

## NEWSLETTER – FEBRUARY 2005

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### A BIT OF MAGIC

Magic is a fitting way to describe what happened at this year's Toy Auction held in early December. Now in its third year, this event represents the collective efforts of a highly committed group of volunteers from the toy industry as well as a wonderful group of companies who graciously donate auction items. With a sellout crowd of over 500 people, even our new expanded space at the Mississauga Grand Banquet Hall was filled to capacity. People came from near and far to enjoy the evening with some flying in from the United States especially for this event. The eager crowd of auction goers seemed to thoroughly enjoy themselves as they placed bids and met up with old friends.



Long time Teresa Group supporter Don Cameron from Wal-Mart acted as the MC for the evening. He spoke passionately about why he was so committed to this organization. Then he introduced one of our guest celebrities for the evening, retired Toronto Maple Leafs star Darryl Sittler who went on to he speak about his interest in the work of The Teresa Group. Darryl was certainly a crowd favourite as he posed for pictures and signed autographs for an army of eager fans.

We were also delighted to have WWE star "Victoria" joining us for the evening's festivities. She is one of the most predominant female figures in the wrestling world and although a fearsome competitor in the ring, Victoria was gracious and congenial as she posed for fans and signed autographs

Once again this year the energetic Steve Morris from Mega Bloks acted as our auctioneer reining over an amazing display of more than 300 donated Silent Auction items. There was something for everyone. From autographed sports memorabilia, electronics, home decor and jewellery through to a mind boggling array of games, toys and toy packages, mini motorcycles and ride on kids cars.



When it came time for the Live Auction, Steve worked the crowd into a frenzy of bidding on some of the bigger ticket items. How about an autographed sweater from Wal-Mart's "Mr. Fluffy" for \$3,300 or an autographed guitar by Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young for \$3,000 or a Trip for four and accommodations to Nickelodeon's new hotel in Florida for \$4,000. The Silent Auction alone brought in close to \$29,000.

The Toy Auction succeeded well beyond our wildest expectations and raised over 108,000 this year. What an incredible achievement! This event has a tremendous impact on the organization's ability to deliver front line services to an ever-growing number of HIV affected children and their families. Our sincere thanks go out to the amazing Top Committee for organizing the auction as well as the volunteers, celebrities, corporate donors and guests who made the 3rd Annual Toy Auction such a smashing success.



The 2005 Toy Auction is scheduled for December 1, so be sure to mark your calendar early.

## **‘IF IT’S OKAY WITH YOU’**

When it comes to emotional support for HIV affected children, our Leading the Way Program is second to none. This multi-faceted program provides nine week group sessions in the fall and in the spring along with numerous other activities and events between sessions and on school breaks. For many of the children, the groups offer both a welcome opportunity to have fun with other kids going through the same situation as well as an opportunity to discuss HIV/AIDS and other problems in a safe and comfortable environment.

Recently, 12 year old Marcus, now in his fourth 9-week session of Leading the Way came to group on a Saturday and asked the following of his group leader:

**"Well, if it's okay with you, this is what I think the group should do today. First we should play basketball for 20 minutes, then we can have snack. After that we can do our talking thing, where we talk about HIV. Then we can spend time on the computers and then we can finish with our DJ lesson. That's if it's okay with you"**

This was absolutely fine with the group leader, especially considering that this was a boy who, upon entering the program was both verbally and physically aggressive, identified himself as a bully and had a great deal of difficulty participating in the group and following rules. He's come a long way thanks to Leading the Way.

## **7 SENSATIONAL YEARS**

When Steve Roy from OZ Salon in Yorkville approached The Teresa Group seven years ago about wanting to develop a



fundraiser for HIV affected children, little did we know what an amazing person we were dealing with. Not only has Steve spearheaded an annual haircutting event that has raised over \$120,000 for our organization, but he has also become a community ambassador for us by talking to customers, friends and corporate colleagues about the work being done by The Teresa Group.

This year's 7th Annual Mane Event on October 24 brought together a wonderful group of salons, stylists, clients and corporate sponsors all joined by compassion in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Salons opened their doors and stylists generously gave up their day off to pamper throngs of customers who showed up to support The Teresa Group. It was a fun filled day with refreshments and goody bags available for every customer compliments of Schwarzkopf Professional. This year's event also featured a giveaway for a Total Makeover package as well as a beautiful Royal de Versailles diamond necklace as first prize in the raffle.

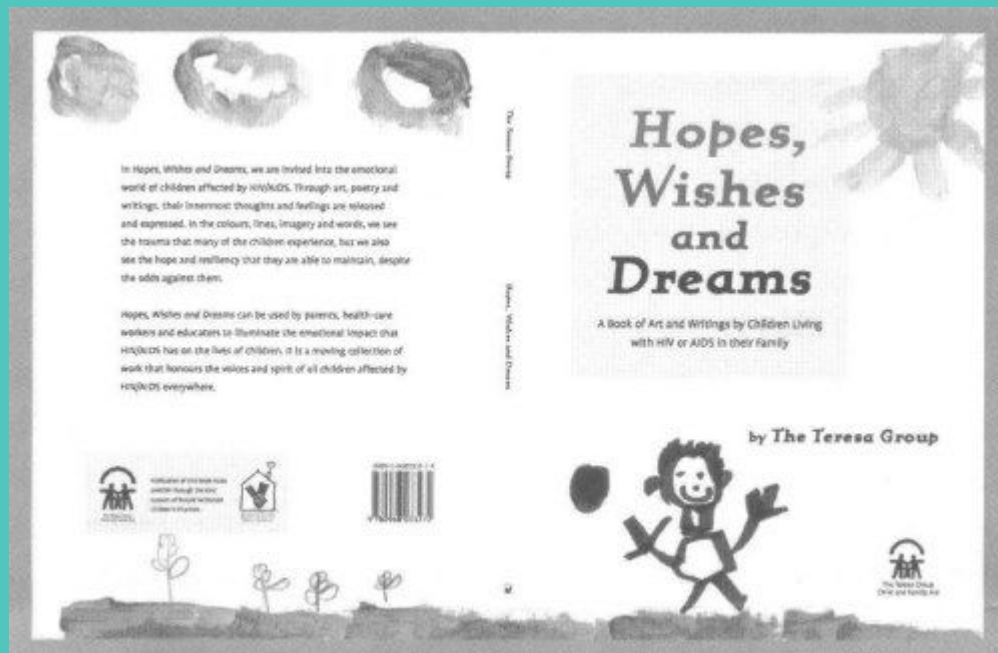


We were delighted when Vanessa Olivarez one of the stars of HAIRSPRAY and local celebrity Carla Collins showed up to support the event. A very special thank you to all the participating salons - OZ, Salon Vivace, Lift, Wellstone

Salon, Esthetic Laser Solutions, Privee Salon, Salon Escape, Salon Piaff, their stylists and clients as well as the volunteers and corporate sponsors who made the 7th Annual Mane Event such a wonderful day. Together we raised over \$21,000!

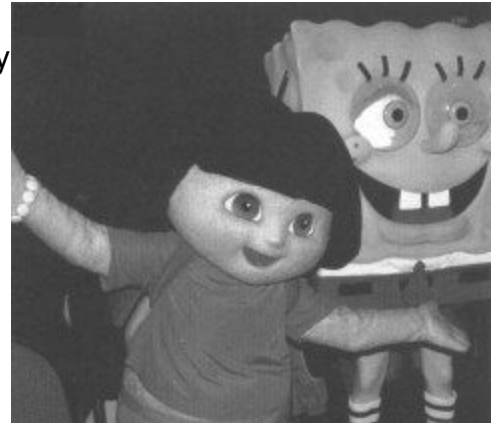
## SOON TO BE RELEASED AT THE TERESA GROUP:

"Hopes, Wishes and Dreams" an extraordinary book of artwork, poetry and writings by HIV/AIDS affected children.



## HOLIDAY PARTY A HIT WITH KIDS AND FAMILIES

"The party was phenomenal. It was priceless," said one enthusiastic parent as he was leaving the 8th Annual Holiday Party. His young daughter along with dozens of other children had the time of their lives as they giggled, jiggled and danced up a storm to music supplied by Lance our multi talented DJ. St. Lawrence Great Hall was really rocking. When they were not dancing, the kids were taking turns at the games corner, participating in special gift give-aways or making fabulous creations at the craft table.



Miss L. Toe the clown was on hand to play with the kids and give everyone a lesson in balloon art. And just when it seemed that it couldn't get much better along came Sponge Bob Square Pants and Dora the Explorer followed closely by Barbie, Strawberry Shortcake and Mega Block Man. They all joined in the fun by dancing with the kids and posing for Polaroid pictures that the children could take home with them. Everyone was having a terrific time.

All that fun really worked up some great appetites. A delicious array of snacks, appetizers, main courses and luscious desserts filled the food tables. Children and parents alike enjoyed the abundance and selection of tasty treats. When it was finally time to leave each family received a special holiday bag loaded with presents for everyone in the family. Everyone went home happy and all that was left was the cleanup. Well not quite all.

Although The Teresa Group's Annual Holiday Party for our families looks pretty straightforward on the surface, in truth, it takes a small army of dedicated volunteers to bring the event to a successful conclusion. When long time Holiday Party organizers Marjorie Monahan and Jean Hafner indicated last year that they would no longer be able to take on the organization of the event, we were very worried about a replacement. To our delight volunteer Marcel Watier stepped up to the plate this year and true to their word, Marjorie and Jean offered their guidance and support while Marcel was becoming familiar with the six-month process of organizing the party.

Marcel says that he couldn't wait to get started and that the special Holiday Party file that Marjorie prepared for him was his constant companion as he moved through the various stages of connecting with the toy companies, verifying the number of families, children and their ages, organizing the collecting, wrapping and sorting of gifts and finally soliciting and organizing pick up of all the food donations for the event. The final step was the call to the volunteers. Without them the event would not have been possible. As always our volunteers responded to the call for help with enthusiasm and energy.

A very special thanks goes out to our new Holiday Party organizer Marcel Watier and co-mentors Marjorie and Jean as well as the many event day volunteers and all the other volunteers who worked to help with the wrapping of the gifts. Of course we want to recognize the phenomenal support we receive from our friends in the toy industry who donated all the children's gifts for the 175 gift bags as well as the local caterers and restaurants that supplied the wonderful food for the event.

## TERESA GROUP PRESENTS AT ROMANIAN CONFERENCE

At the invitation of the Canadian Public Health Association and Close to You, an organization in Romania that works with HIV infected children, The Teresa Group was invited to make a presentation at the First National Conference on HIV/AIDS, Youth and Education. After a visit to our organization last year and an invitation to speak at our Let's Talk Conference last March, representatives from Close to You returned to their homeland with ideas for holding their own conference. With funding from UNICEF and the Global Fund, Close to You made their conference dream a reality in October.



Approximately 250 delegates representing physicians, health workers, parents, youth, psychologists, social workers, teachers and community groups all gathered for this two and one half day event. Because Romania has over 8,000 HIV infected school aged children and youth, the conference focused on issues of social and professional integration of children in the education system, the rights of HIV infected children, prevention strategies, stigma and discrimination and the psychosocial implications of HIV/AIDS on children and youth.

Karen Vance-Wallace, Executive Director of The Teresa Group made a presentation to the conference about lessons learned from our nine years of experience with the Leading the Way emotional support groups for children and youth. She also had a number of opportunities to meet and share information with Romanian organizations as well as with Pierre Poupard, the Director of Programs for UNICEF in Romania. The conference was a tremendous experience that was made even better by the incredible hospitality displayed by the Romanian host organization, Close to You.

## VOLUNTEER COMMITMENT REMAINS STRONG

In today's fast paced society recruiting volunteers has become a very challenging undertaking particularly for smaller organizations like The Teresa Group. If you are successful in recruiting, the next challenge is retaining those individuals. How do you keep volunteers motivated and satisfied given that they may only have a very limited amount of time to give the organization? If volunteers are not satisfied with the work that they do, agency loyalty declines and job turnover increases.

As a volunteer driven organization, The Teresa Group has worked hard over the years to maintain a stable base of volunteers who are committed to the agency and prepared to do the much-needed work. One way we gauge where we stand with our volunteers is through an annual evaluation survey that measures levels of volunteer satisfaction. The results of the

survey help the agency to determine what within the department is working and what might need to undergo some change.



In our most recent survey volunteers continued to indicate a high level of satisfaction with their volunteer placements with The Teresa Group. Of the volunteers that responded to the survey, 68% had been volunteering at The Teresa Group for more than a year and 50% had been Teresa Group volunteers for 2-11 years. Given the current trends in volunteering (a year or less per volunteer per agency), the fact that an agency the size of The Teresa Group can maintain such long-term volunteers is quite impressive and is one indicator of job satisfaction.

"The Teresa Group is the first organization I have worked with that truly appreciated its volunteers."

"The best thing about The Teresa Group is that I was able to challenge my own boundaries, experiences and values in a safe and very supportive environment."

The respondents are involved in all areas of The Teresa Group - board of directors, office volunteers, family support volunteers, transportation volunteers as well as many involved in holiday and special events. It was quite beneficial to have responses from so many different areas of volunteer work as it allowed us to get a sense of volunteer satisfaction right across the agency.

Almost 90% of respondents felt that their volunteer contributions were valued by the agency. Over 80% of the respondents stated that the overall volunteer experience with The Teresa Group was Excellent/Good. The same percentage of volunteers stated that the roles and responsibilities were clear and that they knew what was expected of them.

"Volunteering at The Teresa Group, I got a sense of common purpose and an opportunity to meet many dedicated people."

"I really felt needed and appreciated...I loved that feeling."

"I like seeing the strengths of the clients and I have noticed how well most of them manage with the stress of HIV."

"The Teresa Group has friendly, helpful, accommodating and understanding staff."

From its inception, The Teresa Group has considered volunteers an integral piece of the organization. The agency simply could not function at the same capacity without the constant support and dedication we receive from our volunteers. We are thrilled that the results of the most recent survey indicate that our volunteers are as happy to be with us as we are to have them. Our deepest gratitude goes out to them for all of the wonderful work that they do for the entire Teresa Group organization.

## VOLUNTEER AWARDS

This past October, five of our volunteers received The Ontario Volunteer Service Awards for their dedication and multiple years of service with The Teresa Group. The following individuals received awards.

**Elizabeth Blomme** received an award for an amazing 10 years of service. Elizabeth had been providing practical and emotional support for families as well as assisting with the Holiday Party.

**Heather Hill** received an award for 6 years of devoted service. Heather was the volunteer site manager for the Leading the Way Program for many years as well as assisting at the Teresa Group office.

**Ida Greco** also received an award for 6 years of service. Ida provides support to families as well as assisting with The Mane Event fundraiser.

**Ann McGill** received an award for 5 years of service. Ann has provided transportation for families as well as assisting with special events like the Let's Talk Conference.

**Bob Lament**, the President of the Board of Directors of The Teresa Group received an award for 5 years of service. In addition to providing leadership on the Board, Bob assists at The Mane Event, the Holiday Party and the Toy Auction.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to these individuals for their outstanding dedication and we look forward to working with them in the future.

## NEW PROGRAMS INTRODUCED AT THE TERESA GROUP

Building on the success of our popular New Moms Group, The Teresa Group has announced the addition of two new programs that will provide a continuum of emotional support and early intervention information for HIV positive women and their young children.

The new Pre-Natal Group will provide HIV positive pregnant women with a specialized program of support and information in a warm and welcoming atmosphere. Despite the importance of good prenatal care, many HIV positive women do not attend any prenatal classes due to fear of disclosure of their status. Among other topics, the program will focus on the various aspects of HIV and pregnancy, side effects of HIV medication, disclosure issues, nutrition, concerns about transmission, healthy delivery and the Formula Program. The Teresa Group will partner with nurses from St. Michael's Hospital, Sunnybrook and Women's College Hospital, the Hospital for Sick Children and social workers from Mount Sinai in the facilitation of the groups.

Our new Moms and Tots Group was organized to address the needs of mothers who were looking for support with parenting skills particularly for their young toddlers. Many of the mothers are first time parents. This group will focus on understanding a range of child development issues as well subjects like potty training, nutrition and fussy eaters, temper tantrums, sleeping patterns, self esteem and the importance of play. Of particular interest to this group will be a discussions on how to deal with stress and other issues related to parenting while coping with a diagnosis of HIV.

## CONGRATULATIONS TO THE WINNERS OF THE MAIN EVENT RAFFLE:

FIRST PRIZE:

18kt. Yellow and white gold and diamond pendant courtesy of Royal de Versailles Jewellers Inc. - **Elda Sparaga**

SECOND PRIZE:

Black Leather Banff Bag, Courtesy of Roots Canada - **Sarah Godwin**

THIRD PRIZE:

Toshiba DVD Player, courtesy of Cambridge TV & Stereo - **Anna Cohen**

Congratulations also go to **Ann Blundell**, winner of our 50-50 Draw at the Annual Toy Industry Auction and Dinner held on December 2, 2004.