



ONTARIO ASSOCIATION FOR FAMILIES OF CHILDREN WITH COMMUNICATION DISORDERS

O.A.F.C.C.D. NEWSLETTER

MAY 2002

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School Services Under Threat

OAFCCD Annual Meeting

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Ontario Association for Families of Children with Communication Disorders was held on Saturday, April 20th in Kingston.

The key note speaker was Professor Genese Warr-Leeper from the School of Communicative Disorders, University of Western Ontario. Her workshop was entitled **The Social Consequences of Language Disorders: When You Don't Know the Rules, You Can't Play the Game.** (See article on Page 2)

The Annual General Meeting also featured the launch of a **very exciting public awareness campaign.** Thanks to the creativity of the Lanark, Leeds and Grenville OAFCCD Chapter, OAFCCD has chocolate bars to use in May public awareness activities.

The **Chocolate Bar wrappers feature pictures of children who have a communication disorder,** and information about communication disorders. The chocolate bars will be distributed at community events, to members of Provincial Parliament, and to school board Trustees and Special Education Advisory Committees.

It is hoped that **the chocolate bars will be a positive reminder of the needs of our children.** The wrappers encourage families to contact local services or OAFCCD if they have concerns about their child's speech and language development. The bars also suggest that individuals contact their local MPP and ask for speech and language services to be mandated in schools.

May is Speech and Language Month

Share this information in this Newsletter with family and friends. Make copies of the Parent And Child Activity Calendar and hand them out to families of young children

It is alarming to hear that more than **half of the school boards in Ontario are preparing for a deficit budget.** The grants for 2002-2003 have not been announced and are not expected for at least another month. Many boards have a deficit they are carrying from this school year, and **without an increase in grant levels they anticipate difficulties in balancing the budget.** As with most publicly funded agencies, school boards are no longer allowed to pass deficit budgets and Trustees face fines and even imprisonment for failing to comply.

Although special education grants, SEPPA and ISA, are protected and can't be cut, many boards have been spending additional funds, from other parts of the budget, on special education. This means that **special education programs and services are vulnerable to budget cuts.** Cuts may effect special education teachers, educational assistants and professionals, such as speech and language pathologists.

Speech and Language Pathologists are especially vulnerable because they are not mandated by the Ministry of Education. This has long been a concern of OAFCCD members, and the organization has been asking for many years for a ratio of SLPs to students to be mandated and funded by the Ministry.

As a parent or a taxpayer there are a number of things you can do to help ensure students continue to get the services they need:

1. **Contact your local MPP** and ask for adequate funding for education and mandated speech and language services.
2. **Contact your school board Trustees** and remind them that the board must meet the needs of all identified students, including those with speech and language disorders.

For more information check out the school services information on the OAFCCD Website at www.cyberus.ca/oafccd

The Social Consequences of Language Disorders: When You Don't Know the Rules, You Can't Play the Game

Summary of information shared at AGM workshop
by Professor Genese Warr-Leeper

Since the mid 1980s researchers and clinicians have become increasingly aware of the overlapping diagnoses presented by children with social or behavior disorders. Although **the prevalence of language disorders is 10 times higher in children with behavior problems** than in the general school population, it is most often unsuspected and, if unaddressed, can hamper assessment and treatment efforts. **Hidden weaknesses in understanding and using language** is one of the most common and least understood difficulties encountered in the child with behavior disorders.

For children at risk, **the importance of communication competence has been established.** Language provides the main method of establishing and maintaining social relationships, constitutes a principal means of organizing behaviour and is central to the successful acquisition of many cognitive and academic skills, particularly literacy. It is clear that language acquisition is an integral component in the development of an individual and **failure of the language system can affect social, academic and vocational success.**

A language disorder may be suspected if the child has:

- **Consistent difficulties in listening**, particularly for decontextualized (out of context) material which must be processed quickly.
- **Difficulties in understanding multiple meanings** of words and figures of speech.
- **Difficulties in inferencing** (filling-in) for missing information.
- **Difficulties in producing syntactically complex sentences.**

Students with language disorders need help to recognize and learn the rules of social communication. In particular, they may need help to:

- **learn communication alternatives**
- **learn event-based/script knowledge** for difficult

situations

- **develop broader and more varied emotional vocabularies.**

Assessment services for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties should include at least a screening for language disorders. When a language disorder has been identified, intervention services should include strategies to address the disorder.

If you are interested in learning more, please call Alison Morse at (519)9842-9506 for a copy of the workshop handouts.

Photo Contest

Why not use that **wonderful summer weather to take the photo that could win you a prize** - and appear in OAFCCD posters, brochures or even the chocolate bar wrappers.

OAFCCD will be **holding a photo contest this fall** to get photographs for public awareness activities. The contest is **open to everyone** - parents, professionals and children. There will be two categories - (1) photos by an adult or (2) by a child (under 16).

We are looking for **photos which feature children or teens at school, at play or close up.** There will be a prize of a \$25 book certificate for the best photograph in each category. There is no limit to the number of photos you can submit, but all photos must have the name and address of the person taking the photo, as well as the person in the photo.

Photographs will not be returned, and OAFCCD retains the right to use all photographs entered on literature and materials associated with the organization or its aims.

The closing **date for entries is November 1, 2002** and an official entry form will be included in the September Newsletter. For more information, please call Alison Morse at (519)842-9506.

Camp Directory

The OAFCCD 2002 Camp Directory is enclosed with this Newsletter. We are pleased to see more camps than ever before. However, OAFCCD has not evaluated the camps and is only providing the information as a service to families.

OAFCCD has won \$10,000 in Radio Airtime

Country 92, in Smiths Falls has awarded OAFCCD \$10,000 in air time over the next year. The station held a contest and invited non-profit organizations to tell them what they would do with free air time and how it would benefit the community.

The OAFCCD proposal was accepted, and **short public service announcements will start airing in May**. Thanks to Susan Richards for seeing the opportunity.

Newborn Hearing Screening

The **Hearing Foundation of Canada** has sent OAFCCD a copy of their information video, "**A Parent's Guide to Newborn Hearing Screening**" and it can be borrowed by calling Alison Morse at (519)842-9506.

The video is part of a public awareness campaign to explain why **early identification of hearing impairment is so important**. The Ontario government has recognized this with the new Infant Hearing Screening program. If you **have concerns about your child's hearing**, please contact your family doctor or call the Preschool Speech and Language Program in your community.

OAFCCD Member Survey

Thank you to all the members who have returned the survey forms that were sent out in January. To date we have had 40 responses and more continue to arrive. Although there is not room for a full report, the results indicate that **members value the Newsletters and Parent Resource Articles**. **A significant proportion have not accessed the Website** and this reinforces the value of including resource articles in the Newsletter.

There is **strong support for a variety of articles** and we have tried to cover a range of issues in this Newsletter. We will include a more detailed report on the results, and how we are going to respond, in the September Newsletter.

Family Net

Since November there has been a **new resource for families on the Internet**. Guided by the Consumer Advisory Committee of the Ontario Association of Children's Rehabilitation Services (OACRS), there is an interactive site for families which features new stories daily.

Cate Breough, a parent and one of the co-ordinators of Family Net, sees the value of a **Web news site that helps families network and share information**. And this is what Family Net has been set up to do. Family Net is designed to bring relevant news and current reference material to parents and caregivers and to provide forums to share experiences, knowledge and offer support in the daily challenges of raising children with special needs. "We hope that Family Net will be relevant and meaningful in the lives of families," says Cate. "We want it to be well used, and well worn - like a really good book."

Family Net will be working closely with The Newsletter Company (TNC) to **present daily stories from families, caregivers and organizations** on a Web site that enables people to read about, react, respond to and ultimately become engaged in a supportive dialogue.

Cate recognizes the power of storytelling. "**My child's disabilities have fundamentally changed how I look at the world**. I could never have imagined how my family would be affected by the arrival of my daughter and her special needs," says Cate. "My husband and I realize that in order to best provide for our family's well-being, **we need to connect with other families who can share in our journey**. We need to share stories. Family Net provides a means to do that."

Family Net now provides parents, in Ontario, with a means to share stories about their successes and challenges - daily. Cate explains that writers will be contacting parents to interview them about their experiences. Once written, the stories will serve to connect families who share the need for support, information and advocacy.

Check out Family Net at:

<http://www.familynet.on.ca>

COMING EVENTS

Conferences:

Toronto - Transitions Conference, April 26-27, Conference for families and service providers about planning for adult living. **Contact: Deborah Horner at 1-800-363-2440**

Hamilton - My Community Includes....Me! Family Alliance Ontario and Integration Action Group, May 3-4. Featuring Judith Snow, panel on Education and Individualized Funding. **Contact: Janice Strickland (519)473-4686**

Waterloo - Safer Schools: Safer Communities Conference, May 9 -11. Featuring Stephen Lewis, Barbara Hall and Barbara Coloroso. **Contact: Ian Barrett (519)570-0003 Ext. 4452**

Waterloo - Human Genetics: Implications for Clinical Practice, May 30-31. **Contact: Sharon Balzan, Rotary Children's Centre, (519)886-8886 Ext. 217**

Ottawa - Children's Mental Health Conference, May 30 - June 1, Workshops, Speakers and Displays provide an opportunity to share effective intervention strategies. **Contact: MMS (905)335-7993**

Toronto - From Adversity to Diversity, Ontario Association for Community Living Conference, June 5 -8. Featuring Family Day on June 5th, Hon. Bob Rae as Keynote speaker. **Contact: Anna Marchionda at (416)447-4348**

Workshops:

London - Augmentative Communication Individual Authorizer Workshop for Speech - Language Pathologists, May 1. **Contact: Carrie Connell, Thames Valley Children's Centre (519)685-8680 Ext. 53367**

Richmond Hill - On Your Mark III, May 3, One day conference to connect families and service providers in York Region. **Contact: Health Connection 1-800-361-5653**.

London - Can We Talk? You're Grounded for Life,

May 7 and 14. Workshop for parents of 11 - 15yr olds. Strategies to improve communication with your teen. Cost \$5. **Contact: Middlesex-London Health Unit (519)663-5317 Ext. 3250**

Toronto - Using Communication Boards Everywhere, May 16. Programs require a referral from an SLP. **Contact: Surrey Place Centre, Melanie Aristedou (416)925-2169 Ext. 441**

Toronto - Childhood Apraxia of Speech: Practical Applications for Therapy, May 31 & June 1, 2002. Presentation at Bloorview - McMillan Centre by Michael Crary, sponsored by Expressive Communication Help Organization (E.C.H.O.) **Parent Fee \$75. Contact: Rhonda Jacobson-Cherry (905)780-1489**

Uxbridge - Benefit Concert featuring children's singer/songwriter Magoo, June 8th for Precious Minds to raise funds to support families. Tickets \$10 adult, \$5 child, \$25 family rate. **Contact: Kristy at (905)852-2145**

Uxbridge - Summer Survival, June 20th. Parent Support Group meeting will focus on preparing for summer with activity ideas and stress busters. **Contact: Precious Minds at (905)852-2146**

York Region - OAFCCD Chapter Meeting with presentation "*Link between Speech and Language Disorders and Early Literacy*" Date TBA. **Contact: Rhonda Jacobson Cherry (905) 780-1489 or rjacobson@rogers.com**

London - "More Than Just Talking" and "Cracking the Code - Enhancing School Age Literacy Skills" Workshops for parents and educators are held monthly by the London Speech and Language Centre. **Contact: Bonnie Riddolls, (519)642-7370**.

London - Speech and Language Information Session - A monthly session where an SLP will answer your questions while your child plays nearby. 2nd Thursday each month at 10 - 11am. **Contact: Thames Valley Children's Centre (519)685-8680**