

ANNUAL
REPORT
2007-2008



Oolagen
Community
Services

we don't give up on kids



“THE TIMES THEY ARE A CHANGIN’”

(Bob Dylan)



Patricia Andrews
President



Bob Engel
Executive Director

When considering a framework for this report, we could not help but identify “change” as a central theme, not only at Oolagen but in our world. Obviously change can involve a number of aspects of one’s life. For example, our personal lives have changed significantly in relation to our parents. In this respect, we have become caregivers to our elderly parents who deserve to be cared for and loved in their final years as they cared for and loved us during our lives.

In the United States the presidential election emphasized the need for change. In 2008, a new Prime Minister was elected in Canada but at press time it appears that further change may occur. Regardless of one’s political persuasion, change is the only constant. There are more challenges in the world today than ever before in our lifetime. Achieving change for the better will be a daunting task for the successful candidates.

Change has also taken place in our financial systems impacting most of us in many different ways. This change challenges all of us to live within our means. With the bailout of AIG and the bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers and many other financial institutions around the world, we have learned that nothing remains stationary and we need to challenge the way in which we view the future. A new perspective will include Oolagen’s response to the

changing environment in children’s services.

In 2007-2008, Oolagen met the challenge of change. We applied for and received funding to renovate Oolagen House at 591 Huron St. The physical change in the environment made the house warmer, and youth now experience a more homelike atmosphere. In addition, we renegotiated funding for the residential facility on Dalton Rd. This means that our Child Welfare clients continue to receive excellent care from Oolagen staff.

In response to a growing demand for services, Oolagen modified its out-patient program. Specifically, we extended our walk-in program from three hours per week to eight hours. This will enable us to provide service to more clients.

The Toronto community has changed significantly during the past number of years. There are many different cultures living in Oolagen’s catchment area. To help clients from diverse populations, we had to rethink the way in which we provide service. Staff have received additional training in ways to engage diverse communities. We have learned much from Cheryl White and David Denborough from Australia and Charles Waldegrave from New Zealand, well known and knowledgeable professionals in delivering services to indigenous and multicultural communities. This training was essential in providing group work services

to the Tamil and other diverse populations at St. James Town; a program that was funded by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. In addition, we are collaborating with the Child Development Institute to develop a conference related to this issue.

Oolagen’s most important accomplishment in 2007-2008 was the successful completion of Children’s Mental Health Ontario’s Accreditation Program. In order to receive the Accreditation Certificate, Oolagen services and policies must comply with approximately three hundred standards. Oolagen complied with 100% of the mandatory standards and 97% of the non-mandatory standards – an excellent outcome, of which we are very proud.

When considering the success of and change in our agency, the Board of Directors plays a significant role. This year we added three outstanding members to our hard working Board; Barbara Silverberg, Claire Pizer and Anu Bhalla. We thank all Board Members for their excellent work and commitment to our organization. With the support of and direction from the Board, the staff of the agency continues to be energized and responsive to the change that is required to be effective in today’s society.



Condensed Statement of Revenues and Expenses for the year ending 31 March 2008

| Revenues | Expenses |
|--|---|
| Interest & Recoveries \$50,835 | Other \$249,205 |
| | Accommodations \$256,670 |
| | Administration \$187,373 |
| | Travel & Training \$65,271 |
| Grants \$2,876,121 | Program \$52,828 |
| | Salaries & Benefits \$2,115,609 |
| Sundry \$0 | |

Total: \$2,926,956

2008 Operating

Excess (Deficit) of
Revenues over Expenses: Nil

| Revenues | Expenses |
|--|---|
| Interest & Recoveries \$45,683 | Other \$194,969 |
| | Accommodations \$286,681 |
| | Administration \$131,827 |
| | Travel & Training \$62,171 |
| Grants \$2,967,520 | Program \$130,251 |
| | Salaries & Benefits \$2,207,304 |
| Sundry \$0 | |

Total: \$3,013,203

2007 Operating

Excess (Deficit) of
Revenues over Expenses: Nil

How you can help

There are many ways to support our work with kids and families at risk in our community:

Make a monthly gift Your monthly pledge of support will help Oolagen turn troubled youth in the right direction.

A monthly gift is easy, cost-effective and respectful of your time and privacy.

Leave a Legacy If you want to help ensure that troubled youth and their families get the help they need, make Oolagen a part of your estate planning. Your bequest in your Will or through a gift of stock or real estate will help to build an endowment fund that will support our work into perpetuity.

Host an Event A fun way to entertain and make a difference at the same time is to host a fundraiser for Oolagen. Turn a family or work occasion into a philanthropic gesture.

Adopt a Child Your annual gift of \$2,500 will help a troubled youth stay in school as they work through debilitating issues.

Adopt a Family for the Holidays Many of our families also struggle financially. Each year during the holidays, a special committee of young moms,

who have been helped by Oolagen, run a Christmas Sponsorship Drive to help other needy families. Adopters receive a family profile and a list of suggested gifts that also recommends food vouchers for the family. Special thanks to Lindsay Kretschmer who continues to head this program each year.

Designate your United Way Donation to Oolagen Although we are not a member of the United Way, many choose to designate their United Way gift by listing our charitable number BN# 11906 8625 RR0001 with their donation.

Oolagen is Well Managed

At Oolagen, our overhead costs are uniquely managed to remain below 10%. This means that over 90 cents of every dollar donated goes directly towards helping troubled kids in Toronto.

To Donate

Make an online donation at www.oolagen.org
Mail your cheque (payable to Oolagen Community Services) to:

65 Wellesley Street East, Suite 500, Toronto, ON M4Y 1G7
Or call **Caroline Sneath** at 416-395-0660 ext: 230.

James LeNoury of Children's Mental Health Ontario presents Oolagen's Certificate of Accreditation to Board Chair Patti Andrews, at Oolagen's 2008 AGM.





Ruth Pluznick

Director of Clinical Services

We Honour our history and recognize the importance of change

I recently attended a retirement party for an executive director at a neighboring children's mental health centre. The history of our sector was in the room; and the presence (and stories) of so many people who shared the journey over the years to provide services for children and families in children's mental health centres reminded me of the rich traditions of thought and practice that serve as a foundation for the work we do today. It also had me thinking about the many changes that have characterized my 20 years at Oolagen.

When I began, we were "experts" on the problems of young people and families. The models of therapy we relied upon were largely informed by a Eurocentric view of what is "normal" and acceptable with respect to the lives of our clients. A professional's voice was far more influential at a meeting than the voice of young people or family members, and we seldom thought to

consider community members as "consultants" for our work.

Significant changes in Oolagen's philosophy and practices have been underway since the early 90's. Responding to the need to better serve an increasingly diverse population in Toronto, we "went back to school". We studied with the Family Centre of New Zealand to learn how to address issues of social justice alongside our therapeutic work, and we learned narrative therapy from the Dulwich Centre in Australia. In so doing, we introduced ourselves to ideas and practices which made it possible for us to acknowledge the significance of context (class, culture, race, gender politics, etc.) in the way young people and families make sense of the world. We learned the importance of exploring what it is that our clients want for their lives and relationships (instead of simply what's expected by professionals.) We discovered ways to make visible (and utilize) the skills and knowledge, often a legacy from families and cultures, of young people and parents to resolve their own difficulties. Most recently, our partnership with the Dulwich Centre has invited us to develop practices which include communities as well as families in our work.

The staff at Oolagen, while valuing the social work education and training we've received over the years, are relieved that we no longer need to be "experts" in other peoples' lives. We have chosen to adopt programs and practices that acknowledge the unique experiences, contexts and perspectives of clients and help us to respond in ways that fit for them and the lives they want for themselves and their families. This direction for service, reflected in all our programs, rests on our belief that there are many different ways of doing things and the more we can understand what is important to those we are serving, the more our work will be meaningful for them. As mentioned in an earlier annual report, "we are stepping into their shoes, their lives in ways that will hopefully make a difference."

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One illustration of our current service direction is "The Intergenerational Alliance Project" with young people, parents and grandparents in the St. James Town community. The Intergenerational Alliance is a project involving three agencies (Oolagen, Turning Point Youth Services and Boundless Adventures) working together to respond to the needs of multi-cultural parents and care-takers in the St. James Town community who are experiencing difficulties with their adolescent children. In this project, residents in this identified community will be given support to develop a self-sustaining parent helping parent network.

While we bring our resources as children's mental health centre workers to the Intergenerational Alliance Project, the underpinning for the project is a respect for the skills and knowledge of participants as well as opportunities for parents/grandparents to learn from each other; in this exchange, it is possible to discover practices of parenting which are helpful even when they don't represent traditional or "Canadian" ways of doing things. Support will be given for finding a balance between what has been important in the history and culture of participating families and what might be possible or necessary in Canada to prepare their children for success.

The Intergenerational Alliance Project reflects our current philosophies and practices (as do all other projects and services at Oolagen). Yet, as I write this, I suspect there are already changes occurring in the way we do things, perhaps not yet visible, that are influenced by some new thinking that is going on at our agency (or somewhere else in the world). In the end, this may be our legacy. We will always value our history (and our connections to the people who helped to shape directions for children's mental health); we will also commit to an openness to change when the times and circumstances beckon us elsewhere.

“A.J.” Gallant Pays It Forward

“With Oolagen’s support, I was able to accomplish so much. I got my life back.”

What better testament to a program’s relevance and effectiveness than when a client gives back?

Wraparound program participant Arthur Joseph “A.J.” Gallant was featured in a Toronto Star special information supplement spotlighting Children’s Mental Health Week.

Put into the care of the Children’s Aid Society at age nine, A.J. lived in more than 20 places in the span of six years. “Life seemed hopeless,” recalls A.J. “When I was 15, I came to Oolagen’s Huron Residence. I tested everyone’s limits in every way, but Oolagen lived up to their motto: ‘We don’t give up on kids.’”

“The Wraparound program assured me that I had realistic and achievable goals—something new to me. I was able to get my major struggles under control, obtain and keep a job, and pursue my dream of becoming a journalist,” A.J. adds.

A.J. also worked through a truly difficult process to reunite with his mother and move back home. “With Oolagen’s support, I was able to accomplish so much. I got my life back.”

At his Wraparound “graduation” party, A.J. demonstrated just how far he’d come and how much it meant to him. “I made a financial contribution to Oolagen. I really wanted to say ‘thank you’ with more than just words.” And this from a budding writer!

Today, A.J. is a confident young adult who has just celebrated his one year anniversary with his employer, is poised to enrol in a college journalism program, passed his driver’s test and bought his very first car. He has been interviewed by CITY TV, sharing his thoughts as a young voter and the issues that matter to him.

As well as enjoying all these personal successes, A.J. has also committed himself to inspiring other youth to believe and discover there is hope if they put their minds and hearts into their dreams. A.J. says, “My heart rests with Oolagen. They truly don’t give up on kids.”

Oolagen residential programs served 22 youth and families.



A Winning Partnership

Since 2005, Winners Merchants International has donated generously to support Oolagen's Walk-In Clinic. Sean Blackwood, store manager at the Scotia Plaza Winners, was a special guest at a recent Oolagen team meeting. We learned more about Winners and their commitment to social responsibility, and Sean learned more about how Winners' financial support helps us help kids.

Sean Blackwood of Winners presents Oolagen Board member Heather DeGraaf with a \$10,000 donation.



Oolagen's Walk-in Clinic and Out Patient Program reduced wait times and expanded service hours

Oolagen Wraparound Projects with child welfare agencies served 78 youth and families, including 31 young moms and their families

Deborah Goodman, MSW, RSW, Ph.D. and Manager of Research and Evaluation of the Child Welfare Institute at Children's Aid Society Toronto, is leading two research projects for Oolagen.

Oolagen Goes Global

In September 2008, Ruth Pluznick was invited to join Cheryl White and David Denborough of the Dulwich Centre in Australia for a narrative therapy training initiative in the Middle East. For five years, the Dulwich Centre has been working with the Treatment and Rehabilitation Center for Victims of Torture (TRC) in Ramallah, to provide training, support and further development of culturally appropriate narrative ideas and practices for counselors. Ruth participated in a training event in Ramallah.

Dulwich Centre also has a 20 year partnership with Israeli colleagues in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. Ruth gave a workshop at the Barcai Institute in Tel Aviv for youth whose parents are experiencing mental health difficulties. Ruth, David and Cheryl met Palestinian and Israeli colleagues to talk about the complexities of life and relationships in the Middle East and explore opportunities for further involvement.

Cheryl wrote a letter to Bob Engel expressing her thanks to him for supporting Ruth's participation in this important event:

The ability to teach with generous, open-hearted clarity asks a lot of a teacher...



Dear Bob,

Thank you for supporting Ruth Pluznick's very valuable contribution in the Middle East. She offered so much; she was great!

It is not an easy task to move between two places so war-torn, traumatized and affected by conflict. The ability to teach with generous, open-hearted clarity asks a lot of a teacher; this is what Ruth managed.

To our colleagues in Israel it means a huge amount to have Jews from the Diaspora share their work. They live with their children going into the army, their clients having problems associated with the legacy of the Holocaust, terror attacks and the criticism of other countries. Ruth's visit also meant a huge amount to the Treatment and Rehabilitation Center for Victims of Torture in Ramallah. They trusted her, respected her as a Jewish person who cared about their plight, was connected to Israel and cared about the hardships they face.

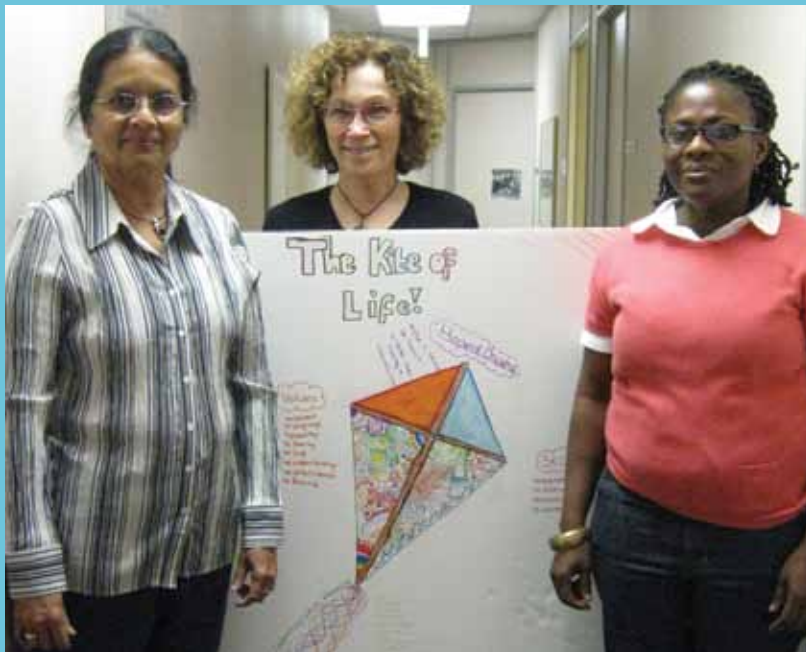
You would have been filled with pride seeing Ruth teaching across translation in Arabic; the rapt and engaged faces of young Muslim women as they listened attentively. It was humbling to see what this rare opportunity meant to them.

I do not need to tell you what a good teacher Ruth is, or what a great spirit she has. And she speaks so highly of Oolagen!

I wanted to thank you personally for making this possible.

Warmly,
Cheryl

Visit www.dulwichcentre.com.au



A young participant in the St. James Town Intergenerational Alliance workshop explains, "We the young people and our parents are the kite. Our grandparents are the ones holding the strings to the kite. They release us out slowly, and they pull us back slowly to protect us when there is a strong wind." St. James Town project coordinators Thilaka Xavier and Joyce Edem are pictured with Ruth Pluznick.

"It is well-known that the protest movements of the sixties profoundly altered laws and attitudes. Less well-known is how those movements changed youth services." Keith Hefner, *The Movement for Youth Rights 1945-2000*, Social Policy magazine, Spring, 1998

Founded on Change

by **Caroline Sneath**
Director of Development

Growing up in the 60s

formed the way a generation of youth viewed the world.

They believed they could change the world, stop the war and make the world a better place for all. This was the era in which Oolagen was born. Before the youth movement in the 60's there was a "one-size fits all approach" to treating problems faced by young people. Now young people were recognized and respected as individuals not just "adults in training" and organizations like Oolagen grew out of the need to respond to the needs of youth as young people defined these needs.

Oolagen has stayed true to this spirit and works with the youth and families in our programs as partners in the change that we make in their lives. We also recognize that we are only able to do this important work through the generosity and partnership of our supporters. By working together, we are able to continually adapt to best meet the needs in our community and enable young people and their families to make positive changes in their lives.

The Change You Make

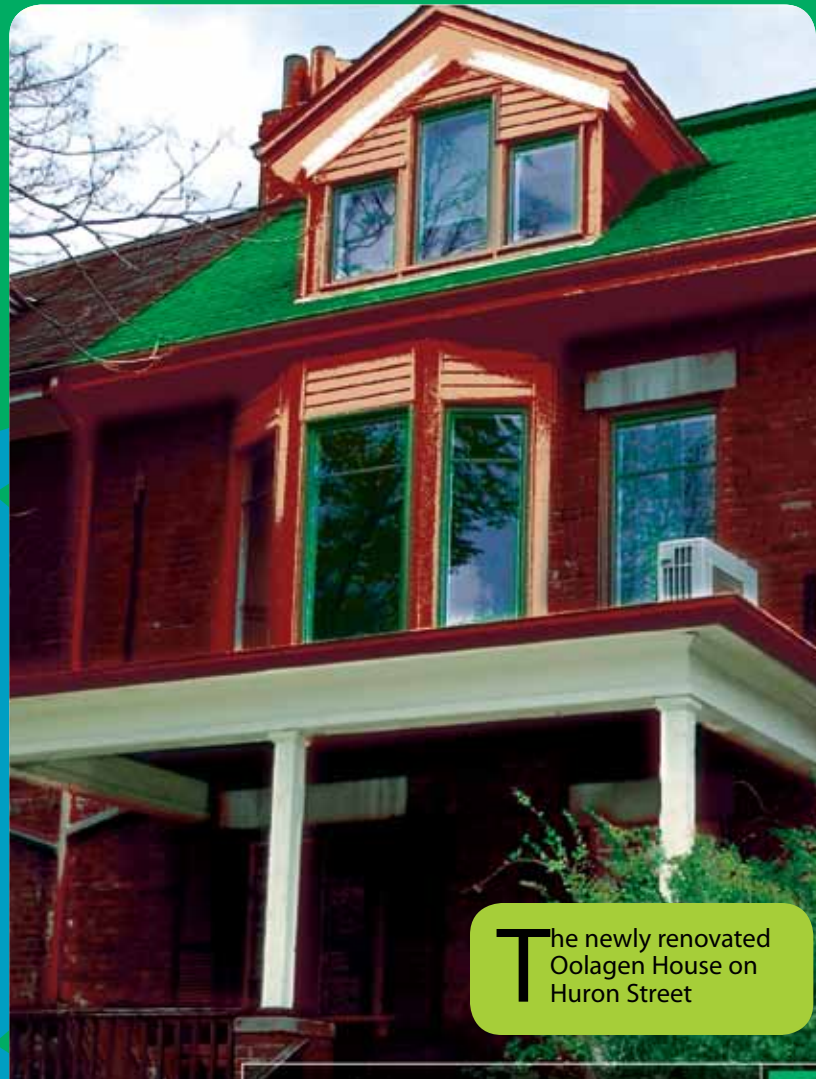
This past year we were able to finish the renovations of Oolagen House (pictured on the right), one of our two residential treatment programs located in downtown Toronto. We also started a pilot project in the St. James Town community to build a self-sustaining, culturally sensitive parenting support group. We have expanded the hours of our walk-in clinic and in doing so we revamped our in-take process by combining it with the walk-in.

One of our newest donors is A.J (featured on page 5), a former resident of Oolagen's Annex House. A.J. speaks very highly of our work and the help and direction he received from our staff. In thanking us, he decided to become a donor and give back to the organization that helped him grow into the confident and capable young man that he is today.

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Daily we see the changes in the lives of many young people like A.J. who walk through our doors. Often, when they first come to us, they feel hopeless and overwhelmed with the challenges they face. At Oolagen, we help to guide them through their difficulties and enable them to find their strengths to work through their issues and build on their hopes and their dreams.

We are deeply grateful for the support of our donors. At Oolagen, the smallest gift goes a very long way in helping a young person grow to become capable and confident and this makes the future brighter for us all. In the true spirit of our founding, we are all working together to change our world, one child at a time.



The newly renovated Oolagen House on Huron Street

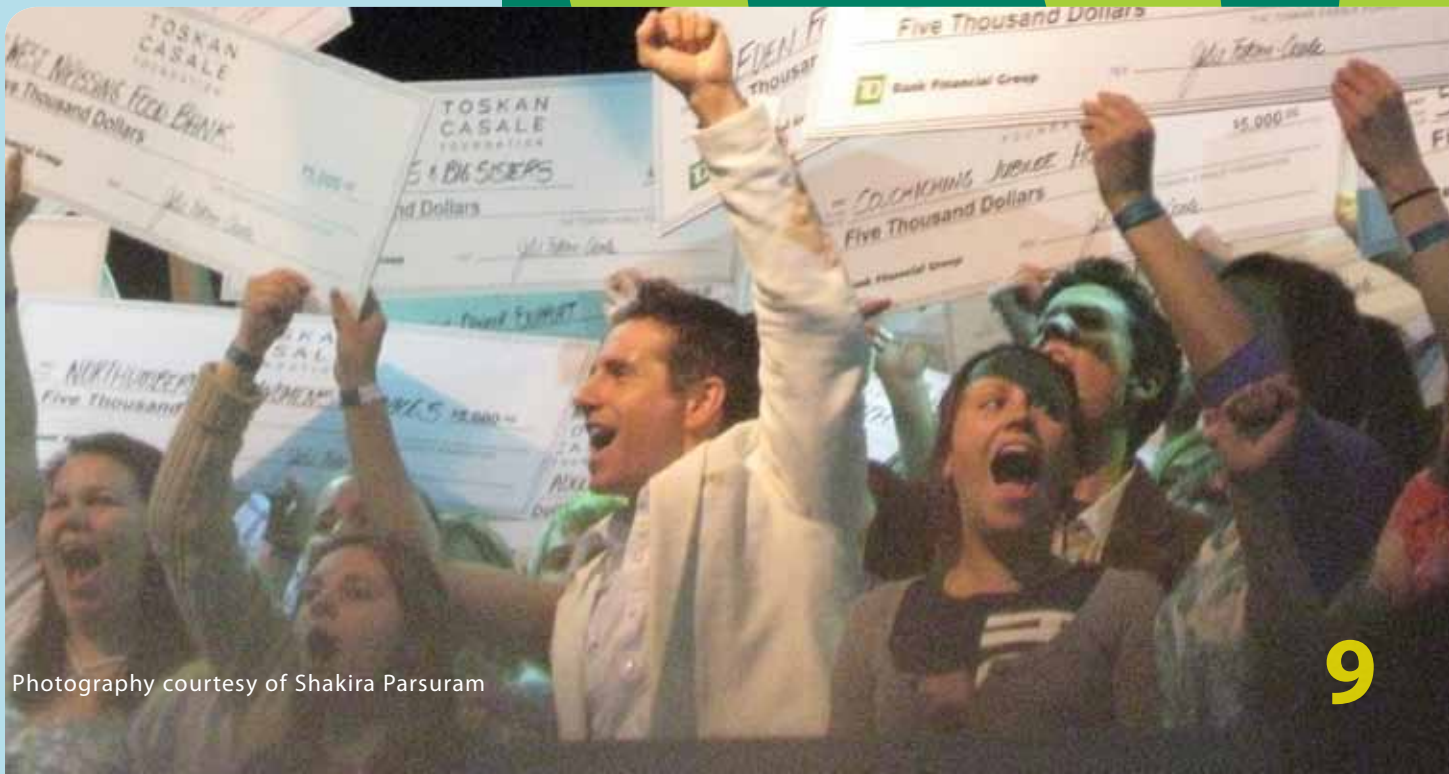
Teens Helping Teens

Since the Toskan Casale Foundation launched the Youth Philanthropy Program (YPI)

in Canada in 2002, 120 high schools across our country participate. Students research problems in their community, choose one charity, write a funding proposal and present the charity to their classmates. One proposal is then selected to represent that class in an intramural competition. The final element in the program sees each class team presenting the charity they are championing to an independent judging panel.

In 2008, the judges chose the proposal for Oolagen, presented by Sir John A. Macdonald Secondary School students as the winner, resulting in a \$5,000 grant.

Sir John A. Macdonald S.S.
wins a \$5,000 grant for Oolagen



Photography courtesy of Shakira Parsuram

Oolagen in Forest Hill

There's a new face at Forest Hill Collegiate

Institute (FHCI) this year and it's our one and only Bonnie-Sue Solomon. Bonnie Sue has been a social worker for our school-based program since 2002. She hit the ground running by visiting every single class in the school, sending an email to all parents and addressing the Grade 9 orientation night, all as ways to introduce herself and the work of Oolagen.

FHCI is a new addition to Oolagen's school based program and is the only ESL school in North Toronto. Half of the 900 students are newcomers to Canada.

Prevention programs Bonnie-Sue has started at FHCI include a hosting a Bullying Awareness



Week in November and starting a school-wide "Caught you Caring Campaign" that recognizes students' acts of kindness and then enters their names into a draw to win prizes.

Oolagen After Hours Project Yields Encouraging Results

In our ongoing efforts to gain greater understanding of the child welfare experience and avoid admitting children aged 10 to 16 years of age into care, the Children's Aid Society of Toronto, in partnership with the Catholic Children's Aid Society, Native Child and Family Services and Jewish Family and Child Services and Oolagen have undertaken a 1 year pilot project with respective Emergency After Hour Service (EAHS) programs.

Designed to document the impact of pairing EAHS workers with an Oolagen adolescent therapist, the initiative studies families receiving intervention by an Oolagen worker and compares their key outcomes against families who receive traditional EAHS intervention. Key outcomes for these families will be tracked for two years.

Of the 21 families who have contacted Oolagen since the project began in April of this year, all youth, with the exception of one, were able to remain in the community with family or another care provider.

300 students and families received on-site counselling from Oolagen

Oolagen school-based programs address and provide support for family conflict, depression, suicide, bullying, eating disorders and other barriers to student success and wellbeing.

Oolagen delivered 650 consultations with school staff to address problem behaviours

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The Catholic Children's Aid of Toronto

Our delightful cover features original artwork by Raeshawn, a 12 year-old Grade 8 student, from the "Friends of Oolagen Community" greeting card series. Greeting cards are \$20 per set, and part of the proceeds benefit the Oolagen Young Moms Committee. To purchase cards, call 416-395-0660.

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Graphic Design: Steve Caston (Loogadis.com)

Oolagen Photography: Ana DeMelo



*we
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give
upon
kids*

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Charitable Registration # BN 11906 8625 RR0001