



our year in review

ANNUAL REPORT 2014–15



BOARD PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

We have a shared commitment to the children, youth and families we serve

An annual report is a time of reflection and an opportunity to recognize the efforts of many wonderful people who make a contribution at F&CS – foster and adoptive parents, staff, volunteers, donors and Board members.

Our shared commitment to the children, youth and families we serve and our collective impact is described throughout this report. We want to recognize and thank our many community partners and acknowledge that we could not do our best work without them.

We are very fortunate to be partners with agencies who care deeply about the families living in Guelph-Wellington. We also want to thank staff from the Central Regional Office of the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS) for their continued support of our agency and community.

Our Strategic Plan (2012–17) continues to provide direction for our Society and we remain focused on our three strategic directions: Prevention and Early Help, Leadership for Change, and Service Excellence through Organizational Effectiveness. In 2014–15 we undertook a project to measure our success in meeting the objectives identified in our strategic plan and, while we still have work ahead of us, we have met many of our milestones in these first three years.

Over the past year the Agency has been involved in a number of provincial projects that will impact our sector and our agency for years to come:

- a Board governance project led by OACAS and funded by MCYS;



Daniel Moore



Jan Lord

- the development and release of performance indicators that will grow in scope and be reported annually by MCYS;
- a review of the Child and Family Services Act;
- the implementation of a shared information system called CPIN; and
- phase one of a shared services project for the child welfare sector.

We hope that you take the time to read through this report to learn about our activities over the past year. There are new photos to capture our story which we hope you enjoy as well.

As Board Chair and Executive Director it has been a privilege for us to serve F&CS this past year and, most importantly, to be part of a team that positively impacts the lives of children, youth and families in Guelph-Wellington.

Jan Lord, President, Board of Directors

Daniel Moore, Executive Director

A photograph of five volunteer drivers posing in and around a blue car. A woman is in the driver's seat, smiling. Two men are standing behind the open passenger door, and two women are sitting on the ground in front of the car. The background shows a building with large windows and some trees.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Our volunteers deliver 40 drives per day for children, youth and families

Providing transportation for children, youth and families is possible because of the commitment of volunteer drivers.

The Transportation Program has approximately 40 drive requests a day for children, youth and families. The drive requests are for transporting children to and from school, medical/clinical/legal appointments and access visits.

The children, youth and families supported by F&CS have many struggles and challenges and transportation is a barrier experienced by many

of them. This barrier often means that families are unable to access supports and services they require for the families' well-being. Volunteer Drivers make it possible for a parent to attend a group or visit their child or go to a doctor's appointment, and for children to get to and from school or get to a counselling appointment. F&CS is grateful for the current group of committed volunteer drivers who provide consistent and supportive transportation.

We thank you for your dedication.

Volunteer drivers (L-R): Lindsay Langdon, Ralph Maze, Kevin Morris, Chris Ryan, Suzanne Webster



Vast majority of children we work with are kept safe by their own family networks

Many people think of Children's Aid and think the main part of our work is removing children from homes where they are not safe. In fact, the vast majority of our work is done to support families to keep their kids safe with their families – approximately 96% of the children and youth we work with, are kept safe by their own family networks. This is the work of Family Services.

SIGNS OF SAFETY

We continue to implement the Signs of Safety (SOS) approach as a way of doing good work in child welfare. Signs of Safety is at the same time strengths based, and a rigorous risk assessment. We have completed the training of all Service Staff and Management, approximately 100 people. This approach is transformational to our practice. Teams are working hard, together with their supervisors, to think differently and more critically about their work with the families we serve – our outcome objectives are more robust short and long term safety



Using Signs of Safety approach to map the strengths and worries of a family.

L–R: Mary Eluobaju (Family Services Worker), Souhila Benketira (Case Aide), Lin Lee (Family Services Worker), and Moira Middleton (Family Services Supervisor)

plans and earlier permanency through the establishment of an engaged family network.

The approach is being used in many jurisdictions around the world – evaluation studies are showing very promising results with families reporting feeling increased clarity on the reasons for child welfare involvement, feeling more respected and feeling more empowered. Workers report feeling more effective in their work and feeling more rewarded. F&CS is part of an international research initiative being run by The Casey Foundation in the US where our SOS implementation is being measured along with the SOS implementation in nine other countries.

NURTURING NEIGHBOURHOODS

We continue to work in partnership with the Guelph Community Health Centre, the Public Health Unit and the Guelph Neighbourhood support coalition through the placement of Parent Outreach Workers in the Brant and Two Rivers Neighbourhood Groups. An evaluation this year indicated that we are

succeeding in achieving many of the early outcome objectives we set out to achieve.

The people we most want to reach through this program are parents who are struggling with challenges. We want to reach them before their difficulties get to the point of causing significant problems in the family's life.

We learned through the evaluation that the most important role of the Parent Outreach Worker is to foster relationships – relationships between the parent and the Parent Outreach

Worker, between the parent and informal supports in the Neighbourhood Group, between the parent and other neighbourhood parents, and finally between parent and formal services.

The researchers refer to these relationships as Impact Pathways. Through these Impact Pathways, the researchers showed that parents were getting the support they needed to prevent their struggles from becoming risk factors for their kids, and in many instances, the struggles were eased and even resolved by the work of the Parent Outreach Workers.

See F&CS client story on page 6 to read more about this work.

FAMILY SERVICES, ANNUAL SUMMARY

- 3,136 calls from people who were worried about kids and families
- 1,634 of those calls connected families to other community resources
- 1,356 of the calls resulted in a child protection investigation due to a concern that a child might have been hurt or was at risk of being hurt
- 948 of those investigations were closed after the investigation was completed - these are often families who needed minimal support, got connected to other community supports, or the original concerns were unfounded
- 385 families required ongoing support after the investigation was completed
- 407 families were already being served through our ongoing services
- 792 families in total were supported to keep their kids safe in their home

Allison P. – ‘Katie helped me believe in myself again’

The following is the speech given by Allison at an F&CS event recognizing the generous donation made by Grace Balnar (page 11) to the Children First Fund in support of our collaborative prevention and early help initiatives.

Hello, my name is Allison P. I'm a client of Katie Davis, Parent Outreach Worker, who was directed towards me by F&CS. I also have a CMHA worker who I've also had for the same amount of time.

Katie has concentrated on my daughter and I, and she has been a tremendous support in so many different areas. I am the first alumni with F&CS to receive an award five years ago for work I did in rehab for alcoholism and the good fight to get my daughter back in my life. Since then F&CS helped me again!

So I started many years ago with F&CS and have ended full circle like the final chapter in my life with Katie who has given me the best support I've ever had. In fact, I don't know what I would be doing now if Katie didn't help me make the first steps to changing my life, including walking through the doors of Conestoga College to sign up for a program called Focus for Change, which changed my life.

Since that time Katie has helped me literally transform again into someone with more hope and confidence now than I've ever had. And she has helped me believe I am good enough, smart enough to continue with three more years of college to become an SSW myself.

A year ago I didn't believe I could. Katie has gathered resources together for me and taken me to important doctor's appointments at McMaster for my child. She went with me to get my G1, helped me with forms and generally helped me to believe in myself again. Katie has been through it all with me and has given me hope for a future with my daughter.

She's helped me find out what I really need to do to function as a student and mother. I'd be a little lost without her. She always assured me that I am intelligent enough to do my studies even with a learning disability. All I ever wanted was to be able to go to one person who hears you and actually helps you through struggles generally as a single mom living in housing and beyond.

In my opinion she does good things even as small as the food hamper – making sure we're alright even though we have a professional relationship I feel finally someone cares and I trust my life and my daughter's life in her hands.

For these reasons I've listed above are why having a parent outreach worker in communities is so important.

Katie Davis (Parent Outreach Worker) and Allison P.





TD Financial Literacy Program participants Manny and Julyan with instructor Beth Harris

TD FINANCIAL LITERACY

'Compound interest adds up fast – and also, never use a cash store'

In 2014–2015 the agency provided enhanced Financial Literacy training for our young people as a result of receiving a grant from the TD Financial Literacy Fund. Beth Harris was hired to deliver this program and she worked with 59 youth to ensure that they understood many financial concepts – budgeting, banking, credit cards, interest, saving, and many more.

This program was very successful and included hands-on learning such as buying groceries on a budget, meal planning, and visiting a bank to open an account. Emphasis was placed on the importance of education and the assistance and supports available to the youth. Manny and Julyan looked into the educational choices available in order to pursue careers in corrections, technology, forensics and wildlife. "The most interesting information," according to Manny and Julyan, "was learning about compound interest and how fast it adds up on credit card bills. And also – never use a cash store."



Foster parent Joy Cole with Families to Permanency Worker Darren Sinnaeve

Working hard to provide permanency for the children and youth we work with

All children need to know that they are loved and belong to a family. They need to know that there are people in their lives who will be there for them today and into the future, even as they become adults. We are working very hard to find permanency and belonging for the children we work with. We even work with families to build networks of support around the parents to ensure that children can remain with their parents. When that can't happen, we look for kin, foster or adoptive families to care for children permanently through custody or adoption.

Keeping siblings together is always our first priority. We have a high degree of success in doing this and last year 8 sibling groups totaling 24 children and youth moved to their new adoptive homes. These children ranged in age from 1–16 years of age and ranged from sibling groups of 2 to a sibling group of 6.

The work that is done to prepare children for a move to a new family is very important. Children can feel that they are losing the foster parents they have grown so attached to, connections to their own family and they fear the unknown in a new home with new parents. We try to ensure that they maintain connections whenever possible with people who have been important to them including their own families and foster families.

HELPING THE TRANSITION

Together Joy Cole and Darren Sinnaeve worked to help four children transition to a new home. "As a result of good teamwork, the transition went very well," said Joy. They were able to assure

the children that Joy would remain in their lives and help them to understand that being adopted by others was not rejection by the foster parents they had become attached to. Darren worked with the mom of the children to help her to explain to the children why this had happened and to help them feel good about accepting new parents in their lives.

KINSHIP

- On March 31, 2015, we had 24 children living in 17 kinship service families
- In 2014–2015, more than 15 children and youth had family members obtain legal custody to provide for them permanently

OLDER YOUTH

Of the 33 youth who were not discharged to a permanent family in 2014–2015, 28 were youth who turned 21 and are no longer involved with our agency due to their age. This is a big concern for us. We want to do more to ensure that youth who are aging out of care have the best start they can. In addition to youth needing supportive people in their lives – families and friends – who will be there for them, they need education or training in order to find jobs or careers that will support them well. They need adequate housing and financial literacy to help them manage their finances.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES, ANNUAL SUMMARY

In 2014–2015 there were an average of 196 children and youth in our care.

- 82 children were discharged from care. 49 of these were discharges to a permanent family.
 - > 30 returned home
 - > 13 had an adoption placement finalized
 - > 6 went to live with kin
- 31 children and youth were placed on adoption
- We had 77 approved foster homes and 9 kinship care homes

FINANCIAL REPORT

Financial year-end for 2014–15

Audited financial statements available on request

EXPENDITURES

Direct Service	
Staffing Costs (service)	\$ 10,529,135
Boarding Rates	3,856,784
Client Support	684,149
Travel (Staff & Clients)	583,370
Adoption Subsidies & Probation	438,253
Legal & Professional	200,552
Program	10,944
Sub-total	\$ 16,303,187

Infrastructure and Administration	
Staffing Costs (Administration)	2,100,623
Infrastructure (Building/Technology/Capital)	1,388,045
Administration Costs	431,577
Sub-total	\$ 3,920,245

Expenditures Total \$ 20,223,432

REVENUES

Ministry Funding	\$ 19,596,845
Children's Allowance / Parental Maintenance	458,538
Other non-recurring expense	425,219

Revenues Total \$ 20,480,602

Excess of Revenues over Expenditures 257,170

Purchase of Capital Assets	63,387
Deposit to Balanced Budget Fund	193,783

Fund Balance \$ 0

CHILDREN FIRST FUND

The five-year impact of Children First funded programs

Thanks to the ongoing generosity of individuals, families, businesses and corporations within our community, over 751 children and youth have been assisted through Children First Fund programs.

Program	Impact
Education Support	26 youth have received an award; anticipate 20 to apply for September
Youth Holiday Meal/gifts	80 youth living independently
Parenting Program	Worked with 16 families; 25 children/youth
Summer Camp	25 vulnerable children/youth (not in care) participated
Financial Literacy Program	Worked with 59 youth to prepare them for living independently
Permanency Support	Develops and sustains networks of support and is making a difference in the lives of 126 children and youth in care
Prevention & Early Help	2 Parent Outreach Workers connected with 3500 people over an 18 month period and provided supports for 130 families (260 children) with a further 20-25 anonymous families (approx. 50 children)
Family Fun Program	38 vulnerable families with 3–5 children/youth each enjoyed a Guelph Storm home game with refreshments

• in partnership with MCYS, community organizations and local businesses

A FEW HIGHLIGHTS

- The Joyce Foundation and The Catherine & Maxwell Meighen Foundation have through grants to the Education Support Program ensured that 20 youth in our care will receive support with education expenses.
- Until The Last Child provided a grant which continued the



work of two Family Finding and Permanence workers associated with Family & Children's Services' Permanency Pilot. The Family Finding model is being used with children in care to locate family members who can establish life-long connections for children and youth needing permanence.

- NHL player Daniel Paille and wife Dana in partnership with the Guelph Storm Hockey Club provided family fun experiences for vulnerable families in the community.
- Through support from the United Way Guelph Wellington Dufferin, a Social Innovation Animator connected with the Prevention and Early Help collaboration provided support to community leaders in two Guelph neighbourhoods resulting in the development of important programs for the citizens residing there.
- The support of the Rotary Club of Guelph Charitable Foundation has provided a secure play area that offers a welcoming space for children in care to visit with their families.
- The members of the Guelph Chamber Choir ensured that our youth living independently without family experienced a holiday turkey dinner and received a gift stocking.



Standing: Michael Balnar, Laura Greenway-Balnar, Scott Pollard, Kristi Pollard, Chris Linguori. **Middle:** Ryan Pollard with Alison Balnar on the phone. **Front:** Grace Balnar, Katie Balnar. **Absent:** Eric Balnar.



Standing: Sandy Brennan, Tim Eastwood. **Sitting:** Geoff Newton

DONORS

Our supporters make things happen!

Thanks to the generosity of Grace Balnar, more families in vulnerable situations will receive support through Family & Children's Services' collaborative prevention and early help activity in the community.

A former Family & Children's Services staff member, Grace has made a significant gift in cooperation with her family company Balnar Management Ltd., to the Children First Fund; a gift that will continue her lifelong commitment to children and youth.

"This gift is a wonderful way for Grace to "give back to her roots", reconnect with the agency where she worked for many years and support its outstanding work on behalf of children in the community," says her son Michael Balnar.

Grace's generosity is enabling prevention and early help services for vulnerable citizens to be incorporated into a third local community.

SING-A-LONG SPONSOR

As the Performance Sponsor of *Messiah Sing-A-Long* and a corporate donor of the Education Support Program, Geoff Newton and his colleagues are committed to assisting vulnerable children, youth and families.

SUPPORT FOR POST-SECONDARY INITIATIVE

The Newton Eastwood Dietrich Wealth Advisory Group at BMO Nesbitt Burns takes pride in assisting families in our community. That's why each year, through various donations and sponsorships, they are committed to supporting groups like Family and Children's Services of Guelph and Wellington County. "Through supporting the post-secondary education initiative we provide an opportunity that may not otherwise exist for students eager to expand their knowledge and skills in preparation of a better life," says Geoff Newton, Vice-President, BMO Nesbitt Burns.



Standing: Susan Dickert, Curt Hammond, Don McKay, Zakir Akram, Alysha Letourneau (student), Susan Mellor.

Seated: Gabriella Facchini, Jan Lord, Raechelle Devereaux.

Board of Directors (as of March 31, 2015)

President Jan Lord

Vice-President Susan Dickert

Secretary-Treasurer Patricia Widmeyer

Directors Zakir Akram, Raechelle Devereaux, Gabriella Facchini, Curt Hammond, Lesleigh Hunter, Donna Jaques, John Livernois, Don McKay, Susan Mellor, Teresa Pitman, Judy Yarmey

Life Members 2014–2015

Peter Barrow
Barbara Brownell
Moe Brubacher
Mary Carlin
Amy Cousineau
Donna Dodge
Stephen Dodge
Cathy Downer
Don Drone
Elizabeth Fisk
Jeanne Forsythe
Pat Giles
Anne Godfrey

Barbara Hurren
Larry Hurren
Norm Jary
Maureen Jefferson
Peter Jefferson
Janet Kaufman
Gilbert Lavalley
Faye Lund
Nancy MacDonald
Alex Macrae
Eva Marmurek
Pat McCraw
Debbie Musselman

Robert Musselman
Lorraine Paddock
Kendra Pagnan
Dr. John Pate
Michele Preyde
Cathie Ridgeway
John Ridgeway
Dr. Bruce Ryan
Brendan Soye
Gordon Tosh
Wilma Tosh
Paul Truex
Jeff Watson

Jim Whitechurch
Charlie Whittaker

*Sadly, over
the past year
members Margaret
MacKinnon and
Janet Wardlaw
passed away.*

Contact information

Family & Children's Services of Guelph Wellington

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