



Media Release

Sept 8, 2016

Highland Shores Children's Aid Holds 5th Annual General Meeting

Highland Shores Children's Aid (HSCA) held its 5th Annual General Meeting today in Cobourg. Members of the Society elected the Board of Directors who will help set the course for the coming year.

At the meeting, the following four nominees from existing Board Members were elected for 3-year terms (2016-2019):

Alan Whyte
Marilyn Curson
Jay Taugher
Michael McLeod

Returning members of the Board are:

Phillip Peters
Elaine Philip
Donalda Simmons
Peter Knudsen
Anne-Marie Burrus
David Slater
Caitlin Dougherty

Appointed Directors for the 2016/17 Board of Directors are as follows:

- Nora Sawyer from Alderville First Nation. Her appointment is for 2016-2018.
- Ray Dassylva from The Children's Foundation. Mr. Dassylva will assume this appointment for the period 2015-17.
- The Society is awaiting confirmation from the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte for their appointee in order to fulfill a vacant term (2016-2018).

Outgoing member of the Board, John Cairns was recognized by the Society for his service as appointee for The Children's Foundation. A special presentation of a Honourary Membership was given to Lisa Thompson in recognition of her 30 years of service to the Children's Aid Society in the capacity of Executive Assistant to former Hastings Children's Aid Society Executive Directors, Larry MacDonald and Len Kennedy as well as Highland Shores Children's Aid Executive Director, Mark Kartusch.

In his Executive Director's report, Mark Kartusch focused on the changes that the Society had implemented over the past fiscal year and the further changes that lay ahead for both Highland Shores and the child welfare sector as a whole. As he explained it this is "...not change for change sake, but change coming from a real desire for a new result. A new result in our work with families because we are focusing on the strengths they possess rather than shortcomings, a new result by becoming a better community partner and being a leader in improving the service delivery system in our community, a new result in terms of the public's understanding about our work because we are willing to be more transparent and accountable about the outcomes we're achieving and a new result for our sector because we are coming together to work as a more cohesive system across the province."

He shared that there has been a change in the way the Society works with families that is based on the Signs of Safety approach, a new practice which the organization began implementing in 2014. As Kartusch explained, "It is undoubtedly one of the most important steps we've taken as an organization because it represents a major shift in our work. It's an approach that focuses on the strengths that exist within all of us and taps into those strengths so that family members are able to come up with solutions that make sense for them, while at the same time ensuring safety for their children." The benefits of the SOS approach were further evident when a local family, who has been working with the Society, explained for those in attendance how the approach has helped to change their lives and the lives of their children.

Key to the success of the Signs of Safety approach is the involvement of community partners and Kartusch emphasized that the Society have many wonderful partners across the three counties it serves who work alongside HSCA staff to provide the supports that are so vital for families at risk. In the 2015-16 fiscal year, 379 families across Hastings, Northumberland and Prince Edward counties were referred to community partners by Society staff.

He also indicated that the Society is looking for a new result in terms of the public's understanding about its work and one of the ways he hoped to do this was by being more transparent and accountable about the outcomes the Society is achieving. "As a field we have taken some important steps forward by making public several performance indicators on the safety, permanency and well-being of the children in our care. For instance, from 2010-2014 the majority, or 80-83 percent, of families did not return for service within 12 months of their file being closed by Highland Shores. During those same four years, 75-83% of the days of care Highland Shores provided to children were family-based", he explained.

Ensuring the Society continues to provide value for tax payer money and creating efficiencies that don't come at a cost to the families it serves is another area of focus. "I'm happy to report to you today that we have finished the 2015-16 fiscal year in a positive financial position as a result of these efforts", Kartusch added.

The Child Welfare sector as a whole is also making changes in order to work more closely together as a cohesive system across the province. One of those steps is the commitment by the sector to a *Call to Action* which contains eight priority areas for collective change. "The *Call to Action* represents our agreement as CASs to work as a unified provincial system, in concert with the provincial government, to continue to improve the quality and consistency of our services and to provide greater transparency between ourselves and the public, Kartusch explained.

He concluded his report by recognizing the work of the Children's Foundation, the Board of Directors, foster parents and volunteers for their efforts on behalf of children, youth and families during the past fiscal year. "We will continue to "build on the new" this year and will welcome the many challenges and opportunities that change will undoubtedly bring our way."

Following the Annual General Meeting the Highland Shores Children's Aid Board of Directors appointed the Board Executive for 2016/17 as follows:

President: Michael McLeod

Vice President: to be determined at September HSCA Board meeting

Secretary: Elaine Philip

Treasurer: Jay Taugher