



Between Friends

Extend-A-Family

3300 Yonge Street
suite 200
Toronto, Ontario
M4N 2L6
Phone 416-484-1317
Fax 416-484-1589
www.extendafamily.ca
Email ch@extendafamily.ca
Registered Charity
11890-4846-RR0001

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Winter 2002~2003

The Newsletter of Extend-A-Family

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.

Inclusive Education Award

When I read about the call for nominations for an annual award for educational assistants, teachers and principals, I immediately knew what I was going to do. In May of this year, I nominated Ms. Rosanne Morris as Special Education Resource Teacher. Ms. Morris is our daughter, Nastassja's teacher at Bishop Allen Academy.

Ms. Morris possesses those special qualities, which are a prerequisite to teaching a student with special needs. Ms. Morris also supports all of the teachers that our daughter has in terms of curriculum modifications and classroom accommodations including the introduction of the FM system. Ms. Morris goes out of her way to continually ensure that we are informed of any important items that may have been left by the wayside had she not made the phone call to us. Ms. Morris also makes the time to call us to share something positive that has occurred during the day. The agenda is yet another way that we, as her parents, are kept informed.

In August I received a letter from Toronto Association for Community Living thanking me for taking the time to submit a nomination for their Fourth Annual Award for Inclusive Education. Much to my delight, my nomination had been selected to receive one of the awards.

Nastassja and I watched eagerly, with grinning faces, on the evening of September 10, while Ms. Morris walked up to the front of the room to accept her award.

THANK YOU Ms. Morris for coming into our lives and for being here.

-Nastassja's Mom, October 24, 2002



Introducing ... the new Extend-A-Family Coordinators



Kathie

For fifteen years, I have been supporting families and the bulk of my experience is as a child advocate. The areas my advocacy has been most concentrated on are poverty, disability rights and school issues. I have worked closely with the Toronto Family Network over the last two years and have been extremely involved with the Ontario Human Rights Commission, with respect to rights in education over the last year and a half. On a personal note, I bring with me my cherished experiences of supporting my 9-year-old son and my 23-year-old brother.

Marijan

As the newest coordinator, my educational background is in environmental science, and, most recently, pastoral counselling. My experience (as diverse as my education!) includes supporting both adults and children with special needs in a variety of ways. I especially enjoy working co-operatively with people to build upon strengths and overcome challenges, and am excited about the possibilities for this with EAF families!

Sam

My name is Sam Rocchese and I am one of the new coordinators in Extend-A-Family. I completed a two-year course at George Brown College in the Community Worker program, from which I received a diploma. I have had many work experiences in supporting individuals with special needs and with children in various programs and activities that enriched and explored their lives in many ways. I have a passion for helping individuals and for encouraging a person's potential in life. I am very excited to be part of a family-based organization that believes that all individuals should be included in the society in which they live. I am very empathic, compassionate, reliable, eager, fair and will try to use my skills and abilities in the best way I can.

Janice

I have been with Extend A Family since April 2002. It has been a great experience for me, working with the other staff at Extend A Family and meeting with the families, students, hosts and many others that I have had the opportunity of meeting in the past 8 months. My experience over

the past 25 years has been predominantly with children in many different capacities. I have worked a great deal in the community creating services where needed and building on those already in existence. If I could say one thing about my work for Extend A Family it would be that it has given me the opportunity to bring more love into the world and for that I am very grateful.

Mirjana

Hello all of you in a beautiful and multicultural city. My name is Mirjana. I have joined EAF family in April of this Year. As I reflect on my life, I realized that my plans, goals and dreams are to live life that honours and respects others. We are all special people, at times we do not remember how special we are. I love to remind individuals of how special they really are.

After a long history of working in the children's mental health field (in Europe and Canada) and a brief retirement to help raise my grandchildren, I realize that I can only survive if I follow my dreams and my life goals. So it feels natural that I joined the EAF team; we all have similar dreams and goals. I hope that my beliefs and goals are present when working with all that I am in contact.

I know that we can all learn from each other and make a difference.

Bruce

Hey there I'm Bruce Sexsmith. I have been with Extend-A-Family for almost seven months now, and let me tell you I love this job! I have been working with people from all kinds of backgrounds for over ten years, mostly in camp programs, and I believe that there is no more rewarding work than this, playing with children. I hold no diplomas, only years of experience in building communities of inclusion, justice and equality. As a new coordinator, I have been meeting parents, children, teachers and friends. These people are an inspiration to me. I learn again every day how valuable this work is. As I worked, I have come to realize that EAF is a very special organization, and I am proud to be here.



Board Report by Sue Petko, Co-Chair

The Board of Extend-A-Family would like to wish everyone the very best of the season and a Happy New Year. It is amazing to think that we are entering the year 2003! We have become so comfortable writing the date as 20, that we hardly ever think of the 19...s anymore. And yet as parents and friends of people with disabilities we can reflect on how much has changed with ourselves and our community as far as attitudes, expectations and desire to see all people actively part of their community. We can also reflect on the fact that the work of Extend-A-Family will probably never be completed in the sense of community inclusion.

The Board recognises and supports the excellent efforts of all the staff, matched with the desire of parents to make central relationships and participation in the lives of their sons and daughters.

So we wish each other a Happy New Year. We wish that barriers which exist could be wiped away, and supports that are lacking were in place. Together, we can all make a difference.



Executive Director's Report by Anne Marie Cole

Season's Greetings,

I would like to welcome all the new families, hosts & staff who have joined EAF during the past several months. It has been a very busy and exciting time for all involved.

I am also happy to introduce Luis Gonzalez, our new format & layout editor. Luis is responsible for the layout of our new & improved newsletter. We hope you enjoy reading the program updates and heartfelt stories of friendship.

Please mark February 16, 2003 on your calendar - EAF will be hosting a Winter Celebration of Friendship. We will be sending out invitations in the New Year.

During this holiday season, may you and your family be blessed with good health & happiness & may 2003 be filled with love, friendship & kindness.

Warm, Wise Words

Courage

To have courage, you must believe in yourself. I'm not talking about an egotistical attitude; I am referring to a belief in the power within you.

A courageous person has an awareness of the greater picture and knowledge of the divine plan. With trust and perseverance, all of us can have the courage to hear the inner voice and to follow it. A person who possesses courage is willing to open his heart to others and be vulnerable to life's unpredictable changes.

With courage we always have an ability to face obstacles because we know that infinite possibilities are ever present. Courage gives us the trust we need to follow our hearts no matter what outside influences seem to block our way. By James Van Praagh

Acts of Inspiration

Norman Ball, a 59 year-old grandfather from Toronto, recently completed the 13,700-kilometre, 22-month Walk of Hope around North America for children at extreme risk. Norman has been inspired by a 10 year-old boy named Robert Hampson. In spite of being blind and fighting a brain tumour at such a young age, Robert is dedicated to collecting aluminium pop can tabs to raise money to buy wheelchairs, prosthetic devices and operations for other children around the world. Robert's selflessness has inspired Norman to collect tabs, and in sharing Robert's story, Norman encouraged people all over North America to collect tabs as well.

By Jeff Short



Summer Student Program

Summer experiences for several children and teens were enhanced through the support of our twelve students. Funded in part by Human Resources Development Canada, these enthusiastic and energetic young women and men facilitated a variety of community recreational opportunities. They also nurtured interactions, with an eye to friendship building. The Department of Parks and Recreation strike, and the heat wave made for some added challenges, but both student and family comments have reinforced the value of these one-to-one matches. This program is an important part of Extend-A-Family's aim to build an inclusive community. Our thanks and best wishes for a successful year of studies to Matthew; Jonathon; Heather; Donovan; Marcia; Stephanie; Dell; Krithiga; Bessy; Clare; Diana; and Mary.

Safe and Secure Futures Project

Family members committed to building and/or sustaining a personal network or circle for their loved one who has a disability meet in three regional groups, at six week intervals, at the following locations:

East - St. Henry School, 100 Bamburgh Circle (north of McNicoll/west of Warden)

West - Community Living Toronto West Region office, 5233 Dundas St. W. (west of Kipling)

Central - Extend-A-Family office, 3300 Yonge St, suite 200, (4 blocks north of Lawrence)
If you would like information about the mutual support and information offered in these forums, please call Gillian Chernets 416-440-1760 or Christy Barber 416-487-4564

Keep this date open and....



Extend-A-Family's **Winter Celebration of Friendship** will be in the afternoon on Sunday, February 16, 2003, at Earl Bales Community Centre

Summer Fun

I felt like I needed a challenge for the summer, an opportunity that would enable me to grow as an individual, learn new things and meet new people. Fortunately, I did meet a lot of new people and their families. The summer consisted of a variety of activities including going swimming with Michael, Julia patiently trying to teach me how to play baseball, Amelia trying to convince me to watch another movie and eating Thai food downtown with Catherine. I found it interesting how each person was incredibly unique and had their own little gifts to offer; from Marysia's contagious laughter to Catherine's ambitious and patient demeanour, which, inspired me to become more patient.

Julia and I getting soaked at Centerville, bike riding beside the lake with Amelia and baking cookies with Roswitha are just some of the memories that will forever be engraved within me. The summer was full of fun and laughter but it was also an enriching experience. I was able to build connections with people and those connections brought a certain level of awareness into my life. I was extremely glad that I had an opportunity to meet with several families beforehand. I appreciate that many families took time to meet with me, talk to me and even go out of their way to help me organise activities.
Diana Reis, Summer Student.

The Gift

Essay by Joyce Chan, Host to Rebecca Beanyi

Rebecca Beanyi is a twenty-year old individual who has disabilities. Since birth, she has been unable to speak, has depended on a wheelchair, and has required special attention for every waking moment. Consequently, individuals like Rebecca are normally excluded from the regular stream of society through placements in special educational programs to accommodate their specific needs. Yet, Rebecca is no different from any other human being as she, too, needs companionship. I discovered and learned to cherish friendship since having met Rebecca and making a difference in her life simply by accompanying her. In return, her gift to bring happiness through her smile has touched my heart. Over the past year, I have had the opportunity to strengthen a weakness of mine as well. My flaw was my ignorance and failure to admit to the truth. There were numerous situations, including my first encounter with Rebecca, where I found myself in an unfamiliar surrounding, where everything I knew and excelled at could not reduce the tension. Even to this day, I am still learning to confront my downfalls, rather than avoiding them. Hiding behind my awards and accomplishments is no longer a solution. I realized the necessity of attempting to adapt to unknown environments in order to improve as a person. Without my experience with Rebecca, my self-confidence would not be as strong as it is today. This transition began a year ago at my school's volunteer fair, which was the starting point where I first initiated a pursuit of my own aspirations.

In the past, my friends influenced my decisions because they never understood the reasons for my participation in the volleyball team, Covenant House, or other extra-curricular activities. "Why bother?" they had asked. It took me almost a year to find *my* answer – why not? Taking initiative and committing to various responsibilities, thus developing leadership, character, and knowledge, seemed quite satisfying as an answer. These opportunities exist to us like gifts. It is our decision whether to accept, to appreciate, and to give the extra effort in unwrapping them to seek the valuables hidden inside. This volunteer fair was my gift, has containing a treasure. Without second thoughts, I seized my opportunity with "Extend-A-Family," a program that focused on building friendships between individuals and 'buddies' with disabilities.

About three weeks after the fair, I found myself standing before Susan Beanyi and her daughter, Rebecca. Upon meeting Rebecca I became aware of my vulnerability and acknowledged

my weakness of feeling powerless. Cornered by this unfamiliar feeling, I was left frozen by Rebecca's presence. I did not have the slightest idea how to interact with someone suffering from acute disabilities. Now I have learned otherwise. I have turned towards a new direction that I never knew existed. Because of Rebecca's friendship, flexibility in tackling new experiences became an asset that I came to utilize in future leadership roles. My inability to connect with her in the beginning helped me to reassess my priorities in order to make a meaningful commitment – and I began with Rebecca.

My dedication has allowed me to analyze myself, my true self. Up to that moment, I had fallen into a category of students who aspire to take a stand in the community but lack the commitment or ethical intentions. For once, I examined my own commitments and began to redefine my understanding of 'commitment' and 'friendship,' instead of pointing fingers at others. I had finally emerged as a leader from my example of improving others' well-being. Since my first step of attending the volunteer fair, I have taken a leap forward in personal assessment. Now I value the activities I partake in because they define who I am. Based on my transition, I drew another conclusion: if something is worth doing, then I should do it to the best of my ability. Rebecca's companionship has brought forth a new understanding for differences that exists between each individual's difficulties and has taught me how to evaluate my commitments and initiatives as a leader.

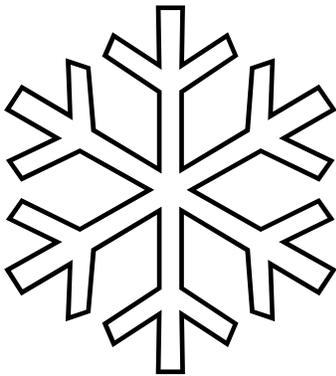
Every time she smiles, I laugh. What more can I ask for? In each volunteer activity I participate in nowadays, I offer myself. No longer are they 'volunteer' hours. They have become my pleasure, my enjoyment, and my satisfaction. I am a better person, though not a different person, that creates and seeks for new beginnings. In life, only handling familiar tasks we have mastered does not add value to our character nor demonstrate initiative. There are become my pleasure, my enjoyment, my satisfaction. I am a better person, though not a different person, someone who creates and seeks new beginnings. In life, only handling the familiar tasks that we have mastered neither adds value to our character nor infinite paths that we can explore throughout our lifetime, some existing where we cannot see. When stepping forward to make a difference, I learned from first-hand experience that it begins inside. It is not always about taking the route that is monumental to the world, but more so, what is monumental to you.

Ryleigh

For the past 9 months, we've had the opportunity to have Ryleigh come to our house and spend some time with us. She comes every other Sunday for a few hours and we could never have imagined how much we would enjoy her company and how much fun it is to be around her. We usually don't have anything special planned for when she comes, but we always wish she could stay longer so we could do more things with her. We spend time going to the park or to the mall, or sometimes we just stay home and eat pizza in front of the T.V. Our dog, Chico, and Ryleigh are very good friends

and she loves it when Chico comes and sits by her side on the couch. Julia has benefited from this experience, since she is learning the responsibility of taking care of someone else and she makes Ryleigh laugh with games of Peek a Boo and tickling. All of us enjoy and look forward to the Sundays when Ryleigh comes over. On Thanksgiving, we went apple picking with Ryleigh and it brought back memories of when we used to go when we were younger. Ryleigh has enriched our lives and we hope we've had an impact on hers too.

Monica, Julia, Daniel Ambelez



Newsletter Survey Report

In our Spring 2002 issue of Between Friends, we asked if you could evaluate our newsletter so we may make it more meaningful for you. We reach not only Extend-A-Family members; natural families and hosts, but also our newsletter is distributed to community connections, other agencies and our friends. As a result, the response was varied.

Nine surveys were returned; three natural families, three hosts, two Extend-A-Family staff (who are not on the newsletter committee) and one friend. Of the natural families, their children are: one child 10-15 years old, one child 16-18 years old and two children older than 18 years.

The Respondents found the newsletter: two useful, three interesting and four useful and interesting. The following were ranked by the Respondents and due to inconsistent responses, it is deduced that: Respite Information and Book Reviews were the least popular, Future Planning, Personal Sharing and Transitional Information most popular and Education, Government, Social Ideas and Information and Resources in the middle. Although in the previous question, Personal Sharing had an average rating it was the most mentioned item for what is the most useful or interesting part of our newsletters.

The least useful or interesting part of the newsletters voted by three respondents was the Fun Page, education, government information and book reviews received one vote each. What would respondents like to see in the newsletter? The answer was personal sharing, two votes on news on upcoming events, stories of possibilities in community building, stories of relationships, employment opportunities / assistance, two votes for success stories, and one vote each for the Fun Page and excerpts from books and articles. Additional comments, ideas or suggestions included two lovely compliments and "more creative approach to donation solicitation."

We thank all those who responded.

Two Pots



Unknown author

A water bearer in India had two large pots; each hung on each end of a pole, which he carried across his neck. One of the pots had a crack in it, and while the other pot was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water at the end of the long walk from the stream to the master's house, the cracked pot arrived only half full.

For a full two years this went on daily, with the bearer delivering only one and a half pots full of water to his masters house. Of course, the perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments, perfect to the end for which it was made. But the poor cracked pot was ashamed of its own imperfection, and miserable that it was able to accomplish only half of what it had been made to do.

After two years of what it perceived to be a bitter failure, it spoke to the water bearer one day by the stream. "I am ashamed of myself, and I want to apologize to you."

"Why?" asked the bearer. "What are you ashamed of?"

"I have been able, for these past two years, to deliver only half my load because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your master's house. Because of my flaws, you have to do all this work, and you don't get full value from your efforts," the pot said. The water bearer felt sorry for the old, cracked

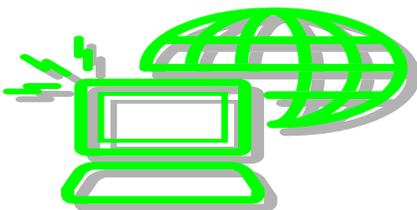
pot, and in his compassion he said, "As we return to the master's house, I want you to notice the beautiful flowers along the path. Indeed, as they went up the hill, the old, cracked pot took notice of the sun warming the beautiful wild flowers on the side of the path, and this cheered it some. But at the end of the trail, it still felt bad because it had leaked out half its load, and so again the pot apologized to the bearer for its failure.

The bearer said to the pot, "Did you notice that there were flowers only on your side of the path, but not on the other pot's side? That's because I have always known about your flaw, and I took advantage of it. I planted flower seeds on your side of the path, and every day while we walk back from the stream, you've watered them. For two years I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate my masters table. Without you being just the way you are, he would not have this beauty to grace his house."

Each of us has our own unique flaws. We are all cracked pots. Nothing goes to waste. Don't be afraid of your flaws. Acknowledge them, and you too can be the cause of beauty. Know that in our weakness we find our strength. Friends in your life are like pillars on your porch. Sometimes they hold you up and sometimes they lean on you. Sometimes it is just enough to know they are standing by.

"Ring the bells that still can ring. Forget your perfect offerings. There is a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in." - Leonard Cohen

Have you seen our website?



Check it out at
www.extendafamilv.ca

Montage Respite Home

Congratulations Montage for offering a respite option to families throughout the City of Toronto – your FIRST year has been a great success. Montage offers a respite option for those 18 years and older in a home-like setting in the east end of Toronto. The support offered is individualized and community focused. For further information, call Lorna Powers 416-780-9630, ext. 25.

Sharing some fantastic news

Notable Achievements

Tony Erlich graduated from Centennial College Early Childhood Assistant Programme. He is now hard at work in Centennial's Personal Support Worker Course. Excellent efforts, Tony!

Julia's good news

Hello all you high school students! Have you talked lately to Julia? Thanks to good leaders at Sparks, Julia is enjoying tremendously her volunteering job. She weekly volunteers for about hour and a half at local Sparks group. Those little five and six years old need a lot of Julia's help with their arts and crafts. She is happy to help them with their tasks, and I am sure the little girls are happy to have Julia there. Good work, Julia!

Farewell to Corrie

Corrie Moorman met Jackie Sutherland and her family on June 29, 1990 . They have shared a very special friendship ever since . In Corrie's words, " Jackie taught me how precious friendship is." Corrie will be leaving us in January. Although we will all miss her, we understand her desire to return home to family and friends in Holland . We appreciate the gift of your friendship, Corrie, and wish you well . Keep in touch ! -Liz Short

Congratulations , Carley Chellew , for 3 first place finishes at the Variety Village Swim Meet , Nov.3 , 2002.

Congratulations , Layla Guse Salah , for a job well done. Layla worked as an academic remediation counsellor at a camp for children with traumatic brain injury last summer.

Congratulations , Brendan Schnabel , who , as the result of a good mid - term report , continues to assist the coach of the Martingrove Collegiate hockey team.

Congratulations also to Jarrett Schnabel - for helping his team to a recent victory in the Etobicoke Basketball Association.

Congratulations, Nicole Vultao, for going up two levels in swimming at Camp Robinhood last summer. Also, her school house league soccer team is on its' way to the upcoming championship games

We're On-line!

We often send out letters, notices and flyers using a lot of paper and postage. We can save time and money by sending this via Email. If you would like to communicate through E-mail, please contact us at ch@extendafamily.ca

Thanks!!

This is a big thank you to everybody who contributed articles, time, resources and thoughts to make this newsletter a success.

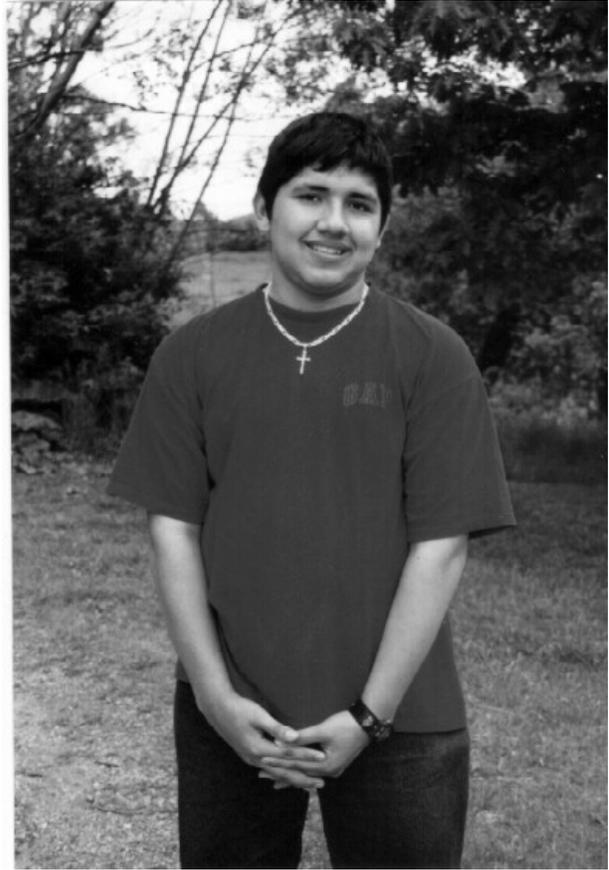
From the Newsletter

Committee, *Bruce, Sam, Marijan, Liz,
Linda and Cate*

About Me

Name: Luis Ernesto Rojas Gonzalez
Age: 15
Birthplace: San Salvador, El Salvador
Birth date: January 2nd 1987
Years in Canada: 12
Occupation(s): Student, Format Editor, and Layout Editor
Brothers: 1 (Jhonatan)
Sisters: 1 (Carmen-Julia)
Current School: George Harvey C. I.

Hi. Just call me Luis for short. I am Extend-A-Family's new Format & Layout Editor. I am a Grade 10 student at George Harvey Collegiate Institute. I like to work on the computer a lot. I even like to write stories. I speak English, and Spanish. I am currently learning Japanese. It can take me a while, but I will get it. I will become a computer programmer when I grow up. I want to travel Overseas to eastern Asia. I also would like to make a wide variety of programs for all languages.



SRV – SOCIAL ROLE VALORIZATION

The staff at Extend-A-Family have all attended, at one time or another, a *SRV* Workshop. *SRV* stands for *Social Role Valorization*, and most recently, the majority of us shared in this training. *SRV* speaks to the issues surrounding people with disabilities, how they can be de-valued, and how society perceives this marginalized portion of our population as "less than" or of lower status than the rest of society.

The course was filled with disturbing, but accurate examples of how this shows up in our every day lives.

During this 3-Day workshop, we were continually reminded of how fortunate we are to be associated with an organization that truly abhors such values and works everyday to remove these barriers and belief systems. The fundamental framework from which Extend-A-Family operates in bringing people together through friendships and in the community is something to be proud of. It is a long walk, and often filled with challenges and disappointments, but we are never alone. Together, we can have a voice, and together, we can make a difference. We are all entitled to a good and respectful life, filled with dignity, opportunities, and full participation in ordinary, everyday life. We are most honoured to have you with us!



ARE YOU...

...passionate about policy making?

...eager to express your creativity?

...fabulous at organizing fun events

**Then we need YOU!
Contact Cate at 416-484-1317 for more
information**



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

**Please make cheques payable to Extend-A-Family & mail to
3300 Yonge Street, suite 200, TO, 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