

among friends

Keeping friends of Integra in touch



INTEGRA

Improving the Lives of Children & Youth with Learning Disabilities

CIBC Children's Foundation Celebrates 25 years of Empowerment

At the end of 2009 CIBC Children's Foundation celebrated its 25th anniversary. They asked to interview an Integra client as to how Integra has empowered him and changed his life. Keir Thompson agreed to be a part of their celebration.

He had just finished a year of counselling at Integra which included a number of sessions in the *Find a Friend* social competence program which has been sponsored by CIBC Children's Foundation since 2001.

Some of Keir's thoughts about the improvements in his life because of the help he received:

"I never paid much attention to the effects my learning disability (LD) had on my life. I guess I knew that my behaviour put people off but I just made myself believe that being on my own, being a loner, was okay. It was my mom who felt I could lead a happier life and searched out help which led us to Integra.

"I had always considered I had pretty average self-confidence though at times I knew it slipped pretty low. I knew I didn't like to socialize but really didn't know what I was missing. I didn't know that I could actually change my lack of enthusiasm for life. I did regret that I couldn't seem to follow through on anything – I would start out with eagerness but would quickly lose interest.

"I only 'saw the light' when Integra put me into group therapy sessions where I learned to have fun socializing. I learned that there are certain times that call for certain behaviours and I learned to recognize what proper approaches were and what settings and times were appropriate for certain actions.



Keir with his dad, John

"I now do much better in school. I learned how to talk openly with my fellow students and my teachers. I was so shy before and missed out on a lot because of that.

"I actually think about the future now and make plans. I'm just a teenager so my plans are centered on things like finding a girlfriend and just doing my best at what I do. I now know it's good to set reachable goals. If you believe in yourself you can do most anything you set out to do."



CIBC Children's Foundation

What's New

“Learn Dis”

When it comes to Learning Disabilities (LD), there are so many stories waiting to be told. Challenges are plenty and success is something that has to be fought for and earned through constant effort, patience, and compassion.

In October, Integra, Inspired Playback Theatre Company, Y.M.C.A Academy and the University of Toronto Accessible Services embarked on a new adventure in disseminating the message to the public about LDs.

Championed by Integra’s David Jurasek, Child and Family Therapist, and nine actors from The Inspired Playback Theatre Company, *Learn Dis* is an interactive theatrical improvised play that uses community ritual.

Audience members share moments from their lives then watch them played back on the spot. This provides the audience with a thought provoking first hand account of what it is like to have an LD through an approach that is truthful and compassionate.

Learn Dis takes a contemporary look at LD and the issues of what it is really like to live with such challenges and what can be done about it.

An overall theme of the performance is that LD touches us all whether we or a loved one is dealing with it.



A tagline of the project has become an observation made by a 17 year old with LD when talking about the impact of public reactions: “It is only a dis if you let it be one.”

Many audience members came not knowing what to expect and perhaps a bit leery about what would happen. By the end of the evening, everyone had put concerns aside and was entering whole-heartedly into the spirit of the performance. Some comments

about the experience:

“Like watching ten people stand on the edge of a cliff — exciting and scary. You don't know what to expect. Then they jump -- then they soar. It's exhilarating to watch — the courage, the risk, the art. Wow! BRAVO! Kudo! I'm still thinking about your show hours later.”

“I just wanted to let you all know that this event was absolutely fabulous!... completely helpful, therapeutic, and really creative and energizing.”

Developing Social Competence

“Social competence” refers to a complex set of social, emotional and behavioral skills that kids need to navigate interpersonal relationships. These can include basic social skills like turn-taking, actively listening, and not interrupting and more complex skills such as reading body language, understanding other people’s feelings, and responding to the reactions of others.

Research suggests that up to 75% of kids with LDs have difficulty developing their social competence. Integra has developed and refined an innovative approach to helping children with LDs learn these complex skills. Goals for this program provide a positive social experience and improve social

capabilities. We begin with a careful multi-step assessment of a child’s ability to manage their emotions and behaviors and set individual goals for treatment. Using an activity-based approach, we tailor group size and type to meet the needs of each child. Small groups benefit from intensive adult coaching and modeling of basic social skills, while larger groups offer opportunities for spontaneous teaching of complex skills and discussion of common social experiences, such as bullying.

This year we have been fortunate to receive a grant from the Ministry of Children & Youth Services to study the effectiveness of our popular social competence group program. Stay tuned for the results, expected early next year

Portage to the Future 2009

Sunday night, November 8, 2009, was a remarkable gathering of people generous both with their wallets and with their spirit.

First up – the two co-chairs who worked at securing sponsors, finding auction prizes making important decisions and ultimately ensuring we had an SRO event. Integra is very grateful to Leanne Petroff and Maggie Tulecka for their unerring leadership, good taste, energy and enthusiasm for the Integra cause.

Tarek Aboushakka, proprietor of ORO, accompanied by Chef Stanley Yung and their impeccable wait staff, prepared and served a ☆☆☆☆ menu. One

person was heard saying, “The hors d'oeuvres were so incredible, I don't have room for dinner!” He was later observed eating the main course with gusto, so managed to recover.



A number of people commented on the warmth and ambience of the setting, the camaraderie of the guests and the frisson around the auction. Jay Mandarino volunteered his

skills and led guests through a spirited romp of bidding. He even managed to ward off disappointment when he offered to double the Skateboard Package he had donated.

Also Neil and Leanne Petroff very graciously offered a second week at their Turks & Caicos haven with the result that bidders went away happy and Integra realized double the return on those auction items. Fran and Dan Brown, who have recently joined the Integra family of major funders, were present that night and generously donated a Crystal Bowl designed by Gunnar Cyrén and a Bikuben Decanter.



Camp Director

BARCLAYS
CAPITAL

Intermediate Counsellors

James B. Archer-Shee & Mary Matthews



Junior Counsellors

Kaaren Whitney-Vernon & Rick Vernon

Deloitte.

Event Patrons

Tom Higgins, Margaret McCain, Nicholas Offord & Jutta Vanderkuijp, ScotiaLife Financial

Auction items courtesy of

Susan Sniderman, Leanne & Neil Petroff

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Jay Mandarino, Mark McEwan & Hazelton Hotel,

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Thank you for helping keep Integra's work vital

Principal gifts from April 7, 2009 – March 5, 2010

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Tribute Gifts

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Tilly Davey
Dalia Eisen
Bill Ford
Marci Goldstein
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Joe & Doreen Kronick
Pauline Landon
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Audrey Macklin & Spouse
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Sam Sorokin
Karen Steele
Mona Witten
David Worling
Danny Zalmanowitz
Adrian Zenwirt

Integra's Susan Sorokin Memorial Fund

Provides subsidies for children and youth to attend Camp Towhee. Susan was a gifted social worker, student and staff member at Integra who passed away in 1998. Her family established this fund in her honour and the following gave gifts in Susan's memory:

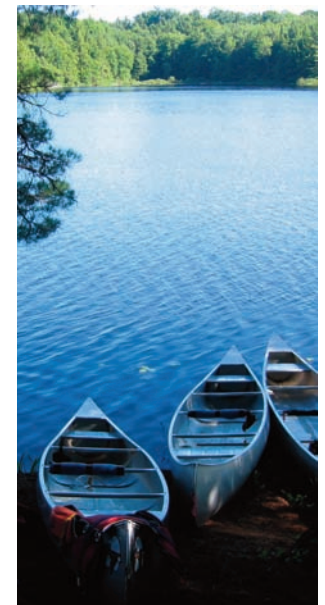
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Ronnie Sorokin & Lisa Redmond
Leo Superstein
Ann Tang & Alan Milner
Mandy Tarder-Kadner

Integra Memorials

In memory of the following: individuals, gifts have been made to Integra:

Peter Barsony
Brenda
Della Holden
Drew Hosier
Elliot Phillipson
Susan Sorokin
Rachele Ventura



We also thank the following camp sponsors for supporting Camp Towhee:

The Toronto Star Fresh Air Fund



Continued

Principal gifts from April 7, 2009 – March 5, 2010

2009 Camps Campaign

The following individuals and families made gifts to help send kids to Camp Towhee. We thank them and their camps for their belief in the power of camp to change lives.

Crestwood Valley Day Camp

Senior Counsellor (\$200)

Matthew & Gracie Gellman

Junior Counsellor (\$100)

Mason & Erin Friendly
Hana & Miki Mitsui Hotz
Seth & Ezra Kirsh
Lucas & Aaron Vidal-Ribas Smith

Counsellor in Training (\$15-\$50)

Meredith Berr
Lauren Riley Breslin
Akshay Duggal
Irene & Christine Drimoussis
Dylan & Julia Toor

Camp Manitou

Section Head (\$450)

1 Manitou Family

Senior Counsellor (\$200-250)

2 Manitou Families

Junior Counsellor (\$100)

4 Manitou Families

Counsellor in Training (\$25-\$50)

3 Manitou Families

Camp Northway/Camp

Wendigo

Junior Counsellor (\$100)

The Coles Family
1 Anonymous

Counsellor in Training (\$25-\$50)

Andrea Pace
1 Anonymous

Camp Oconto

Junior Counsellor (\$100)

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Counsellor in Training (\$50)

Keara Rodd
2 Anonymous

Camp Wahanowin

Junior Counsellor (\$100)

Emma and Alex Fried
Hannah, Rachel & Sam Nashman

Counsellor in Training (\$50)

Simon, Erica & Rachel LeBlanc
2 Anonymous

Camp Wanapitei

Junior Counsellor (\$100)

Emily, Victoria, Graham & Cameron

Counsellor in Training (\$50)

Peter and Michael Lilly
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No Camp Affiliation

Counsellor in Training (\$50)

Anonymous

We also thank the following camp sponsors



Please help Integra provide vital mental health treatment for children and youth struggling with learning disabilities by sending in your donation in the envelope provided or by going online to www.integra.on.ca or by calling us at 416-486-8055

Payment Option #1
By cheque payable to Integra Foundation in the amount of \$ _____

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Night of Shining Stars



Doreen Kronick

Integra's AGM was held last spring on June 16 at the CNIB and was an evening honouring people who have made amazing contributions to Integra.

Joe and Doreen Kronick were the stars of the occasion. Their proactive thinking forty-one years ago led to the development of Camp Towhee

which has empowered thousands of children and youth, challenged by learning disabilities and accompanying mental health problems. At camp kids learn skills in getting along with others as well develop the ability to look inside themselves. At Towhee being 'part of the gang', often for the first time, increases self confidence and esteem. The success of Camp Towhee led to the establishment of Integra, a year-round program. At that time there was no comparable program in the world.

According to Joe, "It was Doreen's idea to develop Camp Towhee and Integra." As for the reason why Doreen wanted to develop a camp that caters to kids with learning disabilities she had this to say, "I wanted a camp that could work intensely on kids' social skills . . . to see whether in fact there could be a difference."

Also that evening a remarkable family was honoured for their dedication and contributions to Integra and its

mission: Neil, Leanne, Lauren, Carey and Brent Petroff. Neil served on Integra's Board for eight years during which he was Treasurer and leading fundraiser. He still remains involved in our fundraising.

Leanne has co-chaired our last three fundraisers to which she lent her leadership, creativity, energy and enthusiasm. Through it all Leanne and Neil have had the support of their children who generously 'allowed' their parents to spend much time in helping other kids.

Overall, the evening was full of good spirits and much cheer, except when it came to saying goodbye to long-term board members. Those resigning at the AGM were:

- Anne Marie Gutierrez, who was a Board Member for eleven years and a vital part of the Finance and Policy and Procedures Committees;
- Cindi Brand, who had been on the Board of Directors for six years during which she served as Secretary and Vice President. In 2004, when she chaired the Breakfast Event, she set the record for the most money raised in the event's ten year history;
- Shireley Valo, a Board Member for four years, brought her experience as a Special Education teacher for the Toronto District School Board and made a valuable contribution to the Research Program Committee.

This truly was a memorable evening for Integra, thanks to all our shining stars.

Community Consultation

We have updated and expanded Integra's flagship workshop, *Walk a Mile in My Shoes* (WAM) with our partner of seven years, RBC Foundation. This interactive workshop lets participants experience the emotional impact of having learning disabilities while gaining an evidence-based understanding of the nature of the challenges. We have tailored the approach to meet the needs of a diverse audience by including: a new *Walk a Mile in My Shoes for Siblings*; a two-part *Walk a Mile in My Shoes* for staff working in the youth justice sector; and a WAM tailored to teachers.

In addition we have developed specialized workshops that

focus on processing difficulties such as executive functioning, language based learning disabilities and nonverbal learning disabilities. These workshops provide parents and caregivers with an opportunity to explore topics in greater depth.

Also with the LDAO we have co-developed brochures on learning disabilities which are part of the initial package given to families by staff at the Toronto District School Board when a student is first formally identified as having a learning disability.



RBC Foundation

Camp Towhee

This past year Integra's Camp Towhee engaged in two major projects:

Project 1: Renovation of several buildings. Built on piers over forty years ago, having endured winter freeze, spring thaws and land movements, certain structures were becoming unsafe and needed serious attention.

With generous support from The Ontario Trillium Foundation and Jim Archer-Shee and Mary Matthews, renovations began to bring six cabins up to safety standards before the camp 2009 session commenced. Then in the fall the second phase of the renovations started on the dining hall and veranda and the gymnasium/barn. By the Spring of 2010, all buildings at Camp Towhee will be safe for our campers.



Project 2: Camp Towhee undertook a program evaluation of 58 children and youth ages 10 -18 and their caregivers. This research used both qualitative and quantitative methods to determine if Camp Towhee effects positive changes in self-esteem and social competence. Both children and parents were



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asked to complete two questionnaires on the first day of camp, on the last day of camp and three months later.

The results showed that both parents and campers reported positive gains in social skills after attending the three-week camp session and parents reported that the social skills gains were maintained at the three month follow-up. Campers reported gains in self-esteem immediately after camp, although those gains were waning at the three-month follow-up.

The qualitative interviews were conducted with five campers, five parents and five camp staff to examine the perception that Camp Towhee evoked transformational changes in the lives of these youths.

An analysis of these interviews showed that it is the immersion into the Towhee community and its philosophy of acceptance, emphasis on 'challenge by choice' and low staff-to-camper ratio with highly skilled counsellors that are essential in contributing to each camper's individual growth and success. The key component for these youth, who typically experience frustration and failure in learning environments, is that Towhee provides safe and supportive opportunities to take risks and to experience success in overcoming fears and obstacles or in meeting individual goals.

The results of this study suggest that Towhee offers an invaluable and unique intervention for youth with LDs and mental health challenges.