



# Care UPDATE



## 1<sup>st</sup> Bruce Harmsworth Volunteer of the Year Award Winner Announced

The Children's Aid Society of Hamilton is pleased to announce that Brian McVittie has been named the first recipient of the Bruce Harmsworth Volunteer of the Year Award.

Mr. McVittie has held numerous volunteer roles within the agency over his seven years of volunteer service and has provided over 6,500 hours of his time. He is particularly well-known for his role as a volunteer driver. His jovial personality and passion to help children make him well known to not only the agency staff but also agency foster parents and the children who benefit from his support.

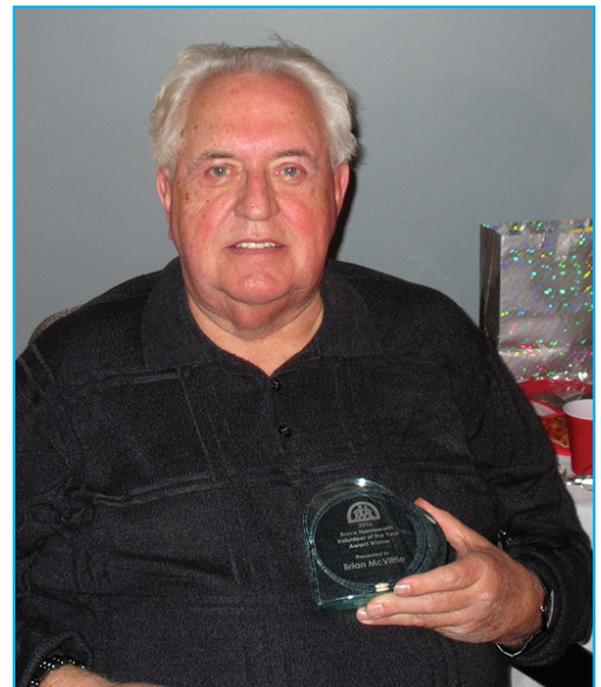
In one of the numerous nominations received in support of Mr. McVittie, one foster mother said, "Mr. Brian has been one of our favourite drivers to work with over the years. He is always pleasant. He treats the children with such kindness and compassion – you can tell he really cares."

She went on to say, "All the kids here get excited when Mr. Brian pulls in the drive...foster kids or otherwise. He has become like a second 'Grandpa' around here."

Another foster mom expressed similar sentiments in her nomination stating, "What makes him stand out is his ability to make the kids feel special and safe. He lights up when he sees them and makes them feel that they are the most important person in the room at that time."

The Society extends congratulations to Mr. McVittie on this recognition and also sincere thanks. Agency volunteers play a tremendous role within the agency and their ongoing efforts are greatly appreciated.

Thank you as well to those who submitted nominations for Mr. McVittie and many other CAS volunteers for this wonderful award as we recognize their efforts and unselfish dedication to the families and children in our community.



Brian McVittie, CAS Volunteer

*"Brian is passionate about helping vulnerable kids feel special and safe."*

*~ Foster Mom*

See a brief history about the Bruce Harmsworth Volunteer of the Year Award on page 2.

# Proposed Changes to CFSA

In early December 2016, Michael Coteau, the province's Minister of Children and Youth Services, tabled Bill 89: Supporting Children, Youth and Families Act, 2016, in the Ontario Legislature.

Bill 89 introduces historic amendments to the Child and Family Services Act (CFSA) that are intended to strengthen and modernize child and youth services. The proposed Bill would create the Child Youth and Family Services Act (CYFSA), which will replace the CFSA and contain amendments that reflect many of the child welfare sector's long-standing advocacy efforts: changing the age of protection, a legislative framework for information access and privacy, recognition of extra-provincial protection orders, personal liability coverage for board governors and supports for older youth.

Input for the Bill was provided by children's aid societies across the province as well as the Independent Officers of the Legislature (PACY, Auditor General), young people, service providers, caregivers, key public sector stakeholders and recommendations from inquests and other review processes.

The proposed CYFSA is ambitious and its proposed changes are wide-reaching including youth justice and residential services. It broadly grants regulation-making

authority to the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and contains multiple amendments in the following key areas:

- Protection and Prevention
- Quality Improvement
- Accountability and Oversight
- Support for First Nations, Métis and Inuit People

Of particular note is the proposed change in age for vulnerable youth. Whereby the current legislation has the age of protection as 16, proposed changes would see this age rise to 18 years old. Children's aid societies across the province are pleased to see the age of protection would be raised to be more in line with the majority of the country. The sector feels 16 is much too young and the change would allow for more vulnerable youth to receive the support they need.

The December 8, 2016 tabling of the proposed CYFSA is the First Reading of Bill 89. The Second Reading debate will not begin before the Legislature returns from winter break on February 21, 2017. The Children's Aid Society of Hamilton will continue to work with the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies and children's aid societies across the province to monitor the happenings and provide input as required.

## Award History: Bruce Harmsworth Volunteer of the Year Award

In 2015, the agency's Volunteer Services department experienced a tremendous loss when a very dedicated volunteer, Bruce Harmsworth, suddenly passed away. In honour of Mr. Harmsworth, and with his family's blessing, the Bruce Harmsworth Volunteer of the Year Award was created and announced in 2015.

Mr. Harmsworth came to his first interview for a volunteer position on January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2007. At the time, he explained that he was retired and referred to our agency by his relatives. He glowed when he spoke about his children, grandchildren and his 24 years as a hockey coach. It was clear that Mr. Harmsworth had a soft spot for children and their well-being, which made a good fit for him in our program. As he carried out his volunteer duties, his compassion was evident.

This award was established to carry forward Bruce's legacy of dedication, compassion and commitment to the work of The Children's Aid Society of Hamilton.



# Pilot Project: School-Based French Language Service

Following a successful nine month pilot project, The Children's Aid Society (CAS) of Hamilton, in partnership with Catholic Children's Aid Society (CCAS) of Hamilton and Family and Children's Services (FCS) Niagara, will continue to offer French-language child welfare services to the Francophone community through its school-based project serving the two French-language school boards in the Hamilton and Niagara regions.

The pilot was developed through the French Language Service (FLS) Initiative formed in 2010 by the Society, CCAS of Hamilton, FCS Niagara, the Centre de santé communautaire Hamilton/ Niagara and the two French-language school boards serving Hamilton and Niagara Regions – Conseil scolaire Viamonde and Conseil scolaire de district catholique Centre-Sud. With a Francophone community that makes up 10 percent of the Hamilton Niagara population, the FLS Initiative came together with the purpose of enhancing services to the Francophone community. Funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation enabled the collaborating agencies to deliver upon many goals including the implementation of a 1-855 number monitored by the CCAS of Hamilton to accept child welfare related calls for French-language community members in the Niagara and Hamilton regions.

The school-based child protection service pilot program was also part of the multi-year plan. According to feedback received to date, the school based project piloted from October 2015 to June 2016 provided a much needed service for the Francophone school community who previously felt

disconnected and unsupported by the provincial child welfare sector.

Sandra May, Director of Intake Services at the Society and agency FLS representative recently noted, the benefit and impact of having a French speaking Child Protection Worker available to school staff on-site has been an invaluable experience for all parties. Not only did the project allow child protection agencies to build upon existing partnerships and community linkages to support FLS efforts, it also improved the availability of timely and effective French service to families.

An evaluation funded by the Canada-Ontario Agreement on FLS was conducted in the fall of 2016, on the cusp of moving the project forward from the pilot phase. It showed the vast majority of feedback for the program was quite positive and in line with the initiative's purpose.

One parent said, "Better communication between family and school and CAS is necessary. Family life for a child does not stop at the school doors, therefore it's important that you are involved at the school." Another parent's response highlighted the need for this and other types of collaborations within the

community, "We have to constantly ask for rights in a minority setting, this helps improve access to FLS."

Teachers, school social workers and principals have echoed the importance of having an easily accessible child welfare professional to provide guidance and consultation to best serve families in need and to do so in the French-language.

One teacher relayed, "This had a positive impact and was a reminder that the work we do is team work with other partners who have different roles – but all are important."

While it is still too early in the rollout of the program to review success from a statistical standpoint, it is clear that the Francophone school community is feeling more connected and supported. As the program embarks upon its continuation outside of the pilot project's scope, it is anticipated that additional schools and a broader age range of students will be addressed.

On behalf of the FLS Initiative, the Society would like to extend sincere thanks to Marie-France LeFort, coach, owner and principal at Proforem Inc., for her ongoing guidance and support.



# Faith-Based Foster Recruitment Initiative Off to Great Start

Special thanks to all our foster families who enthusiastically supported our faith-based foster family recruitment initiative during the past year.

Modeled after a program developed by AdoptUsKids in the United States, the group of Hamilton CAS Christian foster families named the local initiative, '*Children Need Families & Families Need Communities*' to capture the idea that just as children need supportive and caring families, so too do foster families need a supportive community. As Christian foster families, they feel they are in a strong position to reach out and offer support to other families who might be thinking about fostering. Their message has been well received!

Dozens of new families responded to the call and came out to learn more about becoming a foster family. The initiative is fortunate to have the leadership of Al Karsten, a leader in the Christian Reform community, a current member of the Society's Services Issues Committee, and a former resource supervisor at the agency. During the past year, Foster Family Information Nights co-hosted by Mr. Karsten and several foster parents who shared their personal stories and experiences, were held at:

- Bethel Christian Reformed Church, Waterdown
- Immanuel Christian Reformed Church, Hamilton Mountain
- Calvary Christian Reformed Church, West Flamborough
- Flamborough Baptist Church, Waterdown

The group also participated in True City, a Christian-based conference held at Philpott Memorial Church in downtown Hamilton. In the coming year, the group will return to the True City Conference, as well as participate in the All-In Conference, which will be held at New City Church in April. In addition, more information nights are being planned at churches throughout our community.



Al Karsten (left) and foster parents Mary-Jane and Jim Tigchelaar (second from left and centre) share a laugh with a few of the many individuals who stopped by the Homes for Kids booth at last year's True City Conference.

Thanks to everyone for helping to promote all these events and for serving as wonderful guest speakers! You have inspired many to proceed with an application and have touched the hearts of many more who may look to fostering sometime down the road.

If you belong to a church or know of a church, synagogue, mosque, temple or other place of worship, that would be open to holding a Foster Parent Information Session, please contact Rachel Threlkeld, Homes for Kids, at 905-546-KIDS (5437) or email [rthrelkeld@hamiltoncas.com](mailto:rthrelkeld@hamiltoncas.com).

If you would like more information about the faith-based initiative or to become more involved – in either a small way or a big way – please contact Rachel (contact information noted above) or Al Karsten at [alberttrkarsten@gmail.com](mailto:alberttrkarsten@gmail.com).

~ Rachel Threlkeld, Homes For Kids

## Are you DRIVEN to Volunteer?

Help make a difference in the lives of children, youth and families

The Society is seeking mature and responsible volunteer drivers to transport children, youth and families to appointments throughout the Hamilton area. **Drivers are needed most often between 3:00 - 6:00 pm.**

To learn more about becoming a Volunteer Driver with The Children's Aid Society of Hamilton, or for other volunteer opportunities, please visit [www.hamiltoncas.com](http://www.hamiltoncas.com) or email [volunteer@hamiltoncas.com](mailto:volunteer@hamiltoncas.com).

# 2016 Christmas Program Recap

## Thank you to all who supported the 2016 Christmas Programs

Year after year, the generosity and compassion exhibited by the Hamilton community continues to both inspire and impress staff and volunteers working with the agency's Christmas Hamper and Toy Room Programs.

The Society's Executive Director, Dominic Verticchio, says, "I am pleased to report that once again, our goals for the Christmas Support Program were not only met, but exceeded. During the holiday season, there is always a concern that the agency will be unable

to fulfill the needs of the families we work with, but we continue to garner tremendous support from local businesses, organizations, family funds and individuals, and we are truly grateful."

In total, the 2016 Christmas Support Program provided hampers to 329 families and youth living independently and in need of support over the holiday season. Broken down, that is almost 1,200 individuals.

In addition, the agency's Toy Room provides an opportunity for child protection workers to access two gifts per child for families they are working with and who are not receiving support through the sponsorship program. This additional resource enabled 1,100 toys and gifts to be distributed to children and youth.

The Society extends sincere thanks to everyone who donated to the 2016 Holiday Support Programs.



# Grape Expectations Gala

## Spring

The Children's Aid Society of Hamilton's  
14<sup>th</sup> Annual Grape Expectations Gala  
Michelangelo Banquet Centre  
Monday, May 29, 2017

Proceeds from this event will provide bursaries and educational opportunities to children and youth.  
To reserve a ticket, please call 905-522-1121, ext. 6414 or email [tsilvestro@hamiltoncas.com](mailto:tsilvestro@hamiltoncas.com)  
Follow us on Facebook and Twitter for details!

### CONTACT US

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905-522-8053

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#### Our commitment to donor privacy

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We use your personal information to keep you up-to-date on the activities of the Society, including programs, services, special events, funding needs, opportunities to volunteer or to give, and more, through periodic contacts. If at any time you wish to be removed from any of these contacts, simply inform us and we will gladly accommodate your request.

You can do this by:

Phone: 905-522-1121, ext. 6414  
Email: [tsilvestro@hamiltoncas.com](mailto:tsilvestro@hamiltoncas.com)

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*Your support makes a difference...*



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Christmas Support \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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Summer Camp \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Wherever Needed Most \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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