

STRONG FAMILIES STRONG COMMUNITIES

GROWTH THROUGH LEADERSHIP AND COLLABORATION



118TH
ANNUAL REPORT
2017-2018



MISSION STATEMENT

The Windsor-Essex Children's Aid Society is dedicated to the well-being and safety of every child by advocating for, and partnering with, our children, families and communities.

TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Windsor-Essex Children's Aid Society acknowledges the sacred land upon which we are located. We recognize that this land has been inhabited by Indigenous peoples from the beginning. This is the Traditional territory of the Three Fires Confederacy of First Nations, comprised of the Ojibway, the Odawa, and the Potawatomie people. We are grateful to have the opportunity to live and work on this land. We are especially mindful of our commitment to Truth and Reconciliation, and acknowledge that we walk upon territories and original nations of the first peoples of this land.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2017-2018

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EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT

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A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT AND INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



The 2017-2018 fiscal year has been one of transition as the Windsor-Essex Children's Aid Society looks ahead to a new era of upholding the protection of children and strengthening of families. 'Strong Families, Strong Communities' is the theme of this 118th Annual Report. It is a document that celebrates our collaboration with numerous organizations and agencies. It highlights the cultural diversity of our geographic area, which is reflected in the children and families we serve. It celebrates our youth and captures some reflections of how our work has had positive and meaningful impacts.

The Board of Directors has been working diligently to address many of the issues that impact and influence the current state of child welfare in Ontario. Our performance indicators, which are highlighted on the Society website, serve as a barometer for continuous improvement and illustrate the results of our engagement and transparency with our stakeholders. The Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS) Call to Action includes a number of priorities including Enhancement of Governance. In this regard, the Society Board of Directors developed the Governance Committee as a standing committee and has thoroughly reviewed our bylaws, policies and procedures with a view to continuing to govern the Society transparently and in keeping with the best practices established in the industry to ensure child protection and strengthened families in our community. The Board has also made an additional commitment to the emphasis placed on support and commitment to our youth. Beginning in the 2018-2019 fiscal year, a position on the Board of Directors will be designated to a youth representative.

Changes to the Child and Family Services Act have included increasing the age of protection to include all children under the age of 18 years. 16 and 17 year olds who are in need of protection are now eligible for services, which gives them a better opportunity to thrive, reach their potential and promote better outcomes as they transition into adulthood. The full legislation comes into effect in the spring of 2018, with many significant changes that the Society will have to learn and implement. The organization is slated to launch the Child Protection Information Network (CPIN) in the fall of 2018. This network streamlines data between all Children's Aid Societies in Ontario. The implementation of CPIN is a priority for WECAS and is a significant change management project for the organization from both a financial and a staffing perspective.

This has been a challenging year financially. For the first time in a number of years, the Society is closing the year with a deficit budget. A primary reason for this is that the number of cases of children identified as "complex needs" and/or high risk has increased dramatically. This requires contracting with Outside Paid Resources (OPR) for specialized treatment, often group care, as these youth have needs that surpass what can be offered in a traditional foster care setting. Our experience this past year is several children/youth required extensive residential care outside of the community. We are working with our community partners specializing in children's mental health and housing to explore viable options that will reduce such placements and enable the child to remain in a home/local setting with necessary supports for both the child and caregiver. Administration and staff have also been successful in exploring and applying cost containment to almost all operational areas while still maintaining quality service delivery. We continue to explore cost savings on an ongoing basis.



Dr. Sandy Venditti,
President



Ms. Terry Johnson,
Interim Executive Director





A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT AND INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

Collaborating with professionals and community partners has enhanced service delivery and simultaneously given WECAS a strong voice in terms of enhancing service delivery for children/youth and families. This is reflective in innovative programs and grant applications. It has also strengthened our presence in the wider community. Positive media coverage of our services, delivered initiatives and a finalist nomination for the Windsor Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce Pillar of Our Community Award, are some key examples of this.

As with other Children's Aid Societies, foster parent recruitment remains a major challenge. To counter this, we have been exploring new and innovative means of recruitment, emphasizing the support and resources that WECAS provides to anyone who may be interested in this rewarding role. There is an emphasis on seeking family members (kin) who may be willing and able to act in this capacity, hence enabling children to remain within a family unit.

Also, together with other Children's Aid Societies in Ontario, WECAS continues to work at reducing the number of Indigenous and Black/African/Canadian/Caribbean families and children involved in the system. To address this overrepresentation, WECAS has committed to prioritize reconciliation with Indigenous communities through the nine commitments that were established province-wide, as well as through dialogue with First Nations within our geographic Zone. The conversations center on collaboration and seamless services to Indigenous families in the Zone. WECAS has made significant progress in developing more positive relationships with the First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities (FNMI) in our region. This has included the contracting of services through the Can-Am Indian Friendship Centre for an Indigenous Family Wellness Worker for FNMI families open to WECAS. Training has also increased to provide workers with specific Indigenous/FNMI learning opportunities. The Society has also created a Diversity Outreach position to build internal capacity in anti-oppressive service provision and to enhance relationships with community partners. The agency also works diligently to enhance French language services.

As we circle back to the theme of this report, 'Strong Families, Strong Communities', we emphasize that all of this is only possible with the commitment, dedication and compassion of our staff, volunteers, foster parents and Board members. There is a saying, "Every child is one caring adult away from a successful story". This truly describes our team, who dedicate a tremendous amount of their time, skills and beliefs to making a difference in the lives of the children and families that WECAS serves. For this, we say THANK YOU!!

Dr. Sandy Venditti, DDS, MBA
Board President

Ms. Terry Johnson, BSW, MSW
Interim Executive Director





BLACK, AFRICAN CANADIAN & CARIBBEAN

WECAS is actively working to better serve families of African descent by building relationships with diverse Black Communities across Windsor Essex. Following our Town Hall Event in 2016, we began recruiting leaders from across the community to create an advisory body. The Black African Canadian Caribbean Advisory Committee (BACC) was born. Over the past year BACC has met with WECAS staff, sharing meals, ideas, successes and challenges. Committee co-chairs, Ms. Joan Simpson and Mr. Michael Brown, have been instrumental in guiding this work. During Black History Month, we worked with Michael Brown, a local radio personality to create a video explaining why the committee is so important and how WECAS is trying to work differently with families.

WECAS would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to all of these BACC leaders who have given so much of their time in service to their community. We will continue to work together to ensure the very best outcomes for our children, youth and families.



FIRST NATIONS, MÉTIS AND INUIT



As part of our ongoing journey to better serve Indigenous families and promote reconciliation, WECAS has adopted a framework called 'Sharing a Good Heart.' This guides our work in creating relationships with First Nations, Métis and Inuit Communities (FNMI).

Through ongoing education, training and relationship building, we continue our efforts to enhance the capacity of our staff to provide services in a respectful, affirmative and culturally restorative manner. In this spirit, ten WECAS staff attended Walpole Island First Nation on March 9, 2018 for an Anishinaabe Cultural Competency Workshop delivered by Danny Deleary. The day also included

an emotional visit to the Residential School Monument. Guests were reminded that this is not past history but very much living history for those survivors and their families who are still impacted by the legacy of residential schools. The group was also fortunate to have an unexpected visit by one of the community's elders in the afternoon. She recounted numerous stories from her own life and shared her ground breaking work in the field of Social Work.

On March 21, 2018, approximately eight advocates from the Can-Am Indian Friendship Centre and their Supervisor attended WECAS to meet with the Family Service Team and Intake Staff designated to work with First Nation, Métis and Inuit families. The meeting focused on reviewing the Practice Guide, problem solving and relationship building. It was a positive, productive meeting that was well received by all who attended.





COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHTS

- There is continued collaboration/partnership with the Islamic Social Welfare Assistance (ISWA) committee to increase foster home recruitment.
- WECAS was one of the recipients of the University of Windsor's Clark Award, which "recognize(s) organizations in Windsor Essex who are engaging (the University's) students to help them in their mission to create a better life for children and youth".



- Children First and WECAS partnered together to offer 'The Circle of Security Group', an 8-week program to help parents recognize how their own childhood or life events are impacting their attachment to their own children and can impact how they respond to their children's needs.
- The agency hosted a two-day workshop, facilitated by Dr. Kiaras Gharabaghi, with a focus on residential care and children/youth with complex needs. The second day of the presentation was reserved for community partners, and a discussion with Dr. Gharabaghi on how our community could better serve children requiring residential services in our community.
- As a result of our efforts to build relationships with the BACC community, we were pleased to receive the Community Partnership Award from the African Community Organization of Windsor (ACOW) on February 27, 2018.
- WECAS remains a proud member of the Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce in the category of Community Builder. WECAS was nominated for the second time in two years as a finalist for the 'Pillars of Our Community' during their Business Excellence Awards. WECAS is also a member of the Leamington District Chamber of Commerce.
- WECAS has expanded its presence in terms of digital communication. Our followings on social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn) have increased as we promote our many programs, services and events to an expanded audience.
- The Windsor-Essex Child/Youth Advocacy Centre (WECYAC) received funding from Justice Canada for the next five years. WECYAC is a single location that provides a neutral, child-friendly, safe setting for children under 18 to talk about their abuse.
- WECAS hosted the South West Region Mini Adoption Resource Exchange (A.R.E.), an event where local children from the southwest region (crown wards eligible for adoption) are presented to pre-approved adoptive parent(s).
- The Ministry of Education announced new funding for transportation services and to hire Education Liaisons to promote better educational achievement for children and youth in care.



- WECAS was part of a media event announcing the work of the Windsor-Essex County Situation Table. WECAS is a proud member of the table, along with representatives from approximately 27 community agencies, who come together to collaborate on situations where individuals (or families) are experiencing acutely elevated risk.
- WECAS hosted a meeting with community partners to discuss the changes resulting from the increase of age in protection in the new legislation. We provided a high-level overview of how these changes will affect the child welfare sector; and, together with representatives from the community, we brainstormed potential placement options for youth.



COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHTS (CONT'D)



- On May 26th, 2017, Community Hub 33, Leamington, celebrated its one year anniversary. The Hub has been working in the community to elevate the profile of health and social service supports.

- Under the leadership of the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS), WECAS co-authored the Dress Purple Classroom Resources with Boost Child & Youth Advocacy Centre in Toronto. The purpose of the classroom resources is to assist teachers to talk about child abuse and neglect in an age appropriate manner and to help raise awareness among children about how to ask for help from adults in the community.



STORIES THAT CHANGE LIVES



Norm and Trish Lalonde Recognized as Foster Parents of the Year

Norm and Trish Lalonde were recipients of the Foster Parents of the Year Award by the Ontario Foster Parents Association. Norm and Trish have been WECAS foster parents to 24 children in six years. When asked how fostering has changed their lives, the Lalonde's response is, "Fostering has opened doors for us that we didn't know were closed. We were able to see the pain and suffering in children and believe we were better equipped to help them. Every day we have children telling us, "I Love You". Even though children have left their care, they still remain in the Lalonde's hearts.



Essex County Businesses Support Educational Initiatives

As a result of generous donations from Highline Mushrooms and the Libro Prosperity Fund, the Leamington Homework program was launched at Community Hub 33. Children and tutors of the Leamington Homework Program were treated to a tour of the Highline facility. According to one of the children, "We were so excited to ride a bus to the West Farm. When we got there, we put on hair nets and saw where the mushrooms grow and how they package them. We had fun learning facts such as over one million mushrooms are processed weekly at the West Farm". WECAS is appreciative of investments such as this by the business community. These programs are transforming young lives.

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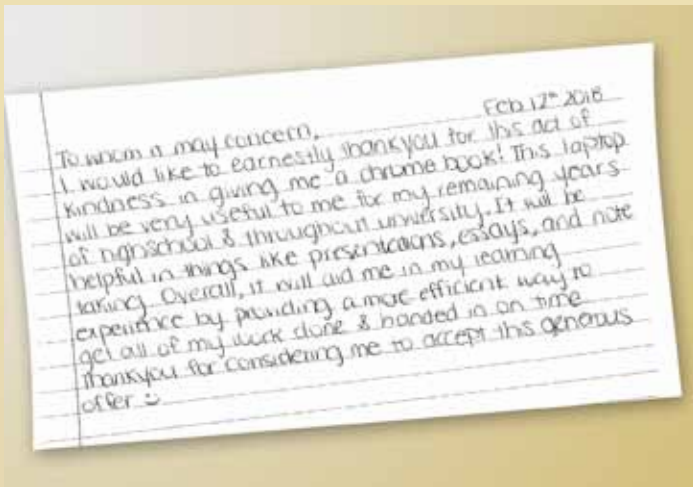




STORIES THAT CHANGE LIVES (CONT'D)

Scotiabank Stay In School Program Makes Learning Exciting

Through the generosity of the Children's Aid Foundation (Canada), WECAS has received a grant for the Scotiabank Stay in School Program. Children who are placed with kin (family, friends and significant others in their lives in the community) often have multiple moves and disruption in terms of the school they may attend. The support of this grant provides these children with the opportunity to focus on learning without any added barriers or stressors. Each child is provided with a Chromebook to complete homework assignments and to use the internet for projects and research. As expressed in the following letter, children have been inspired by the support provided through this program.



Expressive Arts Program, a Catalyst for Healing

At WECAS, the Art Cart is an example of the Expressive Art program offered as a component of family visitations. Activities focus on fun and expression, encouraging positive interactions and strengthening of relationships between parent and child.

The Efforts of One Inspire Many

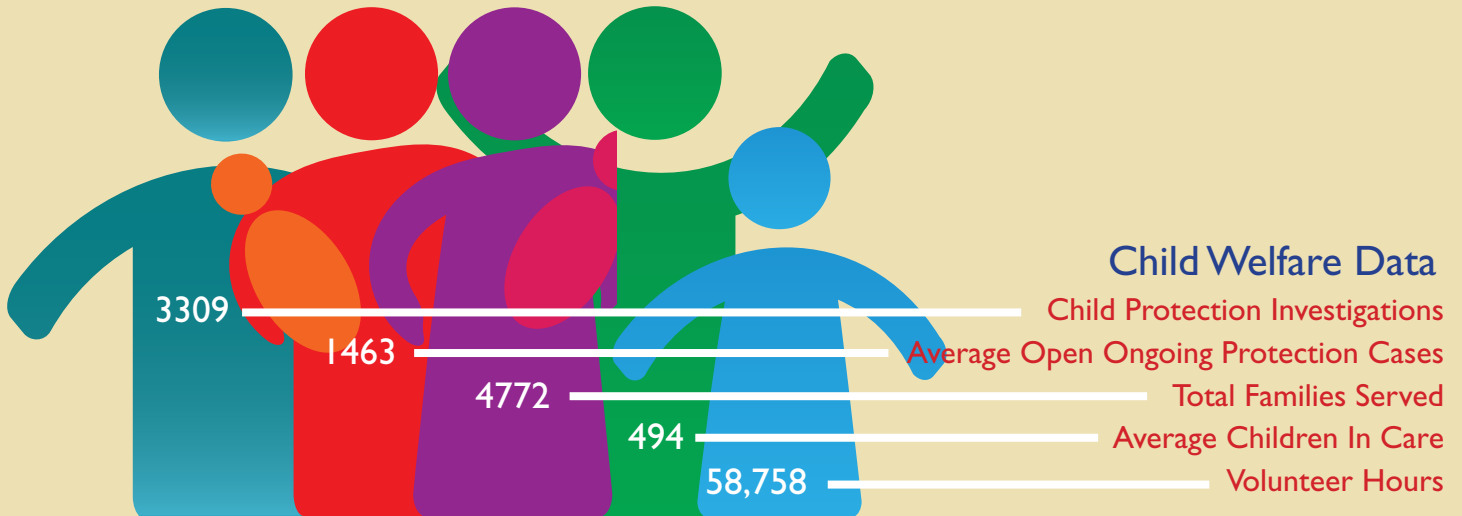
During National Volunteer Week (April 15 – 21), longtime volunteer Anne Horan was featured in the Windsor Star's special feature sponsored by WEAVA (Windsor-Essex Association for Volunteer Administrators). Anne has held many roles in the organization but was recognized for her work in mobilizing her community to help make layettes for our newborn babies. Anne has inspired many individuals, groups and clubs to get involved with this project. Each year, over 125 newborn layettes are provided to babies leaving the hospital or through the Society's High Risk Infant Program.



"It's wonderful to witness the families participating in Art Cart during Access visits. On one occasion a mother appeared reluctant but in the end, there was laughter and pure joy from both her and her son. The instructor was wonderful at handling them both, and encouraging the mother to participate as much as she was comfortable. I am pretty sure the son smiled the entire time. It was great to witness such positive interaction between them."



STATISTICAL AND FINANCIAL REVIEW

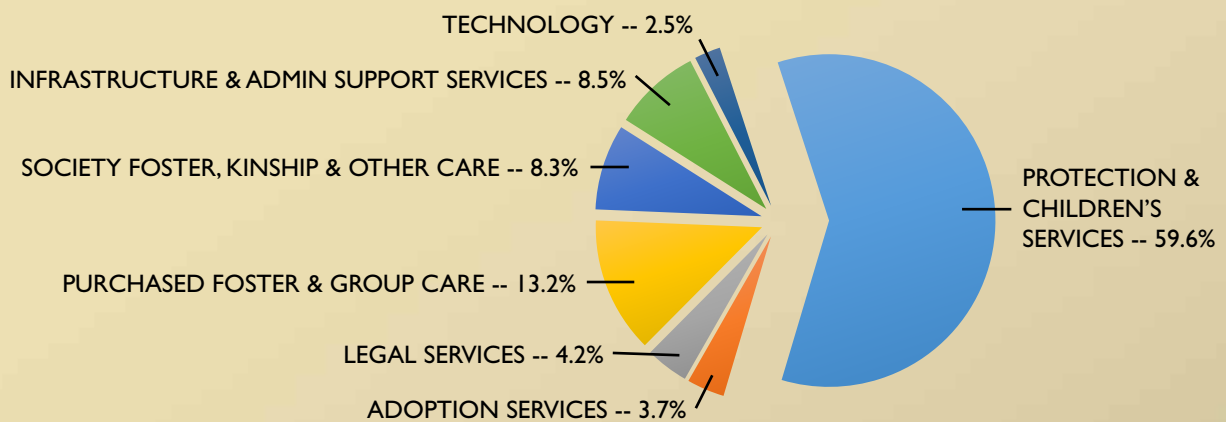


A referral is when someone in the community has a concern and believes that a child or family would benefit from WECAS assistance. As noted in the percentages below our referral sources remain consistent with previous years.

PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY	• 25.9%
SCHOOLS	• 20.8%
POLICE	• 18.1%

TOTAL	
161	FOSTER & KINSHIP CARE HOMES
205	CHILDREN IN KINSHIP SERVICE
160	KINSHIP SERVICE FAMILIES

HOW THE DOLLAR WAS SPENT • \$59.5 MILLION





OUR YOUTH, SETTING THE AGENDA

The youth of our Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) have set the bar for the agency. This group of about 45 talented and enthusiastic young people advocate for youth in care both locally and across the province. Meeting regularly throughout the year, this group explores some of the key issues that impact them as teens and young adults. They inspire our staff through their many fundraising events which benefit causes right here at home as well as around the world. They are an example to all of us of how to overcome adverse circumstances and aspire to one's dreams. We are proud of the young men and women of YAC!

- YAC was awarded the United Way Volunteer Changing Lives Award, which recognizes caring, compassionate volunteers within Windsor-Essex whose efforts, big or small, are improving the lives of others
- YAC worked with the gender and sexual diversity committee, teaming with the Pride Flag Raising ceremony so our youth could take part in the ceremony and make community connections
- YAC hosted its first community garden workshop in conjunction with partners from the University of Windsor
- A Cookie Bake-Off was held at New Beginnings. The goodies were provided to the Downtown Mission.
- Child and Youth In Care Day, May 14th was marked with a Talent Show
- YAC hosted the annual Salad Day and Chili Fest for Staff. Many youth gave up their P.D. Day to help serve, judge and co-ordinate the fundraising events.
- A delegation of youth attended Civics Day and the Ontario celebrations of Child and Youth In Care Day in Toronto
- At a Board orientation session, members of YAC had an opportunity to meet with new members of the Society Board and provide them with an introduction to the role of YAC and youth initiatives within WECAS
- YAC hosted its first Dress for Success event
- Representatives of YAC attended the Celebrating 2017 Mayor's Awards where they accepted an award for YAC in the category of Mayor's Excellence Youth Award.
- Many of our youth, through the generosity of the Jays Care Foundation, attended a Blue Jays game at the Rogers Centre in Toronto
- Youth attended The Canada We Want Conference through the Student Commissions of Canada and the annual OACAS indigenous youth in care retreat in Orillia
- YAC volunteered at the annual Fireworks Fundraiser, selling glow sticks to support the Fresh Air Summer Camp Program
- During the First Robotics competition, the WECAS Team won the Judge's Award, an award given to the team that demonstrates the most heart, overcoming obstacles and growth.
- YAC held its first joint event with Can-Am for Indigenous children and youth in care. Youth in care participated along with siblings, foster parents and support people.
- YAC held a Lemonade Sale for the Me to We Campaign, raising funds to send children in Kenya to school





As a legacy project of the 2017 Memorial Cup, the Windsor Spitfires organization recommended the Windsor-Essex Children's Aid Society to benefit from the transformation of rooms by the Smilezone Foundation. The vision of the Smilezone Foundation is a commitment to put smiles on kids' faces. As a result, the Music Room, Adolescent Room, Family Visitation Rooms and the Youth Advisory Committee Room of the Bill & Dot Muzzatti Child & Family Centre have become Smilezones. Staff, families and youth had input into the design process. The final product includes equipment, and fresh, inviting, child-friendly spaces that provide interactive and inclusive possibilities to all children and families, sharing with them the universal sign of happiness... a smile! We are most appreciative to the Windsor Spitfires and the Smilezone Foundation for this lasting gift.



ADOPT FOSTER VOLUNTEER GIVE

EVERY CHILD DESERVES
LIFELONG CONNECTIONS

TO FIND OUT HOW
YOU CAN WRITE A CHILD'S STORY,
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1671 RIVERSIDE DRIVE EAST • WINDSOR, ON N8Y 5B5
WWW.WECAS.ON.CA

