

## President's Message ~ 30<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting

I would like to extend a warm welcome to everyone and thank you for attending our 30<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting. The theme of this AGM is "Celebrating Our Partnerships". I would like to thank all the presenters this evening for reminding us how much stronger we are when we work together.

The 2010-11 year has been very busy. There have been many budgetary challenges as well as some great opportunities. The reality of today is that funding levels have not kept up with rising operational costs and difficult decisions need to be made in order to provide the highest levels of service while staying within budget parameters. In some areas of the province, social service organizations are looking at amalgamations, acquisitions or strategic alliances to mitigate the effects of current funding levels to ensure that services continue to be available in local communities. Many not-for-profit organizations have, and are continuing to implement service reductions, program closures and in some cases, the full closure of agency operations.

In the past year, H-N REACH has had to make similar decisions in relation to some of our programs. As time goes on, more of our programs are approaching the limits of our budgets, necessitating the ongoing review and re-priorizing of program/unit operations, staffing levels, and service options. As part of our service planning process, we ensure that our decisions are guided by the mission and values of the organization and are consistent with the agency's Strategic Directions. In our Board deliberations, we are careful to balance the need to maintain maximum levels of service while ensuring we develop and maintain the infrastructure that will adequately and safely support our operations.

As we celebrate our partnerships at this year's AGM, it is important to recognize that it is through the strength of our relationships that we are able to address the pressing issues of our local area and focus our collective resources to provide the maximum benefit to our children, families and communities. H-N REACH is fortunate to operate in communities that support this collaborative spirit and we are pleased to make our own contributions to these collective efforts.

As illustrations of the importance of these relationships, I would like to highlight just a sampling of some of our partnerships and achievements in the past year. (The reader will find a more extensive listing of these partnerships in this year's Executive Director's Report that is also contained in your package).

- H-N REACH and St. Leonard's Community Services (Brant) were pleased to accept another grant from the Royal Bank of Canada (RBC) in response to a joint proposal that was submitted earlier this year. The RBC has adopted children's mental health as one of several areas of community need to be supported through the granting of financial assistance on a project basis. This initiative has provided a unique opportunity for H-N REACH to collaborate with St. Leonard's for the past year and this new grant of \$50,000.00 will enable the CBT Training project to continue to the next training level in 2011-12.

- Our OEYC provides many services in partnership with a variety of schools, child care programs, community organizations and groups. The co-location and coordination of these services simplifies access to services for families of young children and promotes opportunities for multi-disciplinary service planning and delivery.
- H-N REACH recently applied for and was granted membership status with OASIS. The need to adopt and accommodate recently introduced Quality Assurance Measures by the Ministry of Community and Social Services served as an example of how agencies benefit from provincial groups working together to address common needs. One of the primary functions of OASIS is to provide member agencies with communications opportunities; labour relations information; a voice with government; a policy database; educational seminars; and other operations related resources.
- Our collective work with partner agencies through the Best Start Network and the Child and Youth Advisory Network has facilitated planning and supported the development of new service options, engagement processes and advocacy initiatives.
- Our Family Services Unit partners with local business and organizations to plan and implement effective work-place wellness and Employee Assistance Programs. These partnerships serve to leverage resources from various funding sources enabling services to reach greater numbers of people.
- The local community received funding from the MCSS Person-Centred Planning Fiscal Innovation Fund. These funds were secured because of the strong partnerships between H-N REACH, Community Living Access Support Services, Community Living Haldimand and the Norfolk Association for Community Living. A joint proposal was submitted, approved and staff were ultimately trained in PATH planning and Person Direct Planning;
- The Child Nutrition Network received \$10,000 from the Imperial Oil Foundation to support Basic First Aid and Safe Food Handling training for local volunteers.
- Our Student Nutrition programs receive many donations of time, resources and funds to complement base funding provided by the MCYS.
- A Trillium Grant was secured as part of the Name It 2 Change It Bullying Prevention initiative. The funding has allowed us to hire a Community Coordinator that will focus over the next two years on establishing school based bullying prevention strategies utilizing a youth engagement model..
- Our Student Support Leadership Initiative has served to strengthen relationships with local Boards of Education and supported the development of protocols to clearly define responsibilities and reduce duplication.
- Our Union House Program has worked closely with the Children's Aid Society to ensure children and youth requiring residential supports are served within our home community.
- The local Youth Justice Liaison Committee has continued to ensure accountability and the coordination of services and supports for local youth in conflict with the law.

From a governance perspective, we have again been challenged to focus our collective agenda on key areas of agency and systems development. During the past year the Board of Directors has spent considerable time and energy on a number of issues such as:

- Reviewing and updating of the Agency Strategic Plan 2009-2013
- Ongoing Board learning and development
- Board Recruitment
- Updating of Board policies
- Preparing for the Children's Mental Health Ontario re-accreditation
- Regional governance activity related to the development of a Regional Application Entity for the Hamilton/Niagara Region and ongoing Contact operations
- Review and reporting of risk management practices
- Participation in collective provincial advocacy plans
- Connections with various funders and political leaders to discuss new developments in public policy
- Updating the agency planning cycle to address new accountability requirements
- Cross board relations and forums to deal with emerging issues of common interest
- Collaboration with other Boards for advocacy and service development purposes
- Planning and implementation of governance-related Quality Assurance Measures resulting from the Social Inclusion Act
- Planning and implementation of governance-related accountability requirements resulting from funder directives pertaining to travel, meal and hospitality expenses
- Responding to the new 'Compensation Restraint' legislation introduced by the Province of Ontario in March 2010

Another great achievement has been our Children's Mental Health Ontario Re-Accreditation. The staff, management team, and Board of Directors invested many hours preparing for this site review process and our Accreditation Report from CMHO outlines the high level of achievement we realized in this process. This is an outstanding achievement and congratulations are extended to everyone for all your hard work.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I want to thank you, the membership and our longtime partners for supporting H-N REACH. As we have just completed our 30th year, I look forward to many more successful years working with you and playing a vital role in the Haldimand and Norfolk communities.

I would like to express my appreciation to our Executive Director, Leo Massi and the members of the Board of Directors for their hard work, dedication, many hours of volunteer service, commitment to our mission, vision and values, and personal support in meeting the many challenges during 2010-2011.

And finally, I'd like to thank you for the opportunity you have given me to serve as the Board President for the past 3 years. I've enjoyed attending your staff days and other functions as well as getting to know you personally and learning about the wonderful work you do at H-N REACH. It has been a great learning experience and a wonderful opportunity. I will be stepping down as Board President; I look forward to the year ahead as I continue to actively serve on the Board of Directors in a different capacity.

Lisa Wallace,  
President,  
Board of Directors