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The Quarterly Newsletter of The National Youth in Care Network

In This Issue:

- The Ken Dryden Scholarship 2006 Winners and 2007 Applications.....1
- Adults' Opinions Wanted – Drugs in the System.....2
- Declaration of Accountability on the Ethical Engagement of Young People and Adults in Canadian Organizations.....4
- Building a Future Together: Issues and Outcomes for Transition-Aged Youth.....5
- Applications for NYICN Board of Directors Now Being Accepted.....4
- RECYN Update.....3
- Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks Update.....3
- 2006 Nova Scotia Youth Achievement Awards.....6

Ken Dryden Scholarship 2006: Winners 2007 Applications

The National Youth in Care Network would like to congratulate the following 2006 Ken Dryden Scholarship Winners:

Katherine MacDonald
Amelia Edwards
Teresita Baker
Lily Zahariev
Sandra Smith
Shirley Haynes
Lily Zhou

The Ken Dryden Scholarship was established in 1995, and is named after the man who got it started and who is determined to keep it going: Ken Dryden, author, consultant on education, child and youth issues, lawyer, former NHL hockey star, and past President of the Toronto Maple Leafs hockey club.

The National Youth in Care Network, a charitable organization established in 1985 to work for youth in care, has administered this scholarship program in partnership with Ken Dryden since its inception in 1995.

Each scholarship covers up to \$3,000 or 80% of the cost of tuition and fees, whichever is less, and is renewable annually, based on reasonable progress toward the completion of an undergraduate degree or diploma. Currently, scholarships are awarded annually to up to 8 new applicants.

Applications are now being accepted for 2007. Details and forms can be found on our website at www.youthincare.ca. Please be advised that there is a new application form and a new deadline.

Application forms and guidelines are available for download on our website at <http://youthincare.ca/work/scholarship.html>. French versions are also available. **The deadline for applications for this fall term is Friday April 6, 2007 at 5:00pm.**

Faxed copies cannot be accepted, so please make sure that youth are given lots of advance notice to avoid disappointment.

Adults' Opinions Wanted! Drugs in the System

One of the NYICN's current research projects focuses on the use of drugs (licit and illicit) in the system and how the use or non-use of these drugs impact the systems youth. To ensure that the project is holistic and represents the opinions and views of both young people and those working with them, we are asking for the opinions and experiences of adults who work directly (foster parents, psychiatric personnel) or indirectly (policy-makers, etc.) with systems youths through the use of a brief online survey. It is very important to us that we collect opinions and experiences of those

working with systems youths (referred to as "interveners"). It will ensure that both youth and interveners are given the opportunity to speak to the issue.

We have designed a short online interview instrument to elicit your feedback. The survey contains 23 short questions, and your participation will greatly assist us in understanding the use of drugs/medications in the system from the intervener's perspective.

If you would like to complete the survey,

please visit our website at

www.youthincare.ca.

RECYN Update

The newly-formed Revolutionary East Coast Youth Network (RECYN) gathered momentum in November when a strong contingent of east coasters met youth in care networkers from across the country in Vancouver at WorldForum 2006. What a conference! Our heads are still spinning...Newsletter Project member Lucas Kreft co-presented with his social worker, Gina Crane-Wilson, and Director Andrew Safer on Critical Success Factors for Youth Engagement: The Youth in Care Newsletter Project in an afternoon workshop.

In other news, Tina Doucette went to represent the Youth in Care Newsletter Project at the Pump Up the Volume conference in Toronto in October with the Office of the Ombudsman (Nova Scotia). In early December, six youths from the Newsletter Project met with the Advisory Committee to the Minister of Community Services to suggest ways to improve services to youth in care. This year, there are nearly twice as many youths involved in the Newsletter Project as last year (28 at last count).

FBCYICN Update

The FBCYICN has just held their provincial Steering Committee Meeting (February 16th – 18th, 2007) and 14th Anniversary. Anyone interested in attending the next Steering Committee Meeting should contact FBCYICN and ask for Colleen at info@fbcyicn.ca or 1-800-565-8066.

We are also putting together a special double-edition of our provincial newsletter, Power Pages and re-launching a new and improved website – both of which will be available in mid-February.

We have a number of programs under development including the Employment to Freedom Program (focuses on 'soft-skill' development to compliment 'hard-skills' learned through other employment

programs as well as connecting young people to additional resources); the Dream Fund Project (an FBCYICN scholarship program for young people in / from care in BC – we held a Christmas fundraising campaign and are planning another fundraising effort around our 14th anniversary); the Community Kits Project (part of the overall Transitions Program – focus is on supporting and providing resources to communities across BC to develop / distribute welcome and independence kits to young people); the Moms Without Moms Project (focused on young parents supporting each other, developing connections to appropriate resources, and developing healthy parenting skills).

Applications for the NYICN Board of Directors are Now Being Accepted

The National Youth In Care Network is currently looking for individuals currently or formerly in care or individuals who work to support youth in care to apply to serve on our board of directors.

If you are interested, please go to our website and apply using the application form which is available on-line.

The application deadline is April 15, 2007.



Respectfully Engaging Young People

Learn how to respectfully engage young people in your organization's work by registering your support for the Declaration of Accountability on the Ethical Engagement of Young People and Adults in Canadian Organizations.

This document is a tool to assist organizations that are currently engaging with young people and those that are beginning the process to reflect on their organization's structures, culture and capacity ~ both human and financial ~ to respectfully engage with young people.

We encourage you to download this free document, and sign the declaration. More details can be found at <http://www.fncaingsociety.com/projects/ethicalYouthEngagement.php>.

The Declaration

Our organization commits to the Ethical Engagement of Young People and Adults in Canadian Organizations as its public promise to excellence in youth engagement. We confirm that we have read the Preamble, Principles and reviewed the Reflective Statements to a degree that acknowledges a high level of agreement with the Principles. We commit to exercising due care concerning the inclusion of personal storytelling, balancing life needs and expectations and supporting staff, youth and volunteers through respectful engagement. Our organization, to the best of our ability, will adhere to the Principles in the Declaration of Accountability. We commit to providing each member of the organization a copy of the Declaration of Accountability, and that copies will be provided to future board members, staff or volunteers.

Building a Future Together: Issues and Outcomes for Transition-Aged Youth

The National Youth in Care Network together with the Centre of Excellence for Children's Well-Being: Child Welfare, and the Child Welfare League of Canada have recently released a new report entitled: Building a Future Together: Issues and Outcomes for Transition-Aged Youth. This report can be downloaded off the CECW website.

Today, Canadian youth and their counterparts around the world, are supported a lot longer by their families than in the past. It is now not uncommon for youth to remain living in the family home until their mid-twenties, or returning to this home at some point as they transition to adulthood. Youth in the care of the child welfare system who reach the age of majority in Canada face a difficult transition. They are expected to be responsible adults making it on their own in the world without being given the proper resources and supports to do so. They don't have a family home to return to or the comfort of a strong support network to help them make their way. While little Canadian research exists on the topic of youth transitioning out of care, what does exist points very clearly to significant problems with the systems currently in place.

This paper outlines the eight areas where youth need support to ensure a smoother transition to adulthood: relationships, education, housing, life

skills, identity, youth engagement, emotional healing and financial support. The first seven areas are referred to as pillars while the final area, financial support, is considered to be the foundation on which all of those pillars are built. Each of these areas are interrelated and work together to create the necessary supports for a successful transition to adulthood. National and international examples are used to illustrate innovative programs and policies that are making the difference for youth. A national survey was conducted of each province and territory's youth transitions programs, with the findings included throughout.



Building a Future Together: Issues and Outcomes for Transition-Aged Youth

Carrie Reid and Peter Dudding



CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE FOR CHILDREN'S WELL-BEING

Child Welfare

in partnership with

Child Welfare League of Canada CMC LBEC Ligue pour le bien-être de l'enfance du Canada

national youth in care network

Independent living is the term most often associated with the transition for youth out of care into adulthood. An American foundation, Casey Family Programs, uses the term interdependency instead of independence. They view the goal of living successfully on one's own not as independence, but as a result of interdependent relationships. While the term independence is often used by child welfare professionals to denote the ability to care for oneself as an adult, Casey prefers the term interdependency to represent the ability to meet one's physical, cultural, social, emotional, economic, and spiritual needs within the context of relationships with families, friends, employers and community. This reflects the belief that relationships cultivated throughout life are not independent of one another but are connected or

interdependent. This paper adopts this definition as it reflects the belief that people are not independent. While we are all individuals, we rely on others as they rely on us. This system of interconnectedness is the ideal state to be achieved.

The goal of this paper is to raise awareness amongst government officials, caregivers, frontline staff, managers and community members about the needs of youth transitioning out of the child welfare system. The issues cannot be solved by fixing one policy or implementing a new program or two. It will take a coordinated effort through partnerships between community organizations and government to build a system of supports that will help launch youth leaving care into adulthood with the optimism and skills to succeed.

2006: NS Youth Achievement Awards

Tara Moore, BSW, RSW, NSCF Executive Member, YIC Committee Member

On November 24, 2006, 49 youth were honoured at this year's Youth Achievement Awards Luncheon held at the Best Western Glengarry in Truro. The luncheon is held to honour youth in care who are between the ages of 13 and 21 who have achieved success in their endeavours. Youth representing all 4 regions in Nova Scotia were in attendance (12 from Northern, 17 from Central, 14 from Western, and 6 from Eastern). The Award recognizes youth in care who have shown perseverance and outstanding achievements. Child welfare is usually crisis focused, therefore it is very important to have an event like this to pay tribute to the youth's special and unique qualities. It is a time for celebration, reflection and recognition of all of their hard work.

The event has gotten so popular there was a waiting list this year. The room was filled to capacity with 288 people in attendance. Family, friends, social workers, foster parents, community supports and group home staff helped share in the special event. Some excerpts from the comments of those who attended included:

“Great day! Very inspiring to see so many youth receiving this award”

“This was really fun and I hope that one day I can be up there earning an award”

“Impressed with the diversity, broad age range, and beautiful awards”

“This has been a most wonderful day. The 4th most grateful day in my life, next to the days of my children’s birth. My son has made me so proud of him in everything he has done.”

“This award ceremony is a great opportunity for the kids and to show them how much they are appreciated, and the accomplishments they have made.”

The room was elegantly decorated and everyone was overflowing with pride. Each table had an inspiring quote as well as table toppers that were mementoes of the special day. These were conceptualized and created by the staff of Homebridge Youth Society (Dawn Hall, Alison Hilman, and Georgia Lamswood), Child Welfare Staff of Halifax District Office (Geoff Hood) and former Youth Achievement Award Winner (Drew Dwyer). Guests were able to view displays on the Amanda’s Gift bursary program, the Voice newsletter project, and art created by the Homebridge “Expressions” program.

An official welcome on behalf of the Council was given by David Muise, President of the Nova Scotia Council for the Family. The emcees were Charmaine Amero of Digby County and Lucas Kreft of Halifax, both former Youth Achievement Award recipients. They are both excellent role models for other youth in care. Charmaine has aspirations of becoming a physical education teacher and Lucas has completed a dry waller course and is enrolled in a graphic design course.

The Honourable Judy Streach, Minister of Community Services, presented the awards to the youth. She stated she was honoured to spend the afternoon with these youth and help recognize their determination and achievements. She advised that this was “the most wonderful occasion since becoming involved in Community Services” that she had attended. She spoke of how she hoped the award would inspire them to continue reaching their goals in the future and the importance of being a role model. She acknowledged the role of those in attendance in shaping the youth’s lives. She also informed everyone that she had announced in the House of Assembly and read a resolution about the 7th annual Youth Achievement Awards.

Each youth received a framed award with a summary of their accomplishments on the back of the award. Some of the nomination letters described the youth as: “the first to lend a hand to someone in need”, “lives life to the fullest”, “has numerous strengths despite hardship” “sets goals for herself” “values friends and family” and “is able to accept support and guidance”.

These youth have many interests such as sports, music, fishing, dance, Scouts and art. They have plans to attend or are already attending post-secondary education for careers in nursing, the military, mechanical engineering, social work, photography, forensic science, veterinarian science, and culinary arts. They all have great potential and I'm sure they will be successful in whatever they undertake.

David, an award recipient from the Sackville agency, said he had "a really good time and enjoyed the meal". Sisters Amanda and Amya thanked their foster mom, social worker, sisters and therapist, and said what they liked most about the event were the speeches from the youth and the opportunity to have their photos taken.

Award recipient Mike Christmas summed it up best stating "If you believe — you can achieve".

The youth in care committee would like to thank the Gordon Foundation and the Halifax Harbourside Rotary Club for their sponsorship as well as Serge Cournoyer, child welfare staff member of Halifax District Office, for photographing each recipient with their award and a group photo for a keepsake of the wonderful day.

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