

## NEWSLETTER – MAY 2004

### OH WHAT A NIGHT!

It is amazing what can happen when a group of committed people put their hearts and minds together.

The second Annual Holiday Toy Auction was such a success that we will now have to consider a bigger venue for next year's event. Lots of food, fun and ferocious bidding were the order of the evening. Approximately 275 items were donated for the silent and live auctions. Strates Banquet Hall was jammed to capacity with an eager crowd of auction supporters.



The wonderful Don Cameron from Wal-Mart Canada was our MC for the evening introducing our special guests and talking about the history of his commitment to The Teresa Group. Don read an e-mail from Olympic gold medallist Chris Pronger of the St. Louis Blues hockey team wishing us well with the event. Chris was a guest celebrity at last year's auction and donated a number of items to the event this year.



We were honored this year by the presence of two sports celebrities who joined in the festivities. Toronto Maple Leafs great Wendel Clark was on hand to mingle with the audience, sign autographs and speak about why he came out to support our event. As the retired captain of the Leafs, Wendel remains one of the most popular Leaf players of all time. We were delighted that WWE superstar diva Stacey Keebler flew in to join us for the evening.

Stacey was a charming representative for the WWE organization mixing easily with the audience and making herself available for photos. She showed off her gentler side during her interview with Don about her wrestling career.

The very dynamic Steve Morris from MegaBloks acted as our auctioneer extraordinaire eliciting some wonderful bids from the enthusiastic audience. The array of items donated for the auction was phenomenal and ranged from toys, home décor, appliances and jewellery all the way through to a fantastic collection of sports memorabilia, gift certificates and game tickets. The big-ticket item of the evening was the Limited Edition - Bobby Orr Power Play Pinball Machine that went for \$4,000 in the live auction.

The toy industry has always been very supportive of The Teresa Group by providing hundreds of children's gifts for our



annual Holiday Party. By supporting The Teresa Group through the Toy Auction, the industry has now made it possible for us to provide enhanced programs and services to the hundreds HIV affected children and families we serve. We are extremely grateful for their ongoing support.

Once again we would like to thank the Toy Committee, volunteers, celebrities, guests and corporate donors who made the second Annual Toy Auction such a roaring success. We more than doubled last year's total by **raising over \$80,000** at this wonderful four-hour event. WOW!! This year's Toy Auction is scheduled for Thursday, December 2, so be sure to mark your calendars early.

## VOLUNTEER AWARDS

This past February, six of our volunteers received The Ontario Volunteer Service Awards for their dedication and multiple years of service with The Teresa Group. The awards were presented to the volunteers by Hon. George Smitherman, Minister of Health at The North York Centre for Performing Arts. Karen Vance-Wallace, Executive Director, and Bob Lamont, Board Chair, were in attendance.

**DON CAMERON** received an award for 10 years of service with The Teresa Group. He has been a wonderful promoter of the agency and its cause, has consistently arranged donations for the holiday party and baskets and has been a wonderful fundraiser for the agency.

**STEVE ROY** received his award for 6 years of service. He created and continues to organize an annual fundraiser, The Mane Event, for the agency. He promotes the agency and its cause and educates the public about the affects of HIV/AIDS in families.

**RUTH HISLOP** has volunteered with The Teresa Group for 7 years. She has worked as a volunteer group facilitator for parents and/or caregivers of children affected by HIV/AIDS.

**JEAN HAFNER** has been volunteering with The Teresa Group for 7 years. She has worked with several of our families, has spoken on behalf of the agency and has been co-chair of the Holiday Events Committee for several years.

**LESLIE EDWARDS** has been involved with the agency for 5 years. She has driven children to support groups and organized the food donations for our annual holiday party.

**DEBORAH ROBERTSON** has been a volunteer at The Teresa Group for 6 years. She has been working with the same family for over five years and has provided both practical and emotional support to them. We would like to thank these individuals for their outstanding efforts and we look forward to working with them for many years to come!

## LET'S TALK CONFERENCE SPECIAL

CANADA'S FIRST CONFERENCE ABOUT CHILDREN  
AND HIV / AIDS HAS EVERYONE TALKING



National Capacity Building Conference held in early March proved to a tremendous success, not only in terms of achieving key conference goals but also in providing a welcoming environment for a very diverse group of participants. Over 210 delegates officially registered for the conference. As well, a number of youth delegates attended and presented, encouraged by the Youth forum that was held the day before the conference. Connecting the conference to the youth forum was an excellent idea and empowered a number of youth to participate in the conference itself.

There were a wide variety of delegates from all across Canada including health professionals, physicians, social workers, educators, community workers, youth, and over 50 HIV affected parents and family members. In addition, there were about 46 international delegates representing the United States, United Kingdom, Romania, India, Guyana, Swaziland, Nigeria, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. We truly had our own little global village.

In the words of one delegate



*“The Let’s Talk theme truly occurred with people from across the globe all focusing their energies on children, youth and families with such remarkable enthusiasm that it was hard not to feel anything but reenergized and exceptionally proud of the work that we all do.”*

This kind of enthusiasm showed up over and over again in the conference evaluations.

Overall The Teresa Group was extremely pleased by the number of people who took the time to fill out evaluations. By conference standards our results are impressive with 65% of registered workshop attendees filling out evaluations. The vast majority were pleased with the way the workshops were conducted. There was a sense that the size of the conference was very conducive to the excellent networking and information sharing that occurred.

***“The diversity of how we are all responding to the same thing using different tools. It now means that we can take this back to our community and share and improve or change what we have learnt”***

Our sincere thanks go out to our conference partner the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, Let’s Talk Conference Manager, Elizabeth Fawcett, Conference Coordinators, Simone Shindler and Shelane Donoghue, Teresa Group staff and volunteers and all of the Steering Committee and Planning Committee members for their excellent work leading up to and during the conference. This project was undertaken with the financial support of the Government of Canada provided through the Canadian International Development Agency and through Health Canada under the Canadian AIDS Strategy on HIV/AIDS. In addition we would like to thank Silver Sponsor GlaxoSmithKline in partnership with Shire BioChem, Bronze sponsors, Abbott Virology and the Hospital for Sick Children’s Foundation as well as the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation and MAC VIVA GLAM for making the event possible.



## THE LITTLE TREE THAT GREW

Located in a highly visible area at the Let's Talk Conference, the interactive tree of Hopes, Wishes and Dreams was a product of the Positive Teen Group and a number of other children and families at the Hospital for Sick Children. Their initial work was enhanced by conference delegates who were encouraged to write down their thoughts about HIV/AIDS on a leaf and attach it to the tree. By the end of the conference, delegates had filled the branches of the tree with beautiful coloured leaves bearing messages of hope and life. The following are samples of what was written on the leaves.



### HOPES, WISHES AND DREAMS TREE

- This leaf is for an important person who died young
- Mom and Dad have AIDS. A - 17 years, J - 11 years, R- 8 years, S - 7 years, what will happen to us?
- Our children are our future! Handle with Care
- There is always hope the HIV will leave us forever!
- Living with HIV, 12 years, Mom of four, thanks to treatment three of my children are HIV free.
- Knowledge is power from this we create choice.
- Great Spirit I pray for you to be with those who have lost
- You only live once. Don't waste it feeling sorry for you. Use PMA (positive mental attitude)!
- Handle life with courage and hope.
- This is a gift given to me! I live and learn from it.
- Knowledge and awareness are great tools for survival.
- We are too much at war with this virus!!! Make peace!!!
- HIV orphans need attention and love!
- Applied knowledge is POWER!!
- Together we will give life meaning!
- Sometimes I wish adults could see life like kids see life...
- Damos mucho amor a los ninos! (Give lots of love to children!)
- Que les vœux se realise! (That wishes are realized)
- The children are what matters!
- We need to become warriors against this enemy that is hurting us!
- ...There is hope , all is not lost. We care for you.
- This is life. Breathe. Beginnings. HIV/AIDS doesn't negate these things° LIVE-----NOW!

## HOPES WISHES AND DREAMS CHILDREN'S CONCERT

The *Hopes, Wishes and Dreams Concert* held on the first night of the conference won rave reviews from everyone who attended and was a powerful testimonial to the idea of children helping children. The concert was held to honour children and youth affected by HIV/AIDS whose voices often go unheard. An outstanding line up of talented young performers wowed the audience with their skill and professionalism.



***“Catherine showed me that I am not alone. Her story truly hit home. Addressed the emotional, spiritual shake***

***up/devastation of initial diagnosis a great choice for starting the conference.”***



With the help of our MC, Mark Beckles from the Nelson Mandela Children’s Fund (Canada), concert attendees felt the spirit of HIV affected children’s voices throughout the evening. At one point he quoted from Dr. Mike Meegan’s book saying, “People can succeed at almost anything if they have enough enthusiasm. The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams. Magic is all about us. We are magic, we

are power, we are promise. We are on an epic journey.” The performances of the young artists took us on a bit of that journey and certainly succeeded in paying tribute to other kids whose lives have been made more difficult because of HIV/AIDS.

Conference attendees were hungry for information and the opportunity to learn and share skills. Our keynote speakers were excellent and brought a depth of understanding and humanity to the conference process. Both Catherine Wyatt-Morley and Dr. Michael Meegan were extremely well received and were given outstanding evaluations by conference attendees.

***“Excellent conference. I appreciate the conference’s effort to offer workshops that provide applicable skills to practice.”***

Our thanks to the following groups for contributing their time and talents to achieve such a wonderful evening - Canadian Children’s Dance Theatre, COBA Youth Ensemble, Centre for Indigenous Theatre, The Toronto Mendelssohn Youth Choir, Kids Creole, Greenfire Celtic Dance Theatre, Hannaford Youth Band, Toronto School for Strings, ITAP Youth Company and Jazz Lab’ – the Cawthra Park Senior Jazz Ensemble.

## **CONFERENCE VOLUNTEERS MAKE IT HAPPEN**

The Let’s Talk Conference was an outstanding success – especially from the perspective of volunteers! We had volunteers involved in every aspect of the conference for an entire year leading up to and including the big event. We started off with a mixture of volunteers from both within The Teresa Group community and externally from the greater HIV/AIDS community. These volunteers made up 7 Conference Planning Committees. The volunteer committee itself included 4 Teresa Group volunteers: Ann McGill, Fran Hirschak, Marcel Watier and Marjorie Monahan. The organization and ease with which that committee and the overall conference were run is a testament to each of the four volunteers involved. Volunteer board member David Harris worked directly with Conference Manager, Elizabeth Fawcett at the Children’s Gala and throughout the conference to ensure an overall smooth flow of events. In addition to The Teresa Group volunteer pool, we recruited and trained 8 new volunteers just to work at the conference, 3 have stayed on to volunteer on a regular basis.



The dedication shown by the volunteers was incredible and they all deserve very special thanks. Some of the volunteers had to arrive at the hotel by 7:00am, others worked the Friday night Gala until 10:00p.m; some did both. In total, we had 26 volunteers working at the conference all of whom were consistently upbeat and enthusiastic the entire weekend! “Grace Under Fire” would be the phrase that comes to mind.

Many volunteers commented that being at the conference and listening in on the workshops were wonderful learning opportunities and that they didn't even feel like they were working. One volunteer said "Being here allowed me to meet so many wonderful people from all over the world who are working toward the same goal. It gave me a renewed sense of purpose and motivation." Another volunteer commented that "The atmosphere of the conference was both busy and stimulating and the enthusiasm of the event was felt by all who attended".

## A LIFE CHANGING EXPERIENCE

The Let's Talk Conference was developed to meet the needs of a variety of different people.



These included educators, front-line workers, health care providers, mental health workers and students. Most important however, was making sure that the needs of family members living with and affected by HIV/AIDS were met. To this end the conference organizers were able to provide a wide range of workshops that were of interest and of value to a very diverse audience. The comments of one participant reflect that the diversity of participants and of the workshops was appreciated...

*"I love that we (PHA'S) are part of this amazing group of people. We are not standing separately but are joining together with professionals and front-line workers, sharing our experiences and learning from one another...there is a wonderful feeling of mutual respect and working towards a common goal, the health and well being of our children."*

Another participant stated:

*"The workshops were very informative and enriching. As a PHA, I am now empowered to tell my children about my status. I am overwhelmed with the lessons learnt."*

Family members and youth participated in workshops or sat on panels sharing information. Feedback indicated that participants found this input to be both informative and inspiring:

*"Fabulous to involve youth actually doing frontline work."*

*"I wanted to hear more!"*

*"This was an important workshop for people living with HIV to learn about public speaking and disclosure."*

*"A great speaker, her passion is contagious. I feel empowered after her presentation."*

*"The presenters personal experience and first hand information was very valuable."*

The Teresa Group strives to provide opportunities for families to feel that their voices have been heard and to contribute a venue for opinions to be expressed. The following words from a family member seem to capture how important this conference was to many people who live with HIV/AIDS:



*"After the conference and the life changing testimonials I am no longer the same person. The conference changed my life. You gave me inspiration and a reason to go on. Thank you so much for leaving such footprints on my heart and thank you for giving me a life changing experience."*

The Teresa Group would like to thank all of the family members who took part in and attended

the conference. We could not have done it without you...Let's keep on talking.

## WHAT'S IN A LOGO?

In this case, the logo has a significant meaning. When you see this logo displayed on Teresa Group materials it means that The Teresa Group is accredited as an adherent to the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy's Ethical Fundraising & Financial Accountability Code. In accepting the code "members of the governing board commit to being responsible custodians of donated funds, to exercise due care concerning the governance of fundraising and financial reporting, and to ensure to the best of their ability that the organization adheres to the provisions of the Code." Each member of the governing board of The Teresa Board has received a copy of the Ethical Fundraising & Financial Accountability Code and a copy will also be provided to each person who is subsequently elected to the governing board.



The use of the logo is an important indicator to donors and the community-at-large that our organization is committed to protecting donors rights, operating in an ethical and accountable manner and using donor gifts wisely.

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**Please join us on Monday, June 28th, 2004 at the Red Foster Club House, 40 Birch Avenue from 6:30 - 7:00 p.m.** for light refreshments and to meet the people involved in the work of The Teresa Group. (Birch Avenue is just south of the Summerhill Subway Station, west off Yonge Street.)

**Official Business Meeting** will commence at **7:00 p.m.**

Following the business meeting, we invite you to hear our Guest Speakers: **Kevin Perkins, Founder of Canada Africa Partnership on AIDS Foundation** (CAP AIDS), and **Joseph Van Veen**, who is cycling across Africa with the Tour d'Afrique to raise funds for projects of CAP AIDS and the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund. Joseph will be presenting a series of photos from his trip.

Please **RSVP** to Wendy at **416.596.7703**.