

# Celebrations



*Celebrating 19 years of providing care, commitment  
and compassion to foster children & youth*



This publication is dedicated to the memory  
of Ron Driediger “Unforgettable”.

## Words are not enough

By Cheryl Sutherland, Executive Director

On Saturday April 14, 2007 I spent the evening celebrating at our foster parent appreciation dinner. It was such a great opportunity to enjoy fellowship with a group of wonderful people that I have the pleasure of knowing. We laughed, cried, had a spectacular meal and great conversations. It was a privilege and an honour to be in the same room as our dedicated, loving foster parents.

There was a slide-show presentation depicting “foster parents in action” with “You are Loved” by Josh Groban playing in the background. It offered a chance to witness the love that is given so freely and unconditionally from our foster parents to the foster children. As well as a time to say ‘THANK YOU’. After the slide-show I went up on stage to say a little something to move the program along and found myself lost for words. How do you put “THANK YOU” into words? Where does the list begin and then end. How does one heart speak to another heart? It is like you find a rare flower that has beauty beyond belief. You try to describe it to people, but no matter how you try you do not do it justice. This is how I feel about our foster parent group. We have been blessed with amazing people that have an endless longing to make a difference in the life of a child. However it is done quietly in the background so as not to bring attention to them. When asked “why did they become foster parents”? They humbly respond “I couldn’t see myself doing anything else”. We have an outstanding group of foster parents!

The next day I was sitting in the van while my husband was getting gas when I observed a woman and a boy at a bus stop. I love to people watch! The boy had his back to the woman and was not making any contact. The woman went over to the boy and put his hood on. The

boy jerked away as if to say “leave me alone”. The boy continued to stand with his back to the woman. The woman arrived in front of the boy. He then turned his back the other way. The woman moved around in front of the boy again. He again turned his back the other way. The woman came from behind and tried to be playful and hug him. The boy jerked away and again turned his back to the woman. As I watched I thought this woman could be a foster parent and this boy a foster child. I watched the woman try and try again to engage this boy in such a loving and playful manner. She didn’t give up despite the boy’s attempts to shut her out.

I was amazed at the tenderness and tenacity I was observing. It may have been a mother and son having a disagreement of some sort and I could have totally misread the whole situation. However I prefer my version where I am reminded of the unconditional love that is extended to foster children from foster parents. The “mission” of “making a difference”, “never giving up”, “making a breakthrough”, and “building relationships”.

Although the woman and the boy got on the bus and I will probably never see them again. I will be reminded each time I witness “foster parents in action” ready to do whatever it takes to make a difference!

# Celebrations



By Patricia Aitchison, Supervisor and CAFAS Trainer

## CAFAS comes to Bridgeway Family Homes

The Child and Adolescent Functional Assessment Scale (CAFAS) is a tool designed to measure the overall functioning and degree of impairment in children and youth who may have emotional, behavioural, substance abuse, psychiatric or psychological problems. It takes a snapshot of a child or youth's current and recent functioning in all areas of their life to help determine what, if any help or support is needed.

This assessment scale was designed by Dr. Kay Hodges, Professor of Psychology at Eastern Michigan University, is time efficient to administer and proven to have high rates of reliability and validity. The CAFAS looks at the level of impairment (severe, moderate, mild or none) a child or youth may be experiencing in eight areas of their life: School/Work, Home, Community, Behaviour Toward Others, Moods/Emotions, Self-Harming Behaviour, Substance Abuse, and Thinking. Each item is based on behavioural descriptions; for instance in the Behaviour Toward Others subscale, vindictive behaviour that is "deliberately and persistently annoying to others" or "intentionally damaging" other's belongings is scored as a Moderate Impairment. The total scores are printed in the report with an accompanying explanation regarding the overall level of dysfunction and the degree of intervention needed. The CAFAS also provides

an area to focus on the child or youth's strengths and to formulate treatment planning goals based on their most serious issues.

It is well documented that early identification and treatment for children and youth leads to better outcomes. As children enter our program we can now more readily assess their level of functioning and initial level of disturbance in order to provide earlier treatment responses. It is our intention to use the CAFAS with new school age admissions and at regular intervals throughout their care in order to track their progress. We are also administering this assessment for our current and long term school age children and youth as a means of tracking outcome measures for research and quality assurance purposes.

As of January 2007 all our Bridgeway Workers have been trained and received their certificates of Reliability as CAFAS raters.



Allora's Art  
age 8

“Support, growth, respect and humour”,  
Bridgeway Workers share their perspective



## Bridgeway Workers: What being on call 24/7 means

One situation was when a foster family was in crisis with a teenager in their home. This family started fostering specifically to care for this teen. They were struggling to maintain the placement and foster mother would call when she would be feeling overwhelmed by the teen's behaviour and the commitment that she had made to this teen. She was grateful to have a safe, non-judgemental outlet available for her and other family members. I was also able to de-escalate the teen over the phone and process issues and end conversations on a positive note, and foster parents would immediately call back to say “thank you”.

*Sandra Robinson*

Some may think wow, 24/7 is crazy, how do you do that? Well, the reality is that there are not a lot of calls that come in after regular business hours; however, when they do, I know that my foster parents need some help and I am 100% ok with giving them what they need during this time of crisis. My foster parents are very considerate of my family time and they use the 24/7 availability that I have for them with great respect. I look at this as an extension of what they commit to each and every child that comes into their home....when my foster parents commit to a child, I commit to them.

*Raquel Garcia*

I remember having a few mid-night “buffet” meetings at one home waiting for an extremely difficult runaway teen to return and the police to show up. Also with two CAS workers, 2 police officers, the family, and myself discussing what to do with a girl who seemed almost impossible to keep safe. Then there's taking a few calls when a child has been admitted to the hospital, or a foster parent is feeling discouraged and wonders if they have the strength to go on.

We all count on each other. It is the truest honor to get to serve at the feet of my families, to actually feel like something I have been able to do has maybe helped make their service and devotion to these precious, but troubled, children a little easier or more positive.

*Joyce Bradimore*

24/7 has been about displaying and living out authentic servanthood. My role was not to be served but to serve the foster parents and the children in their care. During the crisis times, we grew together, supported each other, cried together and laughed together. We learned to trust each other, find solace in the voice at the end of the phone and embrace the comfort that found its way in a hug. The support in serving others definitely has had many rewards. In my humble opinion, time will prove and has proven the value in this type of support.

*Judy Emmerson*

Being a parent is an assignment that takes place 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Since the one of the key roles of the Bridgeway Worker is to “walk along-side of the foster parent”, being there 24/7 makes sense. The times when the foster parent most needs support is when he or she is experiencing a crisis with a child. Immediate contact is a real benefit. It is important that the foster parent gets assistance from someone who knows the child, the issues and the goals. Foster parents are best served by someone who knows them well. Their own worker can best provide all of these needs. Immediate knowledge of any crisis is comforting for the worker in that “no news is good news”.

*Marguerite Nash*

Foster parents are very appreciative of having a familiar voice on the phone when a crisis arises, instead of an unknown worker. I had a recent experience and was able to assist a family with a teen that had gone AWOL. I have a relationship with the child, and I was able to convince him to comply with going home. Forming trusting relationships with my foster families is vital to my role, and knowing that during their times of extreme challenge, I can be there for the foster parents is what the 24/7 on call benefit is all about.

*Angela Mumford*

photo above from left to right: Judy Emmerson, Raquel Garcia, Joyce Bradimore, Sandra Robinson, Marguerite Nash, Angela Mumford



## FCSS soon to be known as: Family and Children's Support Services

# Foster Care Support Services partners with community agencies to support children & families

By Kevin Horlock, Program Administrator, Foster Care Support Services

Foster Care Support Services has been providing services to Bridgeway Family Homes exclusively over the last 8 years. The services that have been provided are the Transportation Service, Child Care during Foster Parent In-service Training as well as contracted services via the Child and Family Support Workers and Educational Development Workers. Recognizing that FCSS is an agency that is fully prepared to support all children and all families in need, FCSS will be known in the near future as Family and Children's Support Services. This is an agency that can provide services to biological family systems, adoptive families, and kinship care family agreements.

In December of 2006 we took the bold step of starting to provide direct services to another agency involved in a special project which entailed providing support to foster families, and biological families who are experiencing challenges in caring for children with FASD.

The Toronto Children's Aid Society and Catholic Children's Aid Society in conjunction with Alliance Youth Services are participating in a special project for FASD children, youth and families. This is being funded by The Hospital for Sick Children. This project focused on relief services in the form of overnight relief as well as day-time relief. CAS workers refer children and youth who have been diagnosed with FASD, or where there is suspicion that the child/youth has FASD to Alliance Youth Services for support.

FCSS was invited to join this project specifically for contracting the Child and Family Support Worker service to provide day-time relief as well as for accessing relief families from Bridgeway Family Homes to provide overnight/weekend relief.

Since mid December 2006, FCSS has supported approximately 35 children and youth by filling the referrals for day-time relief through the Child and Family Support Worker service as well as by coordinating the referrals for overnight relief by accessing the relief services through Gayle Einarsson at Bridgeway Family Homes. In January 2007, Alliance Youth Services approached FCSS about providing drivers through the Transportation Service to assist with the travel needs of the children, youth and families who were being referred to Foster Care Support Services from Alliance Youth Services.

By partnering with Alliance Youth Services, this has presented Foster Care Support Services the opportunity to make their name known not only to Alliance Youth Services but also to Toronto CAS and to Catholic CAS. We are excited about the possibilities that could be before us as we continue to provide direct services to, not only Bridgeway Family Homes, but to other social services agencies as well in order to meet the ongoing needs of children, youth and families in our communities.

Photo above: Front row (left to right) Michelle Todd, Aaron Marshall, Back row: Gerry Stanley, Heidi Quayle, Kevin Horlock



By Phyllis Pecile, Office Supervisor

It was a pleasure to discover what some of our graduates are doing! This is a beginning in Bridgeway's outcome measures research. These graduates still keep in contact with their foster families and continue to experience their support. As foster mom, Elizabeth Cameron shares: **"Our goal is to give these children wings so they may soar on their own, secure in the knowledge that they are loved."**

## Celebrating some of our graduates

**LIZ POWELL:** Liz just finished two years at Tyndale University and a half year at Seneca College. She is now attending York University full time. Her goals are to work at the Children's Aid Society or work in the psychiatric field with mood disorders. She work's part time at Swiss Chalet and part time at Tyndale at the desk. She's very happy.

**BECKY POWELL:** Becky is doing well. Becky works full time at McDonalds and lives in Toronto. She say's she is enrolling at the adult learning center next week to continue her education.

**RODNEY BARNES:** Rodney is full time at Ryerson and he is studying journalism and hopes to work as a journalist one day. He is employed by an underground Toronto newspaper that he writes random articles for. He has also been playing guitar at Open Mike nights on campus and plans to go tree planting in British Columbia this summer.

**VANESSA CLARKSON:** Vanessa is currently living in Niagara Falls and working in the retail business. After graduating with honours in the Social Service Worker course in Peterborough, she was ready to work in the field but could not find anything in Niagara Falls. She originally moved to Niagara Falls to save money for university while living with friends. She still intends to get a Social Work Degree.

**MOLIANA VIL:** Moli is doing well and is positive about her life. She is working at a Wendy's restaurant for quite some time. She has been doing hairdressing for a while and did not find this very interesting. Moli wants to go back to school for Social Work.

**CANDACE BERNARD:** Candace is living in Laval QC taking a French course and understands and speaks French well. She had some setbacks but is now working part time on her high school credits and is determined to complete this. She says after she completes her credits she wants to attend college and be a teacher to work with young children perhaps in a daycare or grade 1 or 2 level.

**OLESYA SLABINSKI:** Olesya graduated from grade 12 and is just completing her first year at Algonquin College in the Personal Support Worker program. She has plans to return to college and further her education as a dental hygienist. She is thrilled to have completed this year and is eager to work and make some money. She knows even after completing the dental hygiene program she will also have this PSW program to fall back on for a choice of jobs.

**BOGDAN SLABINSKI:** Bogdan is currently in grade 12 and does two in school credits and two co-op credits. Co-op is in the construction business, which he really seems to enjoy. He is



## If we could see them now!

well liked by his employer and they have offered him an apprenticeship program, which he is currently looking into registering for. He will do this for 2 years until completed.

**JIMMY MCCARTHY:** Jim has a part time job at Sunoco as a cashier and car wash attendant to earn money for college. He has won awards as an athlete and as a percussionist in his school band. He is also certified as a lifeguard/swim instructor with CPR/First Aid. He graduates from High School this June and plans to enter Durham College this fall to study Social Work. He wants to work with street kids for awhile in a ministry such as "The Refuge" in Oshawa.

**KELLY MCCARTHY:** Kelly graduates this June to the E.C.M. program. (Extended Care & Maintenance) He works part time at Swiss Chalet while completing high school and he has won awards in Science. He has been accepted into Durham College this fall for the 3 year Computer Technology program. He hopes to get a good enough paying job in computers so that one day he can help support other foster kids who need college scholarships. He's currently very interested in police officers who are computer specialists who track down Child abusers & pornographers.

**YUAN BARNES:** Yuan is currently finishing grade 12 and has applied to 3 universities to

study music education. She is in the middle of the audition process and does not know which school she will attend in September. Right now, besides high school she is keeping busy studying music harmony and grade 9 piano. Yuan works part time at Tim Horton's and volunteers at Church leading kid's worship on Sunday mornings and helps out at Junior High twice a month.

She is not sure which career to follow. Teaching music, music therapy and piano tuning are all being talked about.

**DONNIE WINGER:** After several years of going through some difficulties, he is now in a very good place. Donnie is working full-time for G.P. BIKES in sales, maintenance, home shows etc. He has paid off debts, and established a bank account, and has his own credit card. He is doing well!

**BOBBY WINGER:** Is working full-time for BETZ POOLS and this last year they put him through a course on pump maintenance. He has his own car and is also doing well.

**JONATHAN KEATING:** Jonathon turned 18 in 2005 and left home in 2006. Currently he is finishing off a life skills program and is so excited to be starting two jobs. One job will be at Walmart and the second job is at the new soccer stadium.(for the summer).

**BRADLEY ROWE:** Bradley is working full time in the construction industry. He is currently working in a new home development. He has a nice apartment and he bought his own car recently.

**RORY HARRISON:** Rory has graduated from grade 12 and will be attending university to study history.

**ANDREW LITTLE:** Andrew is doing well. He lives in the Barrie area in a staff supported, independent living home. Andrew holds a full time job in a T-shirt screening store.

**KATRINA GARDNER:** Katrina just graduated from Mohawk College achieving her Social Worker Diploma. She has completed her first year at Carlton University where she plans to graduate with her BA in Social Work. She lives in Ottawa and works full time during the summer.

photographs starting on left page, clockwise:  
Liz Powell, Andrew Little, Olysya and Bogdan Slabinski, Jimmy McCarthy, Jonathon Keating, Katrina Garder, Kelly McCarthy, Rodney Barnes, Yuan Barnes, Vanessa Clarkson, Rory Harrison, Candace Bernard



photo of Donna Debolt

By John Neufeld, Manager of Program Development

## Bridgeway prioritizes caring for children/youth with FASD

### Donna Debolt provides FASD training at Bridgeway

On April 23rd & 24th, Donna Debolt presented on caring for individuals with alcohol related disabilities. Donna's passion and commitment to individuals affected by FASD came through clearly and was well received by a group of 200 participants. For the first time in Bridgeway history, our training was offered to other agencies. Participants included foster parents, adoptive parents, relief parents, CYW's, Social Workers, and teachers.

One participant wrote, "Donna's approach is engaging and energetic. Her use of story and humour, along with academic information kept me engaged." Many participants commented on how Donna challenged their thinking and present practice. Participants felt en-

ergized, empowered and they left with a sense of hope. Many were excited to try some of the strategies presented in the workshop. Donna's use of anecdotes and powerful videos was also greatly appreciated.

Organizing this training came out of Bridgeway's philosophy to continuously increase our knowledge about the children we serve. Donna made us aware that 80% of individuals with FASD are raised by others and that a high percentage of children in care are affected by FASD. Knowing that in order to assist individuals with FASD requires lifelong planning and a community approach has challenged us at Bridgeway to explore new avenues of service for these children.



Skylar's Art  
Age 3



# Celebrations

## What can dinosaurs teach us about fostering?



By John Neufeld, Manager of Program Development

We recently had an Appreciation Dinner for our Foster Parents where we celebrated their years of service. We still have families fostering with us that started close to our beginnings 19 years ago. When Cheryl commemorated the foster parents that have fostered for over 10 years, she referred to them as the dinosaurs of fostering.

Due to the dynamic nature of fostering, we are continuously seeking new families to serve children in care. We receive inquiries about fostering almost on a daily basis. For every 100 families that inquire about fostering with us, only 8 go on to have their homestudy completed and provide care. So how do you find the “best” or most appropriate foster families? I go back to the words of wisdom Ron Driediger shared with me at the beginning of my work at Bridgeway, “Build relationships with your foster parents, and let them teach you about fostering.” I started to think about our dinosaurs and what they have taught me over the years. What qualities do these foster families possess that have allowed them to become dinosaurs?

Yes they are all empathic, caring, nurturing, patient, committed, stable, and mature (most days!). However, there are three characteris-

tics that set them apart: flexibility, humility, and teachability. These are three characteristics we try to assess in all of our prospective families.

**FLEXIBILITY** - Although being organized makes fostering easier, the ability to be flexible and to “just go with the flow” is essential. If you like your ducks all in a straight line, fostering is probably not for you. Fostering is one massive juggling act where all the balls don’t always stay in the air. Unfortunately our children don’t always behave according to plan, workers don’t always show up on time or the right day, and appointments get switched at the last minute. Or better yet, you had plans for the weekend and Gayle calls you on Thursday about a sibling group that needs to be placed by the end of the day. Somehow these foster parents are able to effectively problem-solve and respond. Going the extra-mile is a part of these families’ DNA.

**HUMILITY** - I have been most moved by the humility that our foster parents display on a regular basis. They possess a servant’s heart and stay focused on the needs of the child. When a child makes some progress, they attribute the success to outside of themselves. I have often heard our dinosaurs say that they feel called to foster and that something greater is occurring here and they are just

playing their small role in it. Fostering is a very humbling experience that teaches you more about yourself than what you will teach your children. Our dinosaurs have been able to accept this fact.

**TEACHABILITY** - When a prospective family lets me know what a wonderful job they’ve done raising their own children and now they would like to do the same for foster children, I question their teachability. If you have a rigid idea of what parenting looks like, fostering is probably not for you. Our dinosaurs have an unquenchable thirst for new knowledge on how to best serve their children. They never assume they know everything and realize that their approach to each of the children in the home is individualized based on the children’s needs. They have openness to other’s perspectives and are willing to try new things.

So if you know of any potential dinosaurs that have a heart for children, tell them about fostering. We use various methods in trying to find future dinosaurs including advertising at the zoo and in The Prehistoric Times newspaper. Unfortunately, there’s only one tried, tested and true way of finding new families: word of mouth. To the dinosaurs who have taught us so much about fostering and have encouraged others to join the journey, thank you!

**Creative Foster Parent Corner:**  
Providing happy and fun moments today,  
will create special memories for tomorrow.



## Teddy bear's picnic

By Barb Van Auken, Bridgeway Foster Mother

**Who:** Five crown wards ( 3 of whom are FASD) plus three biological granddaughters, ages 4 yrs. – 9 yrs.

**When:** One cold Saturday afternoon in March

**What:** A three hour party with lots of fun activities including:

- Each girl brought a teddy bear; extra teddy bears were set around as decorations.
- Bears were drawn on construction paper for the girls to color, cut out and hang up (more decorations).
- Eat lunch picnic style on a blanket spread on family room floor.
- Painted with water pictures (book from \$ store).
- Put together a Teddy Bears Puzzle (\$ store puzzle).
- Pin the tail on the Bear game (large bear drawn on sheets of construction paper)
- Musical Bear Chairs game (only the bears could sit on the chairs).
- Decorate & eat Gingerbread Bear cookies. (\$ store cookie cutter).
- Took home Pooh Bear Balloon and gummy bears (\$ store).

**Cost:** \$8.00 ( \$1 per girl)

**Benefits:** Lots of fun for all the girls.

**Life Skills learned by the two oldest girls who planned the party (age 8 & 9):**

1. How to plan and prepare a party considering age differences/needs
2. Baking gingerbread bear cookies
3. Making homemade signs and decorations
4. Being good hostesses.
5. Cleaning up after the party.

**Effort by Foster Mother:** minimal

**Reward:** Priceless smiles and happy memories.

**Moral to this Story?**

Kids who are busy planning parties and activities do NOT wear out foster parents with negative behaviors.



Shyanne's Art  
Age 5

# Celebrations



1st photo left to right: Patricia Aitchison, foster parent mentors: Dawna-Mae Mills and Gloria Oxley, 2nd photo: Foster parent mentor, Sherree Hackenschmidt receives a hug of appreciation.

## *B*ridgeway develops a foster parent mentor program

Peer support will make a difference by enriching and further equipping the foster parent community at Bridgeway.

It has been well documented that having/providing/ensuring that foster parents are well supported helps to promote the longevity of placements as well as retention of foster homes and helps with recruitment.

Bridgeway Family Homes has been committed to providing solid and consistent support to foster parents. Ensuring foster parents feel supported and valued is Bridgeway's goal and intent.

The introduction of the foster parent mentoring program is in line with this goal as Bridgeway recognizes that along with the support already in place through the Bridgeway Worker, it is also recognized that peer support is of tremendous value. Peer support offers a voice that speaks from personal experience. Experience is often regarded as the BEST TEACHER. The foster parent mentors have invaluable experience having already 'walked a mile' (or 10,000 miles) in these shoes!

Bridgeway launches their foster parent mentoring program this summer.

By Gayle Einarsson and Patricia Aitchison  
(Gayle and Patricia will be overseeing the development of the Foster Parent Mentor Program)



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