



Inspiring Strength



2007 – 2008 Annual Report

**BOARD OF
DIRECTORS**

2007-2008

Laura Scali

President

Paul Layfield

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Rick Farrow

Joe Germanese*

Karen Hall

Gina Liovas

Dr. Chuks Nwaesei

Marilyn Prior

Michael Stebila*

Andrea Tremblay

*Resigned



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

This is the 28th annual report of this organization. How incredibly far this organization has come, with significant growth of staff, budget, locations, and programs. In addition we have seen changes in the faces of children and families we serve. However, one thing has remained constant, and that is the composition of an incredibly skilled, compassionate, professional, and dedicated staff at Children First.

The Board was privileged this year again, to have some staff make presentations to us to illustrate their day to day experiences involving their specialties with children and their families. Their stories were concise, and from the heart, the presentations were quite touching to the Board, and gave a greater understanding of the services provided by staff to those we serve. A very sincere thank you to the staff from us, to all those who made these presentations.

The Board had one member resign, Joe Germanese, we thank Joe for his contributions and work on our Fundraising Committee. We have been blessed with two incredible new Board members Andrea Tremblay, and Brian Dube, both have come to us with great enthusiasm, and natural insight to the importance of early intervention, and importance of the service provided to children and their families. A very warm welcome to Andrea and Brian to the Board of Children First.

The Board of Directors has been busy with their respective committees. Marilyn Prior chairing the Parent/Consumer committee with the help of Ensemble held a successful Parent workshop. Rick Farrow who chairs the Board Governance committee with help from Marina Iannitelli, and Sheila Cameron have been busy putting in place tools to address recommendations made through Accreditation. Our Finance committee consists of Board Treasurer Marina Iannitelli, Gina Liovas, and Jane Patterson; the Board Recruitment committee consists of Sheila Cameron and myself; the Fundraising committee chaired by Karen Hall, with the help of Andrea Tremblay, myself, Sharri Hamelin, Jane Patterson, and our incredible infectious enthusiastic volunteer Jonathan Deneau. Linda Nagle helping and attending all of these committee meetings, has been a huge asset. I thank all of you for your commitment and time given to Children First.

The Board of Directors approved a proposal in December by Dr E.M. Vokes and Associates, in response to the staff opinion survey results that the Board of Directors received last year at this time. Since then there has been further input by Supervisors, Managers, and two evening sessions held with the Board and Executive Management Team. An incredible amount of time was spent by the Board Executive Group and Drs. Vokes and Sartori to develop a process to move the organization forward. Many thanks to Paul Layfield, Sheila Cameron, and Marina Iannitelli for the countless hours spent in this initiative. We very much appreciate and value everyone's input and time spent on this initiative.

It is with regret, that we received the resignation of Linda Nagle as Executive Director of Children First. Linda came to us at a time of many significant changes, and has made many contributions to the organization, increase of staffing, coordinating a move from two locations, overseeing the construction management of our new location, just to name a few. Thank you, and best wishes to Linda in her new endeavours.

As we move forward, I can't emphasize enough the privilege, and honour to be involved with an organization with such committed Board members and dedicated staff. I sometimes think staff doesn't fully appreciate the impact on the children and families they serve. You the staff are truly the foundation of this organization, with the support and inspiration you give to families, so that they can believe there is truly a light at the end of the tunnel. Every day you are out there working with children and families, you are helping them develop their families' strengths that will carry them through their lifetime, and help them be stronger.

God bless all of you, and keep up the great work.

Laura Scali, Board President

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

2007-08 HIGHLIGHTS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

This has been another very busy year for all of us after our first full year of implementing some major organizational changes. Eight various student placements were facilitated, with special thanks to our staff who provided the necessary mentoring and supervision. One of our biggest challenges was finding qualified staff to fill key positions to address the complex needs of our children and their families. I am pleased to report that recruitment efforts have resulted in hiring seven additional Resource Consultants, our core frontline clinical position, as well as additional specialists in each of the disciplines to support our teams, i.e. occupational therapy, physiotherapy, speech language pathology, social work and psychology. Our administration area has also benefitted from hiring a new secretary as well as a skilled staff to address our information systems technology needs. Currently, we have maximized our available funding. While the employee turnover rate has remained very low, i.e. three in the last year, fluctuations have continued largely due to a predominantly female workforce who have happily contributed to the population of our community – last year we experienced five maternity leaves!

As the service provided by the Agency is labour intensive, staff entrusted with providing the service have a direct impact on our ability to help our families. I am proud to report that last year we were successful in reducing our overall wait list by over fifty percent as well as making significant gains in reducing wait times for service in a number of areas. We also examined our processes to see how we could improve. In particular, we undertook a comprehensive review of our speech services with a focus on the need to meet certain service expectations, as Children First is part of the overall local Preschool Speech and Language system. It is important to remember that the majority of children referred to our program present initially with communication difficulties. As a result of that effort, together with our recruitment and staff returning from leave, we succeeded in significantly reducing our wait list and wait times for speech services.

Our ministry and municipal funders have continued to support the Agency, however referrals have continued to grow and our wait lists reflect the fact that the needs of children with challenges exceed our ability to address those needs despite our best efforts to respond. We will continue to advocate for increased resources, however we recognize that resources are limited. One major effort to raise awareness about our services has been the redesign of our marketing materials. I wish to acknowledge the contribution of Laurie Tiegs, Human Resource Advisor, and our staff along with the parents and children who so graciously agreed to participate in the production of our new video, brochure and signage.

Staff have now settled into our new office space on the third floor and we are rapidly taking up every inch of it. We listened to employee concerns about our reception area and, in response, the Board approved its relocation to second floor where the majority of clinical staff are housed. A staff committee chaired by Jane Patterson, Administration Manager, worked out all the details pertinent to this project and we are happy to report that the new approach seems to be working very well. Special thanks to everyone involved in making this most recent change to our office space and for helping us to improve our welcome to families visiting our building.

Another area of success has been our recent role in providing Program Support funding to child care operators to assist them in supporting the inclusion of children with challenges in their centres. After our first full year's experience, we are proud to report that we have put systems in place to handle this new responsibility and we were able to respond to all needs identified within budget. Special thanks goes to Kim Sanford, Team Supervisor, who worked diligently to take the lead on this program and to the Resource Consultants who helped to make this program work, especially Lori Melnick who has conducted most of the assessments, and to Jane Patterson for putting the accounting systems into place – a concerted effort by all!



MISSION STATEMENT

Children First was founded on the knowledge that the early years of life are crucial to the healthy development of children and families. We are dedicated to promoting and providing family-centred services to children up to six who are demonstrating special needs.





*“The focus
must always
be on families
because that’s
what it’s all
about...”*

We were fortunate last year to be able to support the participation of staff in varied professional development opportunities. I want to mention in particular our partnership with Chatham Kent Children's Services and the Ministry to organize the *5th Annual Mental Health Symposium* for the Southwest Region in London around the theme of “Supporting Parent Child Relationships” which emphasized attachment issues and sleep problems in young children. Such events help staff to better understand families and their individual needs to make a positive difference in their lives and the lives of their children. The focus must always be on families because that’s what it’s all about – that’s why we’re here and why our organization exists.

I am proud of what we have accomplished together these past four years. I wish everyone well as you continue to serve children and families with a positive and hopeful spirit.

Linda Nagle,
Executive Director



CHILDREN FIRST GROUP SERVICES

In order to offer a more comprehensive range of service options to children and families referred to our program, Children First has continued to expand the number and type of parent and/or child groups that we offer, as well as support and education to early learning and child care professionals. The provision of convenient child care for parents who are attending any parent training group continues to be a goal for the agency. Following are some of the groups that were offered by our staff, occasionally assisted by caring volunteers:

Community Parent Education Program (COPE) is a large group parenting course for parents of children aged 3 to 6, designed to:

- Improve child management skills
- Improve family functioning
- Build and strengthen personal networks

Parents can learn skills to increase positive behaviour, avoid conflicts, encourage cooperation and respond to aggression from their child while connecting with other parents to talk about common problems. Parents have often been invited to attend COPE while waiting for an ongoing service partner from Children First. Other parents have learned child behaviour management skills or improved their parenting abilities as part of their ongoing service. Feedback from participants has been extremely positive, with parents often commenting that they found the group very helpful, learned how to be a better parent and would recommend the group to others.

Children’s Social Skills Activity Group assists children aged 3 to 5 in developing more appropriate social skills and prosocial behaviour as well as enhancing their social competence, and is designed to compliment

the curriculum learned by caregivers in the COPE parenting course. The children as well as the parents evaluate their experience and involvement with the group, with the majority reporting positive feedback.

Sibling Support Group is a unique partnership with Children First and Family Respite Services providing staffing support and space for the group generously provided at no cost by Maryvale Child and Adolescent Services. It is an opportunity for siblings of children who have special needs to connect with other siblings via monthly fun and lively activity based sessions including games, crafts and snack. An annual celebration dinner includes parents and participants. Feedback from children and youth attending has been very positive with statements such as "I appreciate coming to the group knowing I'm not the only one with a brother who is different."



Making sense of SEPARATION and DIVORCE as it relates to parenting your young child/ren is a group parents referred to Children First who have separated from their partner in the previous two years and who want to better understand their feelings and reactions as well as their child's in relation to this change. The program is designed to help parents support their children in adjusting to the changes in the family's life. Information and strategies are provided to parents to assist them to manage their own stresses as well as to help their child to cope.

Triple P (Positive Parenting Program) offers 5 levels of intervention from basic to more intensive, all aimed at helping parents feel more confident and competent in parenting their children. Staff trained in Triple P engage families individually in this approach and provided seminars to families involved in our program. Several staff have also extended themselves to co-facilitate 2 seminar series and 2 groups over the past year as part of a larger, community initiative with our partnering Children's Mental Health agencies.

More Than Words is a Hanen Parent Training Program for parents of children 18 months to 5 years with Autism Spectrum Disorder or related social communication difficulties. There are 8 parent only sessions and 3 video feedback sessions. This is a popular group in high demand.

It Takes Two to Talk is a Hanen Program for parents of children with language delays aged 2 to 5 who are receiving other services for developmental concerns. There are 8 parent sessions and 3 video feedback sessions.

Learning Language and Loving It is offered to staff in child care centres and is a very effective Hanen training program that provides a step by step approach to promoting children's social, language and literacy development during everyday activities in early childhood settings .

Cathy Martel,
Program Manager

*"Families and
children
continually 'teach'
us so much as we
journey alongside
them, share in
their joys and
struggles, and
learn together."*



*“...parents
smiling warmly
– even laughing
– at their
situations as
they found these
connections of
friendship and
new found
support...”*

PHENOMENAL START FOR CHILDREN FIRST PARENT COMMITTEE

The Children First Board of Directors made a significant contribution to the quality of life for the families we serve with the approval of our **Children First Parent Committee** (CFPC) Terms of Reference in September 2007. This approval not only allowed the CFPC to move forward but it buoyed our spirits in doing so, with an itinerary for the CFPC to provide the opportunity to enrich parents, in a supportive environment, with some practical tools for managing the demands of family life with a child with unique needs. The guilt-free social outlet we envisioned when embarking on this undertaking was solidified in reality at CFPC's first event in May, 2008. It was a poignant moment to stand back and take in the scene of parents smiling warmly — even laughing — at their situations as they found these connections of friendship and new found support within our mix. We are not alone. What a first!

It was called the “Create-A-File” workshop, and when it was over every family had in hand a valuable resource in the “My Story Journal.” This journal is a concise binder of information pertaining to their child's history, medical needs and records. A phenomenal start for the CFPC! In planning for this inaugural workshop, Jane Welsh and Lisa Raffoul from *Ensemble* collaborated with us on determining the content and how it should be presented in an efficient file. This partnership has established a valuable connection that CFPC looks forward to continuing in the future.

You never know the impact of these interactions and what kinds of connections they can bring. One parent attending the “Create-A-File” workshop found a connection that led her to Queens Park for a day in the Legislature, an experience she wouldn't have had without coming to the CFPC workshop. Our enthusiastic start will continue to grow and be sustained with continued support from staff in fostering interest in the CFPC, providing ideas and feedback, promotion and praise.

Marilyn Prior
Parent Committee Chair

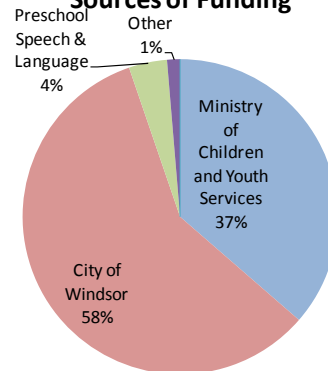


REVENUE AND EXPENDITURES

Revenue:

Ministry of Children and Youth Services	\$ 2,445,075.00
City of Windsor	\$ 3,922,143.00
Preschool Speech & Language	\$ 264,044.00
Other	\$ 88,883.00
Total	\$ 6,720,145.00

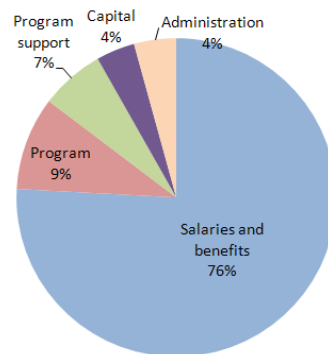
Sources of Funding



Expenses:

Salaries and Benefits	\$ 5,184,477.00
Program	\$ 647,488.00
Program Support	\$ 443,743.00
Capital	\$ 267,161.00
Administration	\$ 291,990.00
Total	\$ 6,834,859.00

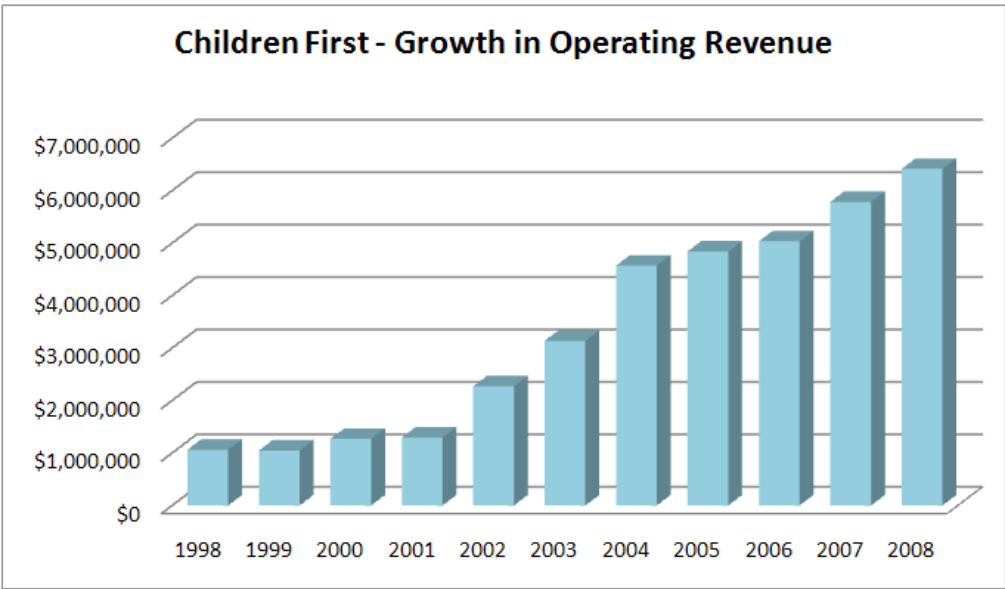
Expenses



*This statement combines Ministry funding as per the Ministry’s fiscal year ending March 31st, and the City funding on a calendar year basis.

“...last year we were successful in reducing our overall wait list by over fifty percent as well as making significant gains in reducing wait times for service in a number of areas.”

Children First - Growth in Operating Revenue





“At times when we felt there was no hope there was, and it was you. You helped us understand we are not alone and there are other children going through similar problems.”



WHAT OUR FAMILIES HAVE TO SAY.....

“This is an excellent program. The entire staff was always helpful, courteous and encouraging. It far exceeded what I expected.”

“The only concern was the lengthy wait time. I know you are not an emergency service and that you prioritize, but it was difficult when you live it everyday.”

“Wonderful service! Home visits are very helpful especially if you have other children at home. I really like how everything was coordinated so there was less stress on my family.”

“The only downfall is the long wait lists but we understand.”

“The AVT that we receive is excellent and my daughter is benefitting from these visits tremendously.”

“Children First services are very helpful, but there still isn’t enough publicity within the community about the agency.”

“I attended COPE while waiting for services and found this to be very helpful.”

“I’m so grateful for Children First; I’d be lost without them.”

In February a new approach was introduced on a pilot basis involving telephone surveys in an effort to increase the response rate. In order to ensure objectivity, our Social Work student, Stephanie Hudec has been conducting the telephone surveys. This succeeded in generating a positive result overall, with an average response rate of 30% which is a significant increase from previous years.

	Always
Services offered were clear	83%
Resources provided helpful	69%
Phone calls responded to	85%
Satisfied with service	79%
Would recommend	88%

SERVICE PERFORMANCE

	2003– 04	2004– 05	2005– 06	2006– 07	2007-08
Number of Referrals	595	554	534	564	682
Number served annually	1092	1124	1041	1137	1225
Waiting list at the end of Report Period	87	106	101	97	70
Discharges	362	502	536	456	556
Front Line Staff F.T.E. (at year end)	60.8	61	62.1	70	80.8
Administrative Staff F.T.E. (at year end)	6.6	9.6	9.4	8.9	9.8

Our current staff complement has grown to 98, serving 1225 children between April 1, 2007 & March 31, 2008

“WOW” COMMITTEE – WORKING ON WELLNESS!



The Working on Wellness Committee started September with a “Fall into Fitness” healthy breakfast for all staff where we promoted some of the events we would be hosting in the coming months. An after work Yoga class was offered and two 6 week sessions were well attended.

In October 2007 Children First was a proud recipient of a Bronze Award from Health Action Windsor Essex and the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit for exemplary

leadership in developing and implementing programs to support the health and well-being of employees and their families.

We held a 6 week Walk Across Canada walking challenge beginning in October. Teams competed to travel the most kilometers across the country by submitting the number of minutes they spent doing physical activity. The minutes of exercise were converted into kilometers (10 minutes = 2 k). The prize was a healthy team lunch for the winning team. We began a similar walking challenge in May which will end June 16, 2008.

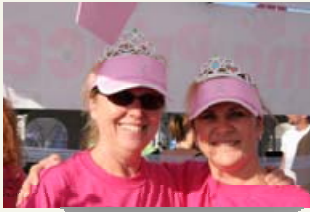
Most recently the Committee hosted a Lunch Presentation by our Occupational Therapists on the topic of Ergonomics and Prevention of Workplace Injuries.

The Committee continues to be enthusiastic about promoting wellness in our workplace. We have had three members leave the Committee in the past year due to the healthy births of three children. We welcomed four new members, Faye Squire, Sabrina LaTona, Angela Muscedere and Nicole Kenahan. Laura Kapetanov, Courtney Gibbons and I remain the veterans on the Committee.

Laurie Tiegs, Human Resource Advisor and WOW Chair

OUR DRAGON BOAT TEAM

Staff at Children First spearheaded a team that participated in the “Race for the Cure” for breast cancer at Sandpoint Beach on Sunday, July 15th, 2007. Our “Paddling Princesses” wore customized pink shirts, while our two Frog Princes wore green. The team included staff, Board members (present and past), community partners, friends and family members. We raised more than \$6000.00 for this event and a photo of our team in action was published in the “Shoreline Week”.



COMMUNITY PARTNERS



Our Executive Director was in good company with some of our community partners who were recognized as “Every Day Heroes” at the “Night at the Oscars” hosted by the Children’s Aid Society on February 8th. This reflects our relationship with partners that continues to be strong and is so crucial in helping our staff to build bridges between our families and community resources.



Linda Nagle was honoured by the Ensemble Team, who represent parents, with a Partnership Award in recognition for the person who has been instrumental in supporting Ensemble’s vision, “Parents as Partners” - a real tribute to the principles and values upheld by Children First.



FUNDRAISING INITIATIVES

Our “HOT HOT HOT Holiday Party” was a tremendous success and raised \$20,000 to benefit children in our program. 250 guests enjoyed a lovely dinner at the Ciociaro Club with live entertainment by the King Fish and participation in the WI, which was a huge hit! Live and silent auctions were filled with the hottest holiday gift ideas for big and little kids. The Fabulous Firefighters were on hand and volunteered their time along with our volunteer crew to make our gala a fun-filled event. We’re looking forward to another **Hot** time in November '08!



On February 2, 2008, Assante Wealth Management held a Charity Virtual Golf Tournament and raised more than \$3,000 for Children First. Pictured left, Laura Scali presents Ross Mitton and Andrea Tremblay of Assante a certificate of appreciation.



RBC Dominion Securities Charity Golf Classic held on June 25, 2007 at Pointe West Golf Club was a huge success, raising more than \$20,000 for local charities. Our share of the proceeds exceeded \$11,000. Staff and Board presented a plaque to RBC Dominion Securities in appreciation of their support. In January 2008, RBC announced that the **total** proceeds raised during their 2008 Golf Classic will be donated to Children First!

PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

We believe that:

- ☐ Family relationships are the foundation for growth and learning.
- ☐ Families are the primary resource and decision-makers for their children.
- ☐ Services are best provided through flexible partnerships with families and the community.
- ☐ Every child has the right to be supported to reach his/her potential.



OUR STAFF 2008

Executive

Linda Nagle, Executive Director
Cathy Martel, Program Manager
Jane Patterson, Administration Manager

Management ~ Team Supervisors

Lee Andrews (Social Worker)
Kamal Haffar (Physiotherapist)
Kathleen Hofmans (Psychologist)
Helen Martin (Psychologist)
Kim Sanford (Resource Consultant)
Sylvia Whalen (Resource Consultant)

Intake

Leslie Wagner, Admissions Coordinator
Donna Nolan-Bickerton, Resource Consultant

Social Workers

Crona Aigid
Patricia Brusco-Teti
Kathy Irabelli
Laura Kapetanov
Sabrina LaTona
Natalie Towne

Psychologists

Larissa Goertzen
Imogen Hall
Jillian Leggatt

Occupational Therapists

Tina Gruber
Jennifer Kinny
Dijana Panzalovic
Diana Weaver

Physiotherapists

Kate Balazs
Alana Frimer
Susan Grebe
Patti Patstone
Faye Squire

Speech-Language Pathologists

Kristy Davis	Karen Palamides
Lacey Marshal	Robin Patterson
Lisa Minnis	Sarah Peralta
Heather Mitchell	Jenny Riggi
Angela Muscedere	Kim Temesvari
Lucy Noal	Walker, Jennifer (CDA)
Marie Novak	

Administration

Debbie Baker - Finance Advisor
Dianne Blair - Administrative Support
Margaret Brain - Administrative Support
Sharri Hamelin - Administrative Support
Jacqui Hastings - Administrative Support
Lisa Parks - Administrative Support
Arvin Singla - Information Technology Analyst
Laurie Tiegs - Human Resource Advisor

Resource Consultants

Mike Alexander	
Carrie Augustine	
Shelley Barber	Claire Jobin
Sarah Bell	Nicole Kenehan
Judy Bezaire	Andrea Kraler
Colleen Blair	Sandra Lohnes
Lynda Bryant	Vera Manshande
Jennifer Burns	Lori Melnick
Deborah Cady	Tracey Merachli
Pam Campeau	Louanne Nacci
Krystyne Chantler	Patty Nicol
Kim Court	Lynne Onions
Bethany Davies	Lisa Paulson
Laurie Dew	Heather Redpath
Lorri Fantin	Jodi Snively
Kim Fisher	Dana St. Jean
Anne Fryer	Lori Stevens
Courtney Gibbons	Sophie Toffolon
Denise Gould	Sherri Toupin
Kim Hales	Tracy Villemaire
Lorelei Helkie	Julie Waddell
Debbie Holmes	Diane Wilkinson
Jolan Holmes	Wilson, Laura
Toni Jackman	

*“Helping children meet
their full potential”*