollar cat scanner for hospitals or do we take the money and spend it on Human Services needs?
- ♥ We lack the stimulation of our moral imagination. There will never be enough money to fix our technical imagination. Modern society would rather have a technical fix than something to enhance our moral imagination.
- ♥ Moral consciousness grows when parents ask for forgiveness. Parents have to develop their children's moral consciousness rather than just have them obey.
- ♥ Kids get their impression of society from society.
- ♥ Trust a person so he can discover who he is.
- ♥ **Relationships** are very important. Relationships are complex. Even in a small relationship of husband and wife, there are differences.
- ♥ We need to have a focus and direction; 'we keep re-arranging the decks on the Titanic without knowing where the Titanic is headed.'
- ♥ Learn how to live loss, how to accept differences.
- ♥ In building **community**, there is loss, anguish, power, anger...
- ♥ When people come to community, they discover God.
- ♥ The Acts of the Apostles is about building community.
- ♥ When working with people I have to ask myself, "what am I doing in this service?" I have to remind myself that I am the mission statement of the organization delivering service to people. In working in this field, there is an intentional, humanistic approach.
- ♥ What we speak comes back as an echo in our lives.
- ♥ Growing to openness is important not just being prayerful or spiritual. Sometimes you need a movement within yourself to widen your thought.
- ♥ **Desire** is fulfilled if we listen. Rest is important to listen Desire will bring fruits. Do we have feelings of powerlessness in our workplaces? Do we desire to change things in our lives and in our workplaces? The 'desire' to change is important. This is the process of personal transformation. Intentionally support and encourage change. We need to support the courage of others.
- ♥ It is our responsibility to make a difference. We have to become more creative in developing a critical vision.
- ♥ It is critical to reclaim responsible citizenship. We must find ways to have clear-cut discussions with Government. We need to look at the growing gap between the haves and the have-nots.
- ♥ "I suffer because no one needs me," a person with a disability expressed to Jean Vanier.
- ♥ It is better to light one candle than to curse the darkness.
- ♥ It is important, so important to know that we are not perfect.
- ♥ I cannot do everything but I can do something.
- ♥ Do not dismiss the small contributions you make, the little things of love and kindness we do for others from day to day.
- ♥ We begin our lives in weakness and we end our lives in weakness.
- ♥ Pray to be a peacemaker not for peace.
- ♥ The greatest dream is to live in the present moment.

We were fortunate to have the children's peace theatre perform, reflecting values of inclusion, togetherness, friendship, forgiveness, community building...



Have you planned your summer yet? **Camp space fills quickly.** For more information, contact the Ontario Camping Association at 416485-0425, oac@ontcamp.on.ca or www.ontcamp.on.ca. The Toronto Parks and Recreation number is 416-394-8533.

Handsome outerwear for child and adult wheelchair users by Epiphany Design. Call 416-410-2243 or 1-800-410-2243 or check it out on the web www.epiphanyd.com. Creating innovative ways of giving people freedom and self-reliance.

MOTHER'S GROUP has amalgamated with PARENT SHARE

Extend-A-Family's Mother's Group has successfully merged with Toronto Association for Community Living's Parent Outreach and Toronto Family Network's group, Parent Share. This group will meet on the first Thursday of the month to share information, discuss a range of topics and meet with guest speakers over coffee and tea.
Location – Loblaws in the Community Room at 3401 Lawrence Ave East (at Markham)
Time – 9:30 am to 11:30 am
Future Dates – March 7, April 4, May 2, June 6. The group does not meet in the summer.
Future Topics – Summer Camps, update on education, homework and siblings.
For more info, contact Karen Cloer at 416-438-6099 ext. 235 or Nancy Hendy at 416-438-1165, ext. 224 or Toronto Family Network 416-484-1536.

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Pop Can Tabs

Dennis Patchell is instrumental in promoting the save-the-tabs program in Markham. It takes millions of tabs to buy one wheelchair. Every tab helps. Email dennispatchell@hotmail.com or call 905-294-4105.

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IS THE NEW SECONDARY CURRRICULUM WORKING FOR YOUR CHILD?

Come share your experience with other Toronto parents and students with special guest, John Reynolds, Superintendent of Instruction TDSB.

Thursday March 21, 2002 7-9 p.m. at Riverdale Collegiate, 1094 Gerrard St. E. (at Jones)
Call 416-393-9820 for more information.

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Regal Family Helpline by Canadian Association for Community Living is sponsored by the Regal Foundation. The helpline will be available to families who are looking for information, resources and connections in their efforts to support their family member with an intellectual disability. The number is 1-800-856-2207.

BOOK REVIEWS

Books are available at the Extend-A-Family office.

Contact Cate at 416-484-1317 to purchase books (while supplies last.)

My Sister Linda by Hanne Brandt

\$5.00

ISBN 0-920304-84-2

Twelve-year old Ali and ten-year old Linda live in a Group Home for children. Their mother ran away when the girls were little, and their dad is an alcoholic who can't look after them. Life at the Home wouldn't be so bad if it wasn't for Arnold and Eric, the couple who supervise the Home. But when Linda meets Maggie, a newspaper reporter, she realizes there is something she can do about it – and maybe gain a mother in the process.

My Sister Linda is a translation from two Danish novels by noted children's author Hanne Brandt. Born in 1940 in Denmark, Hanne taught school for many years before becoming a television broadcaster. She has worked on several documentaries about women and children.



Community Dreams, ideas for enriching neighborhood and community life by Bill Berkowitz

\$15.00

ISBN 0-915166-29-1

Community Dreams is a unique and far-reaching compilation of ideas for enriching neighborhood and community life. The ideas here are fresh and offbeat, small in scale and low in cost. They are ideas for practical use, by people like us, close to home.

In *Community Dreams*, you'll find town-owned bicycle fleets, solar bar-raising, neighbourhood yearbooks, the Al Fresco Branch Library. Hundreds of creative new and borrowed ideas like shopping mall ministries, edible landscapes and universities of the sidewalk.

Read and dream about life, arts, housing, energy, trash, parks, media, food, skills, neighbourhoods, urban design, health, government, safety, workplaces, festivals ...

Community Dreams is a ground-breaking book of "practical utopias." Powerful and wide ranging, it is sure to stimulate and motivate anyone who cares about making communities better.

Bill Berkowitz has created, directed, and written about grass-roots community programs for over ten years. The community mental health psychologist received his doctorate from Stanford University, and has taught social and community psychology for twelve years in colleges.



Making Friends, developing relationships between people with a disability and other members of the community by The G. Allan Roehrer Institute

\$18.00

ISBN 0-920121-89-6

The book discusses why friends are important, obstacles to friendship, ingredients of friendship, learning from different approaches to building friendships and includes personal stories.

Fun Page

Answers on the

last page



Pencil Ponderings

If your pencil is shorter than mine, and Caroline's pencil is shorter than Matthew's and Matthew's is not the shortest and Caroline's is shorter than mine, but longer than yours, whose pencil is the shortest?

Can, Too!

See if you can complete all
Of these "can" words.

1. Walking stick C A N _
2. Sweet treats C A N _ _
3. Yellow bird C A N _ _ _
4. Our country C A N _ _ _
5. Gorge C A N _ _ _
6. This holds
 water C A N _ _ _ _
7. A person running
 for office C A N _ _ _ _ _

Name a Number

Name

TEN animals

NINE things you did today

EIGHT people you'd like to
 know better

SEVEN things you know

 about your town

SIX kinds of fruit

FIVE planets

FOUR friends

THREE characters from
 Wizard of Oz

TWO people you admire

ONE place you'd like to visit
 with a friend

Give me a hand ... er ... foot!

Ready for some hands-on-fun? Begin with HAND and change just one letter to get the next word, and then the next and then the next ... You'll go from hand to foot in no time!

H A N D

_ _ _ _ They play music together.

_ _ _ _ Has no hair.

_ _ _ _ Another word for brave.

_ _ _ _ What you do with clean laundry.

_ _ _ _ What you eat for dinner.

F O O T.

Who is who at Extend-A-Family

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Tara Howitt

Rebecca Lovering Spencer

Elizabeth Short

Susie Sokol

BOARD of DIRECTORS

Co-Chair: Bob Glass

Co-Chair: Sue Petko

Treasurer: Albert Ellman

Secretary: Michele Schmidt

Directors

Anne Bloom

Bill Mosher

Your Name Could Be Here!

If you are interested to join the Board,
please call the office at 416-484-1317.

Fun Page Answers: Pencil Ponderings - your pencil.

Can, Too – cane, candy, canary, Canada, canyon,
canteen, candidate.

Hand to Foot – band, bald, bold, fold, food.

Between Friends is published by Extend-A-Family for the information of its members, supporting members and as promotional material. Extend-A-Family builds meaningful relationships for children and youths with disabilities who live in Toronto and promotes community inclusion for its members.

We would like to make the newsletter useful for you. We invite you to complete the enclosed survey and return to us.

Wishing you and your family and friends a safe and fun-filled spring and summer from the Extend-A-Family Newsletter Committee: Susie, Ruth, Tara, Stephanie, Liz and Cate.

I/We would like to help Build an Inclusive Community.

Please make cheques payable to Extend-A-Family & mail to 200-3300 Yonge Street, Toronto, ON, M4N 2L6. For receipt purposes, we require the following information:

Name: _____ Phone: (_____) _____

Full Address: _____

Thank you for your contributions!

Charitable Registration Number 11890-4846-RR0001

Extend-A-Family, *Building an Inclusive Community*

200-3300 Yonge St., TO, ON, M4N 2L6, Phone: 16-484-1317, Fax: 16-484-1589, email:eaf@idirect.com

We need your help!

In order to make the newsletter more interesting and useful for you, please complete the following questionnaire and fax or mail it to the address at the top of this form, or phone your answers and comments to your coordinator.

All responses are confidential.

Name: _____ (optional)

1. Please indicate your relationship with Extend-A-Family. Are you a

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Natural family | <input type="checkbox"/> Natural individual |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Host | <input type="checkbox"/> Safe and Secure Futures Member |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Respite natural family | <input type="checkbox"/> Friend |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agency | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

2. My child is:

- 0-5 years old
- 6-10 years old
- 10-15 years old
- 16-18 years old
- older than 18 years
- not applicable

3. I find the newsletter:

- Useful
- Interesting
- Useful and interesting
- Not interesting and not useful

4. Please rate the following items from 1 to 10, 1 being the most relevant to you and 10 being the least relevant to you.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education Information | <input type="checkbox"/> Respite Information |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Transitional Information | <input type="checkbox"/> Future Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Government Information | <input type="checkbox"/> Information and Resources |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Book Reviews | <input type="checkbox"/> Personal Sharing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social Ideas and Information | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

5. What is the most useful or interesting part of our newsletters and why? _____

6. What is the least useful or interesting part of the newsletters and why? _____

7. What would you like to see in the newsletter? _____

8. Do you have any additional comments, ideas or suggestions? _____

Your Newsletter Committee appreciates your efforts.