



It has been an exciting year for the Youth Program as we enjoy and explore the possibilities the new building offers. The gym is a big hit, the kitchen is a close second (Jaana keep those cookies coming!) and the bigger, brighter classrooms are great!

**Here's what some of the kids have to say about the new space:**



*I like the new Centre better because we have a bigger and better gym, not a small one we couldn't do anything in...I also like the classrooms, how they look and how much bigger they are and how you get a nice view of the farmlands..." D. D.*

*"I love the space we now have in the new building. It is like 4 of the old buildings put together with a bigger gym. It is a totally new place and program. It also has more washrooms and they are bigger. It has easier access to parks and more toys. Now we need fewer busses and we are all together. We now have a bigger kitchen with more room and a lunch room." R. H.*

*"This new York Centre is bigger and better or new and improved. This York Centre has better bathrooms and the gym is a great place to go if you need a workout and work your gluteus maximus muscles when doing sit ups." E. C.*

*"Spacious is probably one of the best ways to describe the new building. The old building was like a shoebox. You could only move around when someone got out of the box. It was a very cramped place to be. I guess it wasn't really like a shoe box, but the old centre, compared to the new one, was tiny. Looking back, I can't imagine how I went there every day and didn't complain. That place sucked, compared to this place. I enjoy and appreciate the space at this place. I'm glad that we moved to this place and I really love the gym and I think that every kid feels the same, even if they don't admit it." F. M.*

*"At the new Centre we all have a gorgeous view out of our classrooms, so now instead of looking out at a parking lot we can look at a field and also every classroom has a window. The one down side about the new building is that the beautiful view distracts me from doing all my work." M. I.*

**FROM THE ZERO TO 6 PROGRAM**

What is a feeling? How do I know if someone is happy, sad, angry or worried? What do I do when I have these feelings?

*Fun Friends* helps us to learn strategies to cope with our feelings.

Our mottos are: **Be Brave!**  
**I can do it, I can try!**

The Zero to 6 team of Carmen and Becky has begun a new adventure with 4-6 year olds. This year, *Fun Friends* is being offered to clients as an after school program. It runs Tuesdays from 4:30 - 5:30 p.m.

- F—feelings**
- R—relax**
- I—I can try**
- E—encourage**
- N—nurture**
- D—don't forget to be brave**
- S—stay**

This is a fun, exciting group using puppets, stories, feeling faces and songs to teach children how to cope with their anxiety and learn about their feelings.

*The look of the NEW York Centre.  
We would welcome your visit so we can  
show you around.  
Please call ahead - 905-887-5896*



**FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

So much has happened since our last newsletter a year ago. We hope this edition of our newsletter will get everyone up to date with many of our activities.

The York Centre has a brand new look. The consolidation project was completed last Spring with the renovation of the 1868 Heritage Building and the transformation is incredible. The Youth Program moved into their new space in May 2009 and the staff and kids are so impressed with the difference. You can read some of their comments later in our newsletter.

The United Way of York Region has continued to increase our funding to expand our Community Outreach program, which has allowed us to provide groups and restorative services in many more York Region schools. We completed the United Way Community Citizen review this year, where we received top marks in all areas!

We are into the second year of our Ontario Trillium Foundation grant to increase our ability to provide services to York Region's ethnically diverse community. This funding has allowed us to hire two part time diversity workers, one for the Farsi-speaking community and one for the Chinese community. We have also been working with our community partners to share resources and ideas on how to increase our collective ability to reach out and serve all of the families of York Region.

This has also been a year of increased media attention for children's mental health, both locally and provincially. This would not have been possible without the voices of our parents. Last year we brought Susan Hess and her *Quilt of Honour* to The York Centre to work with our Parent Advocacy and Support group to tell their stories. Their strength and courage in telling their stories in front of hundreds of people at our Christmas Concert, in our local papers and to each other has been invaluable in increasing the awareness and decreasing the stigma associated with children's mental health challenges. As a supporter of The York Centre and children's mental health, I hope you will think about adding your voice to our brave parents' voices by speaking to everyone you know about the issues and needs of children with mental health challenges.

By: Mary Beth McLeod

**OUR NEW HOME**

Our new building was celebrated with our Official Opening on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009. In addition to the opportunity for everyone to see our new home, we were thrilled to have the Minister of Children and Youth Services, Deb Matthews and her predecessor, Mary Ann Chambers in attendance. Our major supporters and champions, Richmond Hill Mayor, Dave Barrow; MPPs Helena Jaczek and Greg Sorbara also spoke about their relationships with The York Centre. All of this was topped off with a touching presentation by one of our parents who spoke about what The Centre has meant to her family. The Open House also provided us with the opportunity to thank our donors with the unveiling of our donor recognition wall and donor list displayed in the cabinet in the lobby. For many years, The York Centre has benefited from the community's generosity, from individual donors to corporations and businesses such as Magna International, Allstate Insurance, TELUS, Unilever and many other companies. Please stop by to see our tribute to their generosity.

By: Mary Beth McLeod, Executive Director



Official Opening Ceremony (from L to R) Minister Deb Matthews; MPP Dr. Helena Jaczek, MPP Greg Sorbara and Donna Massel, Parent Advocate



## ADVOCACY

Advocacy continues to be a high priority at The York Centre and many other children's mental health agencies across the province that are struggling to maintain crucial services with very inadequate funding. The provincial government (our major source of funding) has provided only two relatively small increases in the base budgets of children's mental health agencies in the past 16 years!

In York Region the situation is even more critical because of an unjustifiable historical gap in funding (Children's Services receive only \$127 per capita whereas the provincial average is \$221 per capita). Given the rapid population growth and other demographic factors, application of a Population Needs-Based Funding Formula is essential in York Region to ensure equitable funding for children's mental health services as well as other health and social services.

Representatives of The York Centre, Blue Hills and Kinark once again held meetings with the M.P.P.'s for York Region, making a well-researched and passionate case for the urgent need for increased funding. This year our presentations were enhanced by Donna Massel, a parent advocate, who was very articulate and passionate in relating her family's lived experience with their child's mental health issues, their long and frustrating search for help and the effectiveness of the treatment which their child received at The York Centre. We commend Donna for her courage to speak out and to advocate on behalf of the many children and youth with diagnosable mental health disorders who do not receive the treatment/support they need because service capacity is very limited by funding restraints.

Donna Massel and I also made a presentation to the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions at Queen's Park. We focused our remarks on the serious lack of crucial services in the Children's Mental Health Sector caused by lack of funding and the rights of young people to the treatment/support which would enable them to attain optimal mental health and to reach their full potential. We strongly recommended that the mental health of children and youth be the highest priority in the 10-Year Strategy for Mental Health and Addictions.

We sincerely thank the Community Leaders who wrote letters to Premier McGuinty advocating for increased funding for essential community-based children's mental health services. We urge all members of the community to champion this worthy cause...Children's Mental Health is a shared responsibility!

Our advocacy work also includes increasing public awareness of children's mental health issues and promotion of good mental health. During Children's Mental Health

Week, May 2-9th, we intensified our efforts to make information available through schools, libraries and the media.

By: Noreen Lee, Chair  
Board of Directors

## THANKS TO OUR CORPORATE PARTNERS

Support from our corporate partners is so important to The York Centre, as it makes it possible to do all of the extras beyond what our budget allows. Most notable of these are our friends at Unilever.

For the last several years, Unilever has donated a great deal of time and money to The York Centre. Each of the past years they have contributed \$5,000 towards our program and \$1,000 towards gifts for the clients at Christmas. In addition to buying computers and other equipment for the programs, this money has gone towards such things as the rental of a portable wall climb for our summer program, which enabled many children to face their fears, and learn that taking risks can be a positive experience. The Unilever funds paid for our three day winter camp program at the Kinark Outdoor Centre, which for many of the children and youth was their first experience away from home and a great opportunity for team building. In addition, Unilever has generously donated their time. On two occasions each year, Unilever staff has participated in our programs through bowling, baseball games, as well as activities here at The Centre. The Unilever staff, along with the children/youth, has had a great time during these activities.

This past year we also received support from other companies, such as TELUS, which contributed funds to make our 2009 summer program extra fun and a great opportunity for kids to work on their therapeutic goals.

RBC provided funds to run evidence-based parenting groups and anxiety groups. It also enabled us to build our capacity to provide supports to child care centres to build resiliency in the children with whom they work. This funding allowed us to provide services to many more pre-school children and their families this past year.

Over the past years Insurance companies such as Standard Life's employees have supported our Family Festival Fund to assist our families and Allstate Insurance has provided funds for many of our programs.

By: Marcel Wegman,  
Children's Program Coordinator

## FROM THE DIVERSITY COMMITTEE

The Diversity Committee of The York Centre is comprised of various disciplines within the agency. The Committee meets on a monthly basis to discuss topics related to cultural sensitivity, inclusivity and ways in which to better serve the children, youth and families in our communities. As of late, Florence Cheung has been added to the Social Work Team and is currently a representative for Children's Mental Health within the Chinese community. An emphasis is placed on removing the stigma associated with mental health issues in the various cultures of York Region. Sherry Ghasemi, our second Diversity Worker within The York Centre, continues to increase working partnerships with the Iranian population.

In an attempt to further educate our clients and staff, The Centre recognizes significant faith days, holidays and other culturally important celebrations. Children who attend The York Centre have taken a lead in sharing information about their own traditions. In December, a grade six student prepared a presentation about Hannukah to share with all the other classes; as well, two students wrote a speech about celebrating Chinese New Year.

Each week, the committee sends out a small reflective passage or proverb relating to diversity. For Black History Month, our proverb was taken from Africa, specifically Cameroon: **"Rain does not fall on one roof alone."**

We must understand that we all have to go through similar situations. When the economy is tough, it is tough for everyone. When the weather is bad, it is bad for everyone. We all must endure difficulties and we can choose to do so alone or together.

By: Silvia Astudillo, Teacher  
& Darryl Smith, Child & Youth Worker



## SPEECH AT THE LEGISLATURE

**On November 19, 2009, Matthew, one of our students made a presentation to the Ontario Legislature. We would like to share with you some of Matthew's speech:**

### Imagine

*in grade one you think you are the stupidest kid in your class because you are the last to learn to read and you can't cut, paste and colour as well as the other kids.*

### Imagine

*in grade three a psychologist tells you that you are very smart, gifted even, but you can't concentrate on school work and your marks aren't great.*

### Imagine

*your body makes noises and movements that you don't want it to make and the kids in your class call you a "spaz kid" for four years.*

### Imagine

*your teacher tells you that if you could sit still in class and fold your hands on your desk you will be successful but you know that it just isn't possible.*

### Imagine

*going to school gets to be so hard that you have to make yourself go but once you are there you just want to lay on the floor and yell at the top of your lungs.*

### Imagine

*going to five schools in four years because no program seems to work for you.*

### Imagine

*the depression, anxiety and rage that can come from being different.*

*Well, that was my life.....and my disabilities (Tourette's Syndrome, ADHD and LD). But I was very lucky because in grade nine I got to go to The York Centre. There they have helped me with my school work and I take classes like anger management and dealing with anxiety.*

*This year I am going part-time to my High School and The York Centre. I am happy and it is going really well. One year made a huge difference in my life and I am thankful for all the skills that the York Centre has given me. I just wish more kids could get help.....*