

Horizon

A quarterly newsletter for Ongwanada families, friends, staff, volunteers and Home Share providers

A Reunion 50 Years in the Making

Sheila Appleby-Williams couldn't ignore the butterflies in her stomach as she made her way from Toronto to Nananee on the 401 on a rainy Thursday morning. Only a few hours ago she had been at her home in California pondering one of the most important decisions in her life. Now with her mind firmly set, she was about to reunite with a brother she hadn't seen for 50 years.

The early 1950's were a tough time for families with children who had developmental disabilities. The stigmas that surrounded these families forced some parents to make tough decisions and Sheila's family was no different. Her older brother Arthur was diagnosed with Autism and was placed in an institution, away from home, at the recommendation of his family doctor.

"My father was angry and bitter about Arthur's condition and most of his feelings were directed at my mother as if it was her fault," says Appleby-Williams. "My mother wasn't allowed to mention Arthur's



name or have any photos of him in the house. She was forced to hide any items that she sent to him and never really recovered from the guilt, shame and pain of giving away her only son. I was never really allowed to speak about my brother or know where he was."

After a 10 year battle with Alzheimer's, Sheila's mother passed away, following her passing Sheila found a photo of her brother as well as his birth certificate. Unfortunately, she still had no contact name or address. Then recently, when her father passed away, Sheila received a clue that she

believed could help lead her to her long lost sibling.

"My parents divorced when I was a teenager and I hadn't seen my father for years. He had apparently taken on the paperwork concerning Arthur once my mother became ill. While reading my father's will, I learned that he had left some money for Arthur to provide him with any items he needed for his comfort. At that time I finally decided it was time to find my brother."

After some exhaustive searches on the internet, Sheila was led to the Rideau Regional

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“Becoming Independent” Premieres

Philip Burge unveiled his new documentary “Becoming Independent” to a packed house in the Ongwanada Auditorium in June. Burge, a member of Ongwanada’s Medical Associates co-directed the 24 minute documentary film.

The film, shot over a week last July follows Elana, Chris and Trish – three KCVI alumni – chronicling such personal landmarks as a first love and learning how to ride the bus. It is a follow up to “After High School” a film Burge produced and directed in 2005. That film followed the same three students as they transitioned from high school to adulthood.

Burge said the film is meant to promote public awareness and reduce the stigma around developmental disabilities by giving the audience full access into the lives of its subjects. “In showing their experience this video shows them confronting the barriers they encounter every day. It shows that they have many of the same goals as every other young adult in Kingston.”

The film, will act as a resource throughout the province to educate and bring awareness to students about developmental disabilities. The video is available through developmental service agencies across Canada.



Co-directors Reena Kukreja (L) and Philip Burge (R) pose with the stars of “Becoming Independent” Trish, Elana and Chris.

Auxiliary Loses President



With the recent passing of Shirley Parent, Ongwanada has lost one of its biggest supporters and a dear friend.

Parent, the President of the Ongwanada Auxiliary and member of the Board of Governors passed away on July 17 after a courageous battle with cancer. She was 75 years old.

“Shirley was a wonderful woman and this is a difficult loss for our organization,” says Board

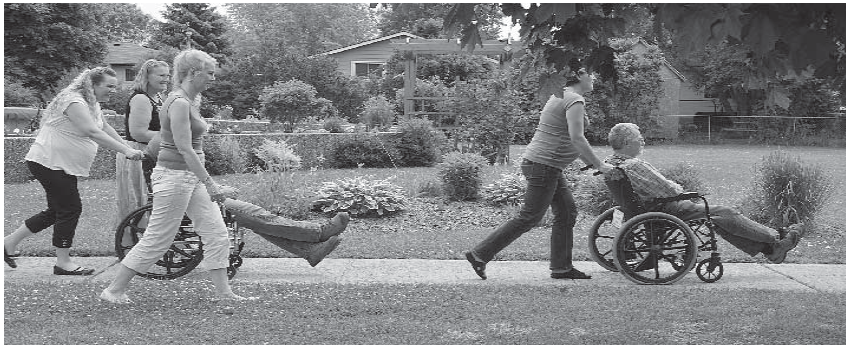
President Jan Spencer. “Shirley showed great dedication and resourcefulness as she raised funds for Ongwanada. She will be dearly missed”

Parent was a dedicated volunteer who worked tirelessly to grow the membership of the Auxiliary. Recently, the small but mighty group, under Parent’s leadership, was able to raise enough money to purchase a new van for Ongwanada.

A nurse by trade, Parent was a caregiver at heart and felt strongly about Ongwanada’s role in the community. She had a passion for art and was an accomplished painter and artist.

She is survived by her four children and seven grandchildren. The family is accepting donations on her behalf to Ongwanada and the Kingston Humane Society.

Mock Disaster Puts Staff to the Test



Organizers of Ongwanada's mock disaster, held on Thursday June 11, say it was an effective test of the organization's ability to function during an emergency.

Community partners including Kingston Fire and Rescue, Kingston Police, the KFL&A Health Unit and the Ministry of Community and Social Services were involved in the exercise that put staff at the Ongwanada Resource Centre to the test, beginning around 1 p.m.

The scenario saw a "delivery truck" strike the back of the ORC and spill some potentially toxic fluid outside the pharmacy area. Kingston Fire and Rescue responded to the scene and staff were asked to evacuate the building with clients who were played by actors for the afternoon.

"This has been a great test for our emergency plan,"

says Ongwanada Safety Specialist Peter Gould. "We found that people have responded very, very quickly and we are very happy with the way everyone has joined in and played their part. This is a great path towards us achieving our accreditation."

A group of staff members were chosen to observe and take notes during the test and now the organization will be able to review its results and determine how to best improve its plan.

"We take our responsibilities to our clients very seriously. So it is important that we hold exercises like this to see how well we are prepared for a possible disaster," says Executive Director R.W. Seaby. "We would like to thank everyone who took part in our exercise, your efforts will help improve safety for both staff and clients in the future."

En Français, S'il Vous Plaît?

As the calendar pages turned from April to May Ongwanada launched its effort to serve the French speaking population in our area. Effective May 1, 2009, the City of Kingston was declared a French Language service area by the Provincial Government.

This means that all public services must be equally available in French and English including services delivered directly by provincial staff, as well as those delivered by transfer payment agencies like Ongwanada

Ongwanada has to demonstrated to the province that some basic public services could immediately be delivered in French and will be expanded in the future.

Some services currently available in French include: the telephone system will handle calls in both languages, our switchboard operator will greet all callers and visitors in both French and English, French and English information is offered on the Ongwanada website, certain clinical forms have been translated to French, bilingual staff will act as a resource should an individual request service in French.

Ongwanada Blooms Again



Once again Ongwanada's Joseph Dominik Sensory Garden has received the highest score possible in the Communities in Bloom competition. The judges visited Ongwanada in July and bestowed the prestigious "Five Bloom" designation.

"This is a great victory for Ongwanada," says Board of Governors President Jan Spencer. "We pride ourselves on our garden and the benefits it brings to not only our clients, but the community as well. A special thanks must be given to our Maintenance and Housekeeping Supervisor Mary-Lynn Huff and her staff for their dedication again this summer."

This is the third time that the Sensory Garden has been designated as a "Five Bloom" winner in its short history. The garden is also a stop on the Via Rail Canadian Garden Tour.

The Sensory Garden is a therapeutic place that provides a dedicated area of sensory rich stimuli of smells, touches, tastes, movements and sights. Named in memory of Ongwanada past president and former board member Joseph Dominik, the garden is the first fully accessible sensory garden in Kingston, and possibly Ontario, of this size and scope. The garden provides many therapeutic, educational and recreational benefits to individuals with varying levels of physical and developmental disabilities, as well as others in the community.

Accreditation Update

As the calendar moves forward, Ongwanada staff members are preparing for a busy fall season. Three surveyors from Accreditation Canada will visit Ongwanada's three main sites, four community residences and two Home Share sites in October.

The accreditation process is undertaken every three years and reflects Ongwanada's commitment to self-evaluation and external peer review in seeking not only to meet national standards of excellence but to continuously improve the quality of supports and services.

The process allows us to assess the quality of our supports, drive quality improvements in services, improves and ensures client safety, promotes teamwork, provides education that benefits staff and clients and increases Ongwanada's credibility and accountability.

Ongwanada will learn its forecasted accreditation status in late October. Ongwanada would like to thank everyone involved in this intensive process.

Ongwanada Prepares for Pandemic

As the flu season approaches, Ongwanada is working to make sure it is ready. This year there is extra concern ahead of the flu season as it is expected that H1N1 will also strike at the same time.

Ongwanada is well prepared to deal with a possible influenza pandemic and is following procedures outlined in its Emergency Plan.

Ongwanada is a leader in the field of tracking and managing the spread of infections and influenza as proven by our effective

Infection Control Program. Senior management is in daily contact with government and public health officials in an effort to keep up to date with the latest information on this developing situation.

Ongwanada will be able to take appropriate actions as required to manage any potential outbreak. Staff are being asked to do their part by practicing frequent and vigilant hand-washing, covering coughs and sneezes as well as remaining home if sick until 48 hours after symptoms are no longer evident.

To ensure Ongwanada's continued ability to provide care and support to our clients in the event of a full-blown pandemic, the organization has stock-piled enough antiviral medication to protect its staff for approximately 8 weeks. As well, Ongwanada has stockpiled a number of N95 protective masks for staff to wear during a potential outbreak.

Client and staff safety is Ongwanada's top priority and the organization will be prepared should a pandemic strike.

Volunteer of the Year Selected

As the saying goes, "Volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they just have the heart." On April 30th, Ongwanada recognized those who "have the heart" during the organization's annual Volunteer Appreciation Night.

The highlight of the ceremony saw Judy Kim named Ongwanada's Volunteer of the Year.



"Judy is an inspiration and an excellent role model for other young individuals in the community" says Coor-

dinator of Volunteer Services, Paula Smith.

Judy began her volunteer work with Ongwanada over two years ago while still in high school and remains a volunteer despite a heavy workload at Queen's University.

Ongwanada thanks all of its volunteers who contribute their time to the organization and those we support.

Family Reunion (Continued from Pg 1)

Centre in Smiths Falls. A contact at Rideau Regional, after some research herself, was then able to point Sheila to Ongwanada. As it turns out Arthur had been transferred to Ongwanada in 1970 and was living in Napanee.

"After speaking with a few people who worked for Ongwanada, I was put in contact with Social Worker Tiia Sacco. Tiia called me back and informed me that they were currently searching for Arthur's next of kin. She asked me if I would take on that role and be interested in coming to visit my brother in person."

"It was a difficult decision to make. When I last saw my brother as a child, he was completely non-communicative and would rock back and forth for long periods of time. Would he remember me? Would this reunion bring peace and closure to a difficult part of my life? Was I prepared to meet him after searching for him for so long?"

Sheila confided in several friends who suggested that a visit may prove to be too painful and bring little closure. But, despite those sentiments decided that she would travel back to Ontario with little expectations. Ongwanada staff sent her pictures of her brother, so that she would be prepared for her brother's ap-

pearance which had changed significantly over the years. But she still wasn't fully prepared for what she saw when she arrived at his home.

"I didn't expect to see a tall slender man lounging in a blue recliner. He looked at me and I saw so much life in his eyes, this wasn't the vacant stare that I saw so many years ago. I was overwhelmed and burst into tears, he wasn't just my long lost brother any longer, he was a person!"

Over the next five hours Sheila was able to learn all about her brother. "He loves new clothes, receiving cards, lounging in his pajamas in his favourite chair. All of which are family traits! I was able to see his bedroom and understand him better. It is difficult to express the comfort that I felt, the relief at seeing how content he is and how well he has been taken care of."

"When I went to see my brother, I was hoping to connect with others in a similar situation and have learned that I was not alone. A number of people of my generation are just now discovering the whereabouts or even existence of a sibling "locked away" for so many years. I can't begin to express the healing and release of the shame and pain that I carried with me for so many years. It seems

that we have come very far in acknowledging Autism and creating acceptance. However, I have discovered that it is still mainly the mothers who are left to fight for their child's rights and refuse to give up hope. This was my mother's struggle-over 50 years ago."

"I have since learned how important of a role Ongwanada has played in the effort to move residents out of institutions and into community homes. I want to share my sincere thanks and appreciation for the environment and care that my brother has and still is receiving. This has been an amazing and healing experience for me. I began my search wanting answers to many questions, but now I have a brother that I can finally acknowledge and build a relationship with."



Since the reunion Sheila is learning as much as she can about Autism. Pictured above: Sheila poses with Autism activist and Hollywood actress Jenny McCarthy at an Autism conference in Los Angeles.

Wellness Award for Ongwanada

Ongwanada has been recognized for its efforts to improve staff and client wellness. The organization was recently awarded the KFL&A Workplace Wellness Award at their 6th Annual Workplace Wellness Conference.

Ongwanada had to meet standards in three main areas including Voluntary Health Practices, Occupational Health and Safety and Organizational Environment.

The judges considered a number of criteria when naming winners. The criteria included; access to EAP, staff recognition, healthy eating options, training opportunities, family friendly practises, emergency procedures, safe body mechanics program, physical activity promotions and personal/staff care.

“We are thrilled to have won and to have received this recognition,” says Wellness Committee Chair Colleen Hill. “It’s a testament to the work we have already done. and we expect an even healthier year at Ongwanada in 2009/2010.”

Board Honours Former President



A large crowd was on hand on Friday April 17 as Ongwanada’s Board of Governors dedicated their meeting space in the honour of former President Phil Koven who passed away last year. Pictured above: Merle Koven brings remarks on behalf of the family.

Client Appreciation

On May 24 staff and supervisors at Ongwanada’s Crescent Centre were delighted to hold their first annual Client Appreciation Day. Staff wanted to take time to honour individual clients for their years of participation and contribution to the program. Certificates were presented to all individuals, ranging from one year all the way up to thirty five years of participation.

The celebrations also included a slideshow presentation chronicling Crescent Centre participants.



Thank you to all those who joined us in recognizing these great achievements, and also a very special thank you goes to Heather Wilson and Leona Sanders who helped plan and organize this terrific event.



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Our mission

Ongwanada will support people with developmental disabilities and their families, respecting their rights, increasing their opportunities to make choices and decisions about the quality of their lives, and responding to their changing needs.

Our role

Ongwanada provides services and support for people with a developmental disability in Kingston and Eastern Ontario. Programs and services are delivered at three sites in Kingston, in community residences, and other homes and offices in the region.

Did You Know?

A recent survey of Ongwanada client's next of kin has shown that family members want more information on the services we provide. The following is a small sample of the services that are available through Ongwanada.

Residential Respite Care - Respite care is offered on weekends to provide parents and other caregivers with occasional relief from their responsibilities. A waiting list of approximately two months is currently in place. Fees range from \$3 a day for children and \$15 a day for adults (subject to change) for respite in an Ongwanada community residence.

Professional Supports - Ongwanada clients have access to a number of professionals including, Physicians, Psychiatrists, Psychologists, Dieticians, Nurses, Occupational/Physiotherapists and Speech Pathologists.

Residential Options - Ongwanada operates over 20 community residences located in neighbourhoods in Kingston, Napanee, Gananoque as well as other outlying rural areas. Generally three to six people each live in these family-like settings. Varying levels of staff support are provided at each home depending on the needs of the clients. Three of the community residences in Kingston offer 24 hour nursing support to clients with chronic medical conditions. As well, a team of visiting nurses provide support to ensure quality healthcare for clients living in Ongwanada's non-nursing community residences.

Strategic Planning - Ongwanada has engaged in strategic planning since 1986 and these plans have provided direction to the organization as it redeveloped and adapted services to meet the changing needs of clients. It is the product of rigorous assessments by focus groups and establishes goals to guide the growth of the organization. Among the goals in our current plan are: Growth and Expansion, New Communities, Flexibility, Staff Training and Development, Client and Staff Well-Being, Information and Technology Plans, Continuity and Stability. For more information on Ongwanada please visit www.ongwanada.com.