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Together, with camps across Ontario, we have provided subsidies each year so that vulnerable children and youth can attend Camp Towhee. Thank you to all who supported our 2006 campaign!

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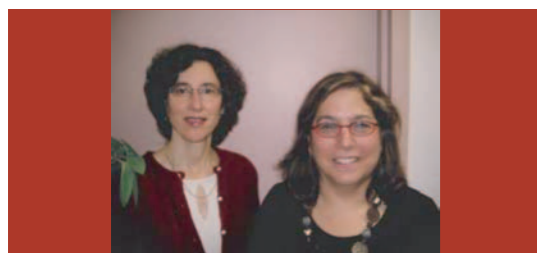
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 Anonymous



Message from Integra's Co-Acting Executive Directors

Welcome to the latest edition of Integra's newsletter. You will be reading about the many exciting ways your generosity has helped vulnerable children and youth with learning disabilities. You will also hear about how Integra staff conquered the challenges presented by the dramatic storm that hit Camp Towhee in August. We have included highlights from our successful *Portage to the Future* dinner event, which aired on the Food Network show, *The Heat*, Nov 14. We will also brief you on our successful breakfast fundraiser, *Invest Now. Save a Future.*, which featured the eminent scholar and author, **Margaret MacMillan**.

Integra is very pleased to announce that Michael Faye has been selected as our new Executive Director. Mike comes to us from a distinguished career in the Children's Social Service sector, most notably as Executive Director of Central Toronto Youth Services for the past 17 years. Earlier Mike worked at Covenant House as Director of Program Services, at Kennedy House Youth Services as Program Coordinator, and the Children's Aid Society of Metro Toronto as a child care worker and supervisor. Mike has earned the highest respect for his work in serving children at risk. He joined Integra November 13. Please extend a warm welcome to Mike Faye!

Thank you for your generosity. We hope to see you at our events!

Barbara Muskat
MSW, RSW, PhD Candidate
Director of Community Consultation

Margaret Amerongen
MSW, RSW
Clinical Director

Voices of Youth

When Jesse Preston read Integra's late summer mailing informing him of the damage done to our precious Camp Towhee by a devastating storm, he knew he had to do something to help. With his savings in tow, Jesse headed over to our office and made a generous donation to help us make repairs.

Jesse is nineteen years old. He works full time and is heading to college soon. We asked Jesse what makes Camp Towhee so special to him.

When you heard about the storm that hit Camp Towhee, how did you feel?

I felt very sad. When we got the letter from Integra, I dropped everything.

What was your favourite part of the Towhee experience?

It was a particular moment when my friend and I sang hymns on a rock. Nature seemed to be humming along. I also loved the Excel program – it certainly builds friendship and trust, especially the Criss Cross game. I trusted all my cabin mates.

What did you gain from Camp Towhee?

I wanted to overcome the bullying. I wanted to make friends, which I did and I still remain in touch with two of them.

How do you think it has helped you now?

Towhee taught me a lot of skills, especially social skills. I really didn't have them before. If it wasn't for Camp Towhee, I wouldn't be who I am today. I learned to cope with my disability to the point that people are shocked that I even have one.

What did your parents think about the treatment you received at Camp Towhee?

My parents thought it was wonderful. They believe [Integra] is a place to invest in. It provides a great opportunity to learn and build on friendships.

Special thank you to CHUM Charitable Foundation for funding this issue of *Integra's Among Friends*.

Continued from Cover Page...



Parents need support too. They acknowledge the isolation of not knowing other parents who also have children with learning disabilities. One mother told us that she saw the name of one of her neighbours in our newsletter. She didn't know this family also had difficulties but she wished she had known because they could have talked about it.

Often parents of group members bond in our waiting room during group. Some go out for coffee weekly and share their challenges and successes of parenting a special needs child. So sometimes finding a friend happens for our parents too.



Dealing with Loneliness

Written by **Barbara Muskat**, MSW, RSW, PhD Candidate, Integra's Director of Community Consultation

Loneliness has been described as sadness and distress experienced when a desire for social relationships is not achieved. It includes feeling bad about not having close friends, not belonging to a social group and emotional discomfort when alone. Loneliness can be excruciatingly painful. Lonely and isolated children and youth lack opportunities to learn and practice being social. Those who lack peer support have been found to be more at-risk for peer taunting, teasing and bullying as well as mental health problems throughout life.

Loneliness is different from solitude. Solitude involves a deliberate choice to be alone. It is considered to be a healthy response at times, particularly when it offers a respite from stress or a chance to pursue leisure or creative activities.

Many children and adolescents with learning disabilities have social difficulties, including problems initiating and sustaining positive social relationships, struggles in interpreting social cues, and disruptive or withdrawn behaviour. While these difficulties may result in rejection by peers, at times other forces compound the issue. Lonely children may have a negative reputation due to their social isolation or to the stigma associated with 'disability'. In adolescence, when peer relationships are so important, adolescents with learning disabilities may have fewer social connections, fewer friends of both sexes, and receive less all-round support from classmates.

Parenting a child with a learning disability can be a lonely, isolating experience. Parents may be blamed and criticized by relatives and friends for their child's difficulties. Parents may not know others who have children with similar struggles. If the child has a difficult temperament parenting may be even more challenging. Parents may have difficulties finding resources to help their child. These may all lead to family stress, conflict and isolation.

Parents should actively assist their children to find and form relationships. Opportunities for relationships can evolve from: joining a school club, attending craft or hobby classes, attending guides/scouts or enrolling in summer camp. Some parents have created a home environment that is enticing to their child's peers, inviting them to play and monitoring that their child is a positive participant in the play.

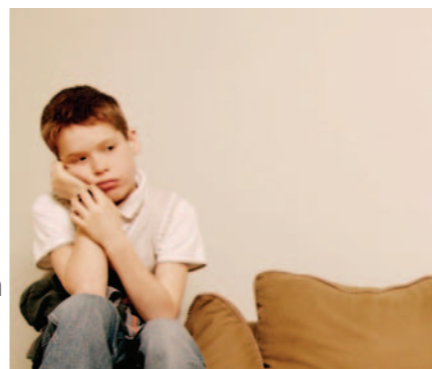
Siblings and other family members can provide companionship for children with learning disabilities. Some lonely children and youth with learning disabilities may require therapeutic support, such as seeing a therapist or attending a group. Talking through the very painful feelings of loneliness allows children and adolescents to feel heard and understood. Explicit help with conversation skills, self-regulation, understanding social conventions and developing assertiveness can also be very useful.

Parents may also benefit from support. Parent counseling or parent support groups can provide opportunities to receive advice and information, share strategies, and be listened to by someone who understands the experience of parenting a child with a learning disability.

The messages children receive from parents, peers, teachers and significant others are highly important in shaping the feelings they have about themselves. Parents and teachers should model pro-social attitudes. They should explicitly offer children ways of entering social activities. Positive feedback and encouragement will assist children and youth with learning disabilities who have experienced rejection and disappointments in the past.

Children and youth with learning disabilities need to develop a positive self image, see themselves as capable and worthwhile, and feel that they have something valuable to offer others. This will give them the internal strength needed to persist in attempts to join the social world.

To view this Tip and others online, please visit the Resource section of our web site at www.integra.on.ca



What's new

Integra partners with The Nature's Group to help protect the environment for future generations! The Nature's Group will donate a portion of their proceeds from ink cartridge recycling to Integra. To find out more about how your company can become involved in recycling, please contact them at 416.536.1382.

- Our *Invest Now. Save a Future.* fundraising breakfast held Nov. 17 at Arcadian Court was a huge success! We raised upwards of \$100,000 for our programs and services thanks to the generosity of Scotia Capital and all of our supporters. Keynote speaker, **Margaret MacMillan**, talked of her new book, *Nixon in China*, and autographed copies.

- Integra's workshop schedule, including *Walk a Mile in My Shoes*, is now online! Visit www.integra.on.ca/workshop1.htm

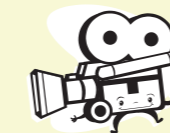
Building brighter futures for the world to see at *Portage*

The cameras were on us this year at *Portage to the Future*, capturing all the highlights of our annual dinner and auction fundraiser that raised over \$100,000 for Integra's programs and services.

Our chair, **Paula Todd**, led our guests through a fun-filled evening in support of Integra's programs. For the fourth year in a row, **TD Securities** took the lead sponsor position. We are indebted to TD for their continued support.

Being dubbed the "best ever", this year's *Portage* created unique and meaningful experiences for our guests, paralleling the services that we provide for our young clients on a daily basis. After all, where else can you find two world-class chefs preparing an exquisite five-course meal in the same kitchen?

Integra was showcased on the small screen when the making of our biggest fundraising event of the year, *Portage to the Future*, aired as an episode of the Food Network's show, *The Heat*, on November 14th.



Once again, we thank **Mark McEwan** for opening the doors to one of his fabulous restaurants—this time, Bymark—where we hosted *Portage*. Mark imported Robert Feenie (along with his organic ingredients) of Vancouver's Lumière Restaurant, and the two created extraordinary cuisine. Arthur Heinmaa knows firsthand what a fundraiser like *Portage* means for Integra's programs and the children and youth taking part in them. As the father of an Integra client, Heinmaa delivered this message to all of our guests, "I think most parents just want their children to find their way. [Integra's] Camp Towhee helped Marcus find his way and for this, Mary and I are grateful."

Portage to the Future 2006 was made possible by these sponsors:

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Event Committee: Paula Todd - Event Chair, Cindi Brand, Colleen Coman, Carrie Gemmell, Sandra Godard, Michael Harris, Mary Heinmaa, Ira Hopmeyer, Jessie Kittilsen, Ellen Nichols, Sharon Ranson, Kaaren Whitney-Vernon, Francine Zuckerman.



Chef and owner of Bymark, Mark McEwan (left), our Event Chair, Paula Todd (middle), and chef and owner of Lumière Restaurant, Robert Feenie (right).

SAVE A FUTURE ALL YEAR LONG!

Join Integra's monthly donation program, the Save a Future Team.

When you become a monthly supporter, you are giving vulnerable children and youth a chance at a brighter future.

Why give monthly? Monthly giving is more cost-effective and dependable for Integra, meaning you will be helping us:

- Reach even more children in need.
- Develop new and innovative methods of treatment.
- Enhance our in-house and Camp Towhee programs.
- Reduce waiting time for our new clients.
- Expand our learning disabilities awareness initiative in schools, health care facilities, and public service campaigns.

How do I join? Simply fill in the reverse side of this form and mail it back to us with your Visa information. You may instead wish to call Carrie Gemmell and join by phone at 416.486.8055 Ext. 222 or email cgemmell@integra.on.ca

How does the program work? As a monthly donor, you can rest assured that:

- Your donations will be withdrawn automatically on the last day of each month.
- You are in control. If at any time you wish to increase, decrease, hold or cancel your monthly gifts, simply contact us.
- It's hassle-free. We will send you a single, consolidated tax receipt at the end of each year for your monthly donations.
- Your privacy is protected. All of your information is kept confidential. And we will never trade your name.
- We promise to keep you in the loop. You will be kept updated on how your monthly donations are helping through our newsletter, *Among Friends*. You will also be invited to attend workshops and events.

Please **join now** to make a difference!