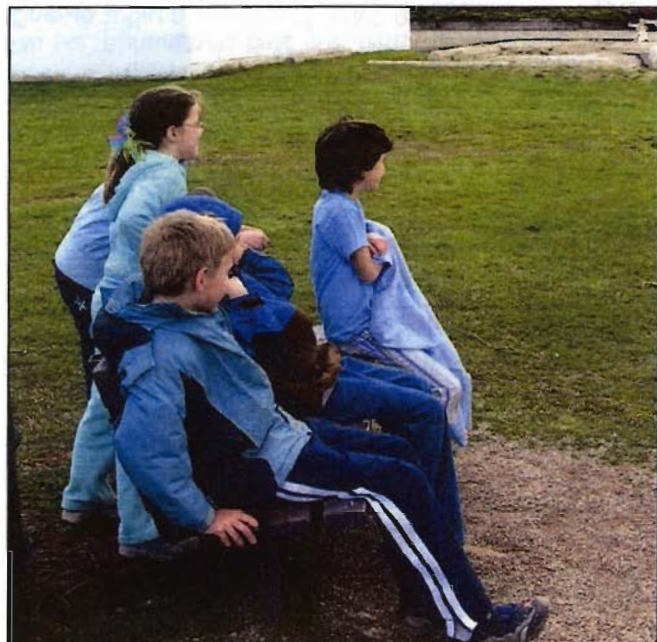


Nelson Youth Centres

An accredited Children's Mental Health Centre offering treatment programs for children aged 7 to 17



Nelson Youth Centres Is Growing!

Nelson Youth Centres has been providing service to Halton for the past 27 years. Over the last seven years the Centre has been able to expand our services to children between the ages of 7 and 17, through the generous support of the community including the United Way of Oakville and Hamilton Burlington and a host of dedicated community members who saw our vision. In 1999 the Centre added three more after school treatment groups for children between the ages of 7 and 10 which enable an additional 40 children annually to have the benefit of the centre's unique programming, bringing the number of children we serve to 160 children each year. In 2003 the Centre was able to enhance programming with an education supports component for children with learning disabilities and learning behaviour issues which link us closer with the school programming for these children in the after school program. In February of this year, with new monies from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, the Centre developed two community-based groups for youth between the ages of 15 and 17. The Centre has established a group in Acton and one in Aldershot (Burlington).

Today the Centre provides a rich array of after-school programs and parent services to support the emotional and social well being of children and youth while strengthening families in the community. Since its inception the Centre has served over 8,400 children, youth and families. Nelson Youth Centres continues to grow in a positive direction by establishing effective services for troubled children and families in Halton, thereby enriching our community.

Cindy McClure

Working in Partnerships

Nelson Youth Centres works in partnership with other community agencies to ensure the mental health needs of Halton's children are met. The centre is a small but vital part of the continuum of services for families in Halton

Nelson Youth Centres is working in partnership with the **Woodview Children Centre** to provide a Saturday Social Skill Group for children with Pervasive Developmental Disorder. This is an 8 week program that helps these children learn more effective social skills which they can use in the community and at school.

Nelson Youth Centres in partnership with **Halton Children's Aid Society and Halton Child and Youth Services** is developing a program for children at risk of being taken into care and who families are struggling to meet the needs of their children. This pilot project was made possible from a grant by the Trillium Foundation of Ontario.

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An Adventure of a Lifetime

This past July our staff arranged to take a group of teenagers from the new Aldershot and Acton programs on a canoe trip for one week.

This was a new activity which our agency had never tried before so we were curious as to whether or not this adventure would be successful. We took some teens who had no camping or canoe experience away from their suburban homes into the wilderness for 5 days. Parents were anxious to know how their children would fair in this different environment. Youth were beginning to wonder what they signed up for when they saw how isolated we were. As the week progressed they began to learn new skills and became more comfortable in their surroundings. Our instructor from the YMCA of Oakville was fabulous. He not only taught the group camping and canoe skills but also how to cook over the campfire, compass work, nature studies and how to portage.

The results of our week away surpassed our expectations of what the group would get out of their time up North. The youth come from different backgrounds with many different social and behavioral problems. During the week they learned how to be a team while also having to face their individual struggles. They learned that getting through obstacles and overcoming problems is really up to them. Without their parents around to help, youth had to cooperate to get to our destination or they would be left alone. At first there was some resistance but by mid week there was a shift in attitude. The youth bonded and began helping each other. They loved their experience so much that on our last day they stayed up all night watching the stars. The next morning several youth didn't want to go home and deal with the issues that awaited them there. During the week, however, they seemed to have developed more confidence, maturity, and personal responsibility which will help them cope and handle things better. The skills and friendships that developed made an enormous impact on their self esteem as youth and staff accomplished things they never thought possible. This camping trip gave the group an amazing gift. At this age we see kids who don't believe in themselves and are often ready to give up. This week gave them an opportunity to shine and have someone believe in them.

Our group is still looking at pictures from the trip over and over again. The stories they share are filled with laughter and pride. It will be an experience that many youth can benefit from and remember for years to come.

Tara Herod

What's Coming Up

This spring, the Centre will be having our 2nd Annual Fashion Show showing off the fabulous fashions from Burlington Downtown Merchants. This event will include door prizes, silent auction, good food and good company. More information to follow in the New Year. An event not to be missed!

In January 2006 come join us for a night of laughter and fun at Club 54. Tickets are \$10 each. Call the centre for more information or tickets.

To find out about these events and others contact the Nelson Youth Centres

By Phone

905-681-2611

By email

office@neslonyouthcentres.com

In the fall of 2006 the Centre hopes to offer the community a night of jazz and relaxation at the Oakville

Centre of Fine Arts. More information to follow in the New Year.



One Mother's Story

When we find a light we are to put it on a lamp stand for all to see and not hide it under a bushel. That is why I have agreed to share a few thoughts about Nelson Youth Centres.

Our 11-year-old foster daughter came to us 5 ½ years ago from a traumatized early childhood. She is the eldest of four children from a single mom family. As a foster parent I am to protect her identity but I do have permission from her CAS worker to share with you her progress. Our daughter attended her first session of Nelson Youth Centres beginning in February of this year. She is a bright, tall, thin, artistic child of Native Canadian and Polish Canadian background. Due partly to her traumatized past and partly to inherited traits, she struggles with ADHD and has been on Ritalin 3 times a day for almost 4 years.

She has struggled with social skills, understanding social situations, making appropriate connections especially with peers. She is standoffish around other children; if she was older one might consider her attitude as snobbish. During her first years with us she struggled with behaving appropriately with children, staying on task during class, and impulsivity.

Her teachers and worker and my husband and I continued to be concerned about her lack of social skills, lack of friends. I know we all joke about being the last to be picked for teams, etc in our childhood. This child literally is. She has never been invited to any friend's birthday party to this day even though we invited girls from school to hers and parents gladly let their daughters attend, not one has ever thought to include her at theirs. Just this year she has admitted hearing about these parties and wonders why she is never included.

She would spend recesses walking the school playground literally talking to herself or hiding out from the teachers and sneaking back into class to play on the computers by herself. When asked in class to find a partner to do a game with or to find a partner to do a project with or find a partner to mark her papers, she would never initiate any of this. She would wait until all were taken and the teacher would have to, over and over again, assign her a partner.

She would not risk volunteering for anything in class or at Church. She did not like to be centered out in any way, even having her name read out as a volunteer at school or announcing her birthday once a year made her cringe. She had feelings of others always looking at her, thinking her strange. Peers seem to have radar about her insecurities and feed on them by telling her to go away, that they didn't want her to

play with them or talk to them. She would comply and walk endless hours around by herself.

We knew about Nelson Youth Centres from the school. We decided the time had come for us to apply for her; we didn't want these isolating behaviours to continue any longer.

Well, what a blessing. Our daughter has found a place where she is accepted and that she accepts. She loves to attend. Here at Nelson she gets the small group activity that she needs; a safe place to land. Her interactions with the other kids are watched and when an issue arises it is discussed immediately and better responses are encouraged. This is exactly what she needs. In the public school system there is not the time or manpower to counsel the children in this way. She is starting to see how others feel and respond to her yet more importantly she is discovering and admitting her own feelings. Because the Nelson kids learn to share their feelings and experiences she now sees that she is not odd or alone in these things.

Our daughter has made so much progress. This summer when she returned from camp she was able to tell us the names of all the girls in the cabin, what city they lived in, bits of information about them. She has corresponded with a couple of them. Other years when she has come home she could not even tell us any of the girls first names. Other summers during camp sing songs, she would literally stay seated rarely join in with the others in those rousing times. This year she told us how she was up and dancing around with the others. At day camp this summer, another girl saved her a seat on the bus every morning. Now for your children this is a small, natural, everyday occurrence, for our daughter this was exciting and new.

This year at school she is taking risks. She has volunteered to help two other girls entertain a physically challenged girl during the lunch hours. She has volunteered to be a pizza helper. She is standing up for herself when told to go away and she is doing less cowering. The aggressiveness from a couple of the girls has increased but our daughter figured out by herself that this is because she is becoming more assertive. One day not long ago she came running upstairs calling out for me to tell me that she videotaped the school assembly on the new digital video camera. She had to move around the gym and be obvious as she took the pictures. The principal even said her name out loud and thanked her for doing that in front of the whole school. Now a year ago she would never have accepted this assignment and to hear her name mentioned out loud even in an encouraging context would have distracted her! I asked her how she felt

about hearing her name, did she die? She rolled her eyes and said "No Mom". Now this day brought tears to my eyes.

Recently when talking to her biological mother, our daughter told her that she now has friends and that she doesn't want to be alone anymore. My heart soared to hear her speak up about this. Also recently she accepted a new girl into the group at Nelson. She was the first to befriend this girl. She would not have cared months ago. The next goal is for her to increase her involvement with other children. To learn to relate to a larger group of friends.

This brings me to the workers at Nelson. My husband and I attended the Parents training nights. We are so appreciative that these nights are compulsory for all whose children attend the centre. We gained so much from hearing other parent's struggles, learned from strategies others have tried, and watched and discussed those amazing Dr. Lavoie and Barbara Colorosso videos. As a foster parent I attend training sessions twice a month during the day, but the evening meetings are so beneficial as my husband and I both experience the teaching together, both hear the advice first hand. This increases the training going on at home.

Our daughter asked me just a few weeks ago, "Why don't the kids at school accept me like my friends at Nelson do?" Like I said earlier a great place to land and a great place to grow.

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**Charitable Registration Number
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Nelson Youth Centres

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