

ldao

Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario

*A different way of learning  
can lead to success.*

VOLUME 35 NUMBER 1

FALL/WINTER 2005

# communiqué

THE PUBLICATION OF THE LEARNING DISABILITIES ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO

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# communiqué

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*Communiqué*, the newsletter of LDAO, is published two times yearly. Articles should be submitted to the editor approximately six weeks before the publication date. **Content deadline for the Spring/Summer issue is: February 27.** Advertising rates are available upon request. Subscription rate for non-LDAO members is \$25.00 yearly.

*Communiqué* provides a forum for information, news and opinions relevant to the field of learning disabilities. The Association does not, in any sense, endorse opinions expressed or methods or programs mentioned. Articles may be reprinted unless otherwise stated. Please mention *Communiqué* and the article's author if and when articles are reprinted.

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# EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

**T**he New Year hastens a period of retreat and resolution. As the cold descends and white nights become grey days, we are motivated to entertain change in our lives.

"I will join a gym and lose 20 pounds!" we valiantly proclaim to ourselves, and by March our well-intentioned motives are quashed. During the past several months, LDAO has reflected on its own course of action and its intention, and initiated a number of changes under the direction of its capable new leadership.

One change you now hold in your hands. *Communiqué*, your provincial LD voice, is undergoing a facelift and this is more fully discussed a few paragraphs down.

Content-wise, we kick off our features section this edition, with an Introduction to Individual Education Plans, and the process involved in creating these important documents, which serve as "templates of ownership" for young learners with special needs. A joint effort between school boards, IPRCs, parents and students, IEPs are holistic documents that provide a valuable means of obtaining education that matters.

As children develop and gradually become more formed, image and environment begin to encroach on their identity. Parents' opinions and guidance begin to take second place to those of peers. And yet, as Andrea Craig states in her article on peer pressure, this does not always have to be a bad thing. Parents can play a role in guiding their children towards positive peer environments with a number of simple tools and tricks, as well as patience and gentle influence. This article shows you how.

Children, of course grow up to be adults, and you can read about LDAO's response to MPP Kathleen Wynne's recent review of adult education in our new "Public Policy Roundup" column on page 6. A unique project that is offering adult learners, many of them with LDs, a boost is "University in the Community". This community-based project of the Workers' Education Association offers free, university-level instruction in the humanities within community-based settings. Now in its second year of operation, the project continues to thrive while inspiring adults to learn for its own sake, while inspiring others to follow their dreams in pursuit of a post secondary education. It's moving stuff, and we are pleased to share it with you.



Carter Hammett, Editor

## It's All in the Name

You will notice other subtle changes throughout this issue of *Communiqué*. We are hoping to create a fresh voice and look to revitalize our publication and we need your help. One of the changes will be a new name, and this is your chance to contribute! If you can think of a catchy title to grab readers' attention, we want to hear from you! The sky's the limit. We want something that reflects the needs of your communities, yet captures the imaginations of readers. Something that speaks to the province, but keeps it real. Oh and there are some incentives in it too! The submission that finally gets selected will be eligible for a fabulous prize! So, go ahead and run wild! Let us know what you think would be a title that rocks for your provincial voice! **Deadline for submissions is: Monday, February 27, 2006.** Send submission ideas to: [journalist4hire@yahoo.com](mailto:journalist4hire@yahoo.com). Be sure to include a return address, phone # and name. We'll confirm a receipt and get back to the winner early in the new year!

Finally, I want to take this opportunity to welcome Christopher Carew to LDAO. While he has some mighty big shoes to fill, Chris brings a wealth of experience to an agency with a hefty provincial presence. It is sure to be a solid marriage. I would also like to thank Kate Lloyd and Diane Wagner for providing the opportunity to step in as editor for this issue of *Communiqué*. It's been enjoyable.

I hope you enjoy reading as much as we've enjoyed writing.

Bon Appetit!

**Carter Hammett, Editor**

# LDAO Welcomes New Chief Executive Officer

By Ruth Taber

**O**n August 15, Chris Carew assumed the newly- created position of Chief Executive Officer of the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario. In this role, Chris will provide the visionary leadership needed to strengthen our organization and implement our priorities.

Chris earned a Master of Business Administration in Executive Management from Royal Roads University in Victoria, B.C. and has extensive leadership experience in the health sector. Most recently, as the Executive Director of the Grand River District Health Council in Brantford, Ontario, he was appointed Chair of the Provincial Executive Directors for The Ontario Provincial District Health Councils. In that capacity, he worked with The Ministry of Health and Long Term Care and played an important role in the development of regional and provincial strategies for integrated health planning initiatives. In senior positions at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto and the London Health

Sciences Centre, he demonstrated exemplary skills in strategic planning, policy development, public relations, project management, and leading teams through organizational change.

Chris brings renewed energy to LDAO. He will be an effective spokesperson for learning disabilities issues and initiatives in Ontario. The Board of Directors and staff of LDAO welcome Chris as he undertakes this significant leadership role.

## Message from the Chief Executive Officer

By Christopher Carew

**S**ince 1963, LDAO has continued to provide support to families, individuals and professionals, living with a learning disability. The ongoing encouragement received from our membership serves to strengthen our passion to achieve greater outcomes; that of creating programs and services to truly meet the changing needs of our learning disability community.

Today, LDAO has become Ontario's largest not-for-profit charitable organization for individuals living with a learning disability. Together, through our affiliation with our national partner, The Learning Disabilities Association of Canada, and our 21 provincial chapters, we continue to work to advance the full participation of people with learning disabilities in today's society.

As the new Chief Executive Officer, I am excited about the opportunity to lead such a responsive organization determined to meet these needs. Looking forward, it is our desire to strengthen the

development of Canadian-based research, become the leading voice in the field of special education, and to work towards engaging decision makers on public policy issues, all of which will positively impact the learning disabilities community.

Please support us as we look to the future – together we can build a powerful voice for children, youth and adults with learning disabilities in Ontario.

We believe that everyone can be successful!



Chief Executive Officer Christopher Carew

# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

By Ruth Taber

For many, this time of year brings an opportunity for reflection and renewal. As individuals, we may identify areas for personal growth or much-needed change. For the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario these past few months have meant careful evaluation of our practices and a critical shift in how our organization functions. We know that we have our work cut out for us.

Under the capable leadership of recently-appointed Chief Executive Officer Chris Carew, we have undertaken a number of significant changes. Our priorities include the need to strengthen the board's governance role and to create the capacity for sustainable growth. We have committed to working more closely with our partners across the province and to communicating more clearly and consistently with our stakeholders. We have undertaken measures to ensure the organization's viability and its ability to maintain a leadership role in the community.

As you read this issue of *Communiqué*, you will see the beginnings of its renewal as a publication. A change in name, appearance, and content are indications of a renewal process that speaks to our commitment to reach a wider audience. By providing relevant information about innovative research, changes in government policy, and accessible resources we hope to help develop a better understanding of learning disabilities among pro-



LDAO Chair Ruth Taber

professionals and other stakeholders while continuing to offer beneficial resources for clients and their families. We invite you to communicate your knowledge, experiences, and expertise about LD with a colleague, friend, or neighbour. Share your copy of *Communiqué* or direct someone to our web site. Also, please provide us with your ideas and feedback so that we can improve our communication with you.

On behalf of all of us at LDAO, I wish you the very best for the coming year.

## Assistive Technology: Building a Community Resource

### *Enhancing Accessibility to Research and Assistive Technology for the Learning Disabilities Community*

The Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (LDAO) is pleased to announce the launch of an exciting new two-year project entitled *Assistive Technology: Building a Community Resource*. Sponsored by the Ontario Trillium Foundation, this project will focus on ensuring availability of the latest information and research to parents, teachers and individuals in the learning disabilities (LD) community. A critical element of this project will also focus on the use of technology to aide knowledge transfer in the LD field and for those living with LD.

The first outcome for this initiative, to be launched in early 2006, is to increase the availability of and access to the most current information and research for community stakeholders. Traditionally, LDAO's method of distributing information has been through our 21 provincial resource centres. Through the generous grant from the Ontario

Trillium Foundation, LDAO chapters will now have online access to a number of leading journals in the LD field.

The second outcome is to equip our province-wide network of LD resource sites with the necessary hardware and software available for using assistive technology (AT). These sites will then be able to offer access to and training in AT. Stakeholders will be able to experience the benefits available through AT options that will provide support to a learner's academic achievements and enhance life skills.

Our informed staff and volunteers will also be able to partner with local school boards to train teachers and support staff in the use of AT, leaving educators more time to teach their students.

# LD AWARENESS MONTH Moves to October

**T**he Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (LDAC) Board of Directors recently voted to move celebrations of LD Awareness Month from March to October effective this year.

As this is a new beginning, the LDAC theme for 2005 was Back to Basics with a focus on how to develop and implement LD Awareness Month activities. LD Awareness Month materials were posted and made available only at [www.ldac-taac.ca](http://www.ldac-taac.ca). Provincial/territorial LDAs, chapters and other agencies (hospitals, schools, government, employment agencies, etc.) wishing to download and use the materials throughout the fall and winter will be able to do so at their convenience.

According to LDAC's web site, several factors influenced the decision to relocate LD Awareness Month from March to October. These included the availability of a solid volunteer base during a month when March break interfered with planning, especially with school closures and questionable weather.

"October was decided upon for several reasons. It is the beginning of a new school year when principals and teachers are more open to include awareness activities in the schools. Provincial and territorial LDAs, are planning for fundraising activities and the publicity generated during October is a good introduction to the Association. Also, it is now aligned with the USA – who celebrate LD Awareness month in October," the web site states.

For more information, visit LDAC's web site at: <http://www.ldac-taac.ca/ldao>

## ACCESS.LDAO.CA Is Just a Click Away

**T**he ACCESS family of websites is a forum intended for use by LDAO clients across the province. There are four main sites that link from the ACCESS site Portal page ([www.access.ldao.ca](http://www.access.ldao.ca)). They are as follows:

### ACCESS Youth

([www.access.youth.ldao.ca](http://www.access.youth.ldao.ca))

- Launching in January 2006, this site is dedicated to providing resources and materials related to LD from a youth perspective. Though the site is geared toward youth it is also open to members of the public wishing to gain an understanding of LD and youth issues. It is projected that this site will also function as an assistive aid for professionals (particularly teachers) in their practice.

### ACCESS Community ([www.access.community.ldao.ca](http://www.access.community.ldao.ca))

- This Bulletin Board platform was launched in September 2005. The purpose is to encourage individuals to discuss issues related to LDs that may be affecting them, their families, their classroom or other professional practice. Knowledge transfer and camaraderie that will occur within this community forum will facilitate LD awareness and peer mentoring.

### ACCESS Learning ([www.access.learning.ldao.ca](http://www.access.learning.ldao.ca))

- This Courseware platform was launched in March 2003. The LDAO Learning Forum is a platform that allows LDAO to run structured courses and workshops online. The site currently delivers training for 1000 + Ontario educators through the Web Based Teaching Tool. Course participants enter the site via a unique User ID and password through which they have access to course content. Bulletin boards allow participants to communicate with classmates, the course moderator, and/or special "expert" visitors. The site is also used to deliver professional development courses and advocacy workshops for parents and adults. A new series of youth workshops will be launched in January 2006.

### ACCESS Resources ([www.access.resources.ldao.ca](http://www.access.resources.ldao.ca))

- This resource-based website was launched in January 2002 as LDAO's Virtual Service (VS) website. Since then, we have renamed the site to come in line with the ACCESS family of websites. The ACCESS resources site makes information specifically related to LD--including: websites, articles, book reviews and programs and services--available to people and communities previously without access to them. LDAO members and the general public, whether living in or outside of Ontario, currently use the ACCESS Resources website. A special restricted "Chapters" section provides all LDAO chapters with immediate access to the latest information, resources, and direction from LDAO.

For more information, please visit the ACCESS web site.

# LDAO Announces Winter Workshop Line Up

Another season of learning opportunities is offered by LDAO with the announcement of its free online winter workshops, beginning January 6, 2006.

## **Professional Workshop Series**

### **Part One: An Overview of Learning Disabilities**

This workshop, the first segment of a three-part series, is self-paced to meet the needs and time commitments of busy professionals. Learning outcomes will be met through exploration of the content provided, additional references and case studies. Topics include:

- Unit One: An Overview of Learning Disabilities
- Unit Two: Working with Students with Learning Disabilities
- Unit Three: Reflective Activities

## **Parent Workshop Series: Setting your Child Up for Success**

**Part One: If Your Child is Struggling** also kicks off this winter. It approaches the subject of LD, and the challenges parents experience in a skilled and sensitive manner that respects the unique challenges each parent struggles with, as they come to terms with their child's disability.

At some point during the course of their education, most children will encounter bumps and barriers. Whether it is trouble understanding a new concept in math, following a new teacher's explanations, or even being able to meet new friends and socialize, the question on most parents' minds is 'How do I know if my child has a serious problem, or if s/he is just going through a phase?'

There are some initial things a parent can do to try and pinpoint the source of the problem. This workshop will provide participants with a basic understanding of special education in Ontario and offer some ideas on the initial steps parents can take to find assistance for their child.

Too often, the LD label emphasizes what an individual cannot do. Human beings are remarkably adaptive, however, and the next two workshops shed light on how individuals can learn, and how they prefer to do it.

## **Adult Workshop Series**

### **Part One: Introduction to Learning Styles for Adults**

This online workshop has been created to provide an introduction to the concept of learning styles. Learners will have the opportunity to explore preferred learning styles and identify some effective learning strategies to help improve the learning process in all environments. To date, there is no one definitive approach to learning styles so it is important to realize this workshop is meant as a foundation course that provides an overview of the subject. Use this workshop as a starting point to explore the various theories. Some units will include recommended reading to delve deeper into the concepts and theories associated with learning styles.

## **Youth Workshop Series**

### **Part One: Introduction to Learning Styles for Youth**

Different people learn differently: that's a fact. Knowing how YOU learn and what style works best provides a great starting place from which to approach education - outside or inside of school.

This course will offer a chance to explore your learning style in a general way. There are many approaches to this topic, and different theories explain learning styles in various ways. The approach here is broad, and we believe this "big picture view" is a good place to start exploring how you learn. We'll share some links and resources, too, so that if you want to take it a step further, you have some idea of where to go.

To register for any online workshop please contact us at [courses@ldao.ca](mailto:courses@ldao.ca) or visit our website at [www.ldao.ca](http://www.ldao.ca) and select the "Courses and Workshops" link. **ldao**

# Dr. Ben Levin Addresses Education Challenges in Ontario at LDAO's Annual General Meeting



Dr. Ben Levin

**O**n September 24, LDAO welcomed Ontario Deputy Minister of Education Dr. Ben Levin as luncheon speaker at its Annual General Meeting

Dr. Levin has a long history in politics, having served in both the Ontario and Manitoba governments. He is well-known for his work in educational reform, educational policy and politics and his work has taken him to England, Iceland, Europe and Israel. A native of Winnipeg, he obtained a Ph.D from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. In 2003 he was the recipient of the Whitworth Award for achievement in educational research from the Canadian Education Association, and in 2004 he was awarded the Lieutenant-Governor's Medal for Public Administration in Manitoba.

Below are some highlights from his presentation, Education Challenges in Ontario, which outline provincial directions in education.

During his speech, Dr. Levin said he was lured back to Ontario's political sphere by the current political and educational climate in the province. He said the provincial government's current agenda for educational reform included three areas of focus:

- Increase student outcomes
- Decrease achievement gaps and inequities and
- Improve public confidence

Noting that student outcomes were "more than just test scores," Dr. Levin proceeded to outline some of the realities in Ontario's classrooms and Ministry achievements in some of these areas. In 2002, only 55 per cent of Ontario's elementary students had reached provincial standards of academic achievement by age 12. The Ministry aims to increase those levels to 75 per cent by 2008.

However, Ontario also has one of the lowest high school graduation levels in the country, with only 60 per cent of all these students passing through and meeting provincial standards. The Ministry intends to increase the number of graduates to 70 per cent over the next five years.

Dr. Levin also outlined other proposed actions his government would undertake, including: limiting class size to 20 students, creating an induction program for new teachers—in Ontario, training for new teachers is among the shortest in the country—which would include extra professional development and mentoring. In

addition, The Ministry of Education's Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat will work with school boards to share best practices, extend the knowledge base of the profession and engage parents, business and other stakeholders to support student achievement goals.

On the subject of Special Education, Dr. Levin said, that this was a "very tough policy area," and "nobody does this right." But the government has or will implement several actions, including replacing Intensive Support Amounts (ISA) 2 and 3 funding models, increasing teacher and school capacity as well as focusing on outcomes for students, rather than inputs and process. Furthermore, he stated the government intended to improve provincial school capacity to meet the needs of diverse learners and increase scrutiny of existing practices in school boards across the province. He added that while more research was required to learn about and share effective practices among stakeholders, the Report of the Expert Panel on Literacy and Numeracy Instruction for Students with Special Education Needs was an important part of moving this agenda forward.

Dr. Levin acknowledged his Ministry's agenda was ambitious indeed, and that more pressure and support was needed in order to see the Ministry's goals realized. He also accepted the fact that the Ministry was asking stakeholders to "do things in new ways" and that "capacity-building takes time."

Dr. Levin concluded by saying that by working together noticeable progress would be made over time.

**Post Script:** On October 12, The Ontario Liberals delivered their Throne Speech and included a promise to lower the 30 per cent high school drop out rate. Part of this will be addressed by new legislation, which will ensure students keep learning until age 18, instead of dropping school at 16. Alternative high school diplomas are also part of this plan. An extra \$6.2 billion over five years has also been pledged to bolster postsecondary education in Ontario. It will truly be interesting to see how the Liberals, who currently run neck-and-neck with the Conservatives in popularity, and are mid-way through their governance, fare with these ambitious promises and especially, how they impact on students with learning disabilities. *ldao*



# PUBLIC POLICY ROUNDUP

DAO has been extremely busy with matters relating to public policy in recent months, and has issued position papers that are directly relevant to LDAO and its stakeholders. Some key issues have been gathered here for your interest.

The Ontario Ministry of Education recently released a landmark report, *Education For All: The Report of the Expert Panel on Literacy and Numeracy Instruction for Students with Special Education Needs, Kindergarten to Grade 6*. It is available for viewing at: [www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/reports/speced/panel/index.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/reports/speced/panel/index.html)

The following beliefs sum up the guiding principles and key themes of this report:

- All students can succeed.
- Universal design and differentiated instruction are effective and interconnected means of meeting the learning or productivity needs of any group of students.
- Successful instructional practices are founded on evidence-based research, tempered by experience.
- Classroom teachers are the key for a student's literacy and numeracy development.
- Each child has his or her own unique patterns of learning.
- The classroom teacher needs the support of the larger community to create a learning environment that supports students with special needs.
- Fairness is not sameness.

On **August 23, 2005** a memo to the Directors of Education from The Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE) was sent to alert school boards about available funding for professional development in special education. The purpose of this funding is to support the learning of students with special education needs and to meet the goals of the Ontario government, including those outlined in Education for All. Boards could apply to CODE for funding for initiatives that reflect the Expert Panel beliefs and are aligned with Ministry policy.

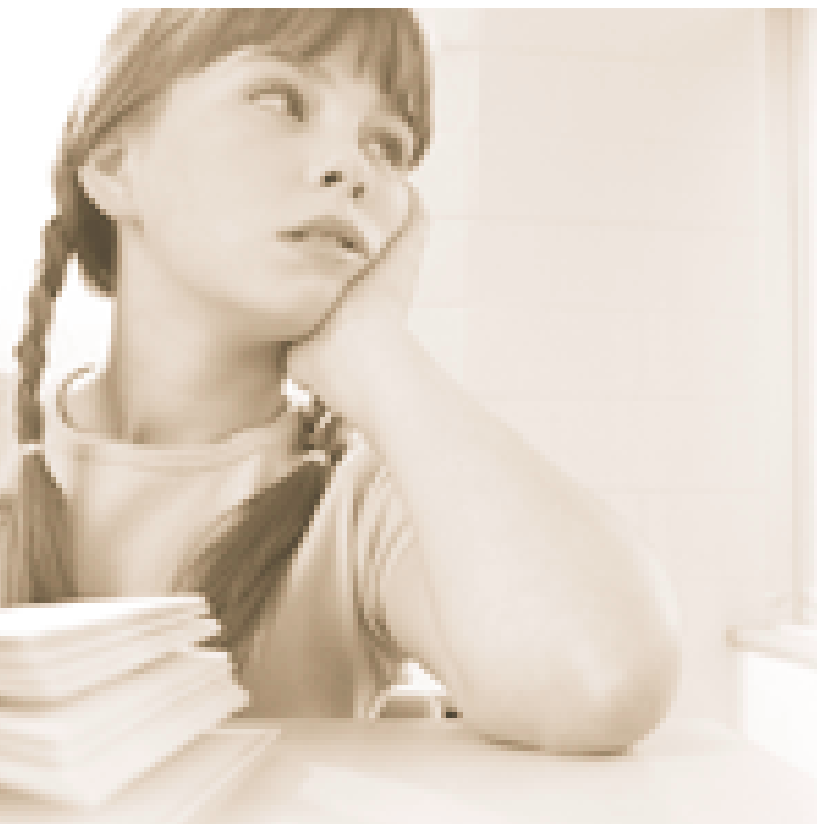
The *Web Based Teaching Tool* (WBTT) is an Ontario Ministry of Education-funded initiative and supports many of the beliefs outlined in the *Education for All* document. In addition, WBTT encompasses many of the eligible areas of focus including early identification and intervention, instructional strategies, curriculum-based assessment, Universal Design, differentiated instruction, professional learning communities, and web-based instruction for teachers.

On **August 22, 2005**, a letter from LDAO was sent to MPP Deb Matthews, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services, in response to the *Review of Employment Assistance Programs in Ontario Works (OW) and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP)*. Ontario Works replaced the old welfare system and introduced mandatory work requirements—with the exception of seniors, persons with disabilities and young single mothers-- for those receiving general welfare assistance. The ODSP program was introduced around the same time, and offers employment and income supports to persons with disabilities in order to facilitate independence.

Although the exact figure is difficult to pinpoint, a large number of OW recipients have LDs. The Review included recommendations for job readiness assessments, and LDAO stated that such assessments should include screening for potential LDs, and referrals for psychoeducational/vocational assessment for those requiring an understanding of their strengths and weaknesses and needing further goal setting. LDAO also advocated that employment preparation programs and post-employment supports, such as job coaches, be made available for OW clients in addition to those on ODSP.

LDAO supported the report's recommendation to offer intensive case management to front line staff, and noted that some of the

*Continued on page 10*



# PUBLIC POLICY ROUNDUP

Continued from page 9

chapters at local levels were already providing customer service training to assist these workers to recognize and properly service their communities. Furthermore, LDAO offered to organize this service provincially, and asked to be included in any further consultations

On **August 1, 2005**, a letter from LDAO was sent to MPP Kathleen Wynne, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Education, as a follow-up to the Adult Education consultations and subsequent report, **Ontario Learns: Strengthening Our Adult Education System**. While LDAO commended the thrust of the Review, and its concept of learner pathways, it took exception to the statement that “not enough is known about how to assess adults for learning disabilities”. LDAO noted that, while access to diagnostic assessments still poses a challenge to adults, several good screening tools have been developed in recent years in the adult education field, and those may give some direction to teaching

approaches when diagnostic assessment is not available. Appropriate goal setting, which fits the learner’s strengths and weaknesses, was noted as a critical success factor for adults with LD.

*Ontario Learns* reported that there is “not sufficient expertise to address LD if identified”. LDAO contends that the expertise does exist, but there needs to be more professional development to enable literacy practitioners to individualize their teaching approaches, based on the learners’ strengths and weaknesses. Some learners, however, will require a more intensive approach offered by instructors with higher levels of training. Furthermore, technology supports and computer-based instruction could enhance the learning experience for many adult students with LDs, but this too will require training for learners and practitioners in the use of such technologies.

Complete copies of the LDAO responses to the two reports can be viewed on the LDAO website Home Page ([www.ldao.ca](http://www.ldao.ca)) *ldao*

## ALDER ANNOUNCES

### New Book on Employment and LD

**T**oronto-based agency Adult Learning Disabilities Employment Resources (ALDER) is pleased to announce the publication of a book on employing people with learning disabilities.

Released in December 2005, *Benchmarking: A Guide to Hiring and Managing Persons with Learning Disabilities* is directed at employers wishing to expand their diversity initiatives by working with people with LD and ADHD.

The 125-page book covers topics such as Disclosure, Accommodations, Recruiting Strategies, Assessments, Mentoring and Human Rights. In addition, chapters provide overviews on LD and its impact on the job. The book also offers an introduction to the employee with ADHD and how to accommodate this community as well.

The book includes several features and useful tools that include an LD Checklist, cultural perspectives on learning disabilities and an introduction to the concept of workplace literacy.

Written by psychologist Dr. J. Douglas Salmon Jr., York University’s Jayne-Greene Black, ALDER’s Glenda Mascarenhas and Carter Hammett, with contributions from consultant Pat Hatt and writer Gladys Wong, *Benchmarking* is a valuable addition for any employer’s bookshelf.

ALDER is a multi-service, client-centred, non-profit agency that provides supportive employment services that includes career counseling and job placement to working-aged youth and adults with LD and ADHD.

For more information, contact ALDER at **416.693.2922** or write, [ld@aldercentre.org](mailto:ld@aldercentre.org) *ldao*



# THORNHILL YOUTH BEATS THE ODDS

**D**aniel Feldberg, of Thornhill, is the 2005 Ontario recipient of the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada Beat The Odds award, given to a young person with LDs who has made an outstanding contribution to their community and/or beaten the odds in personal or academic areas.

Daniel has done both, managing to achieve an overall average above 80 per cent while participating in leadership roles in school activities and community sports. He was a peer mentor in a Learning Strategies course and initiated a Self-Advocacy club at his high school for special needs students.

We wish Daniel continued success in his program at the University of Western Ontario. *Idao*



Here, Daniel is presented his award by Randolph Sealy, Chair of the LDAO's Adult Advocacy Committee.



**MICROCOMPUTER**  
Science Centre Inc.



**Kurzweil Educational Systems**

**Kurzweil 3000 Read Scan Software for the PC and Mac**  
Now available in Version 8

Kurzweil 3000 is the premier reading, writing and learning software solution for struggling students. It is widely recognized as the most comprehensive and most powerful solution for addressing language and literacy difficulties.

The software uses a multi-sensory approach – presenting printed or electronic text on the computer screen with audio, visual and tactile accessibility. The product incorporates a host of dynamic features including powerful sounding study skills, writing and test-taking tools – designed to adapt to each individual's learning style and to maximize foundation for both the learner and educator.



## Adaptive Technology Solutions for Struggling Learners Also Available



**NaturalSpelling 7**  
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# Individual Education Plans: A Lesson in Partnership

By Diane Wagner and Carter Hammett

**E**very student in the publicly-funded school system who receives special education services must have an Individual Education Program (IEP). Each IEP is a truly *individualized* document because it is designed for that student, and that student alone. The IEP process creates an opportunity for teachers, parents, school administrators, related services personnel, and students (when appropriate) to work together to increase the chances of academic success. The IEP can be a testament of quality education for students with special education needs, including LDs.



To create an effective IEP, parents, teachers, and often the student, must come together to look closely at the learner's unique needs. They pool knowledge, experience and commitment to design an educational program that will help the student take ownership of and succeed in their curriculum. The IEP guides the delivery of special education supports and services for the student with special education needs. Without a doubt, writing--and implementing--an effective IEP is an exercise in constructive collaboration!

According to the Ontario Ministry of Education, an IEP is "a written plan describing the special education program and/or services required by a particular student, based on a thorough assessment of the student's strengths and needs."

It is important to distinguish what an IEP is not. The document *is not* a description of everything that will be taught to a student, a daily lesson plan or a document that records all learning expectations.

IEPs may be prepared without the prerequisite of an Identification Placement and Review Committee (IPRC), but the written decision of the IPRC is the only guarantee that a student will be entitled to services he or she requires.

Once the IPRC has made its statement of decision, the principal is notified and becomes responsible for ensuring the IEP is prepared and implemented.

Information gathering for the IEP should include a review of the student's records (e.g. IPRC statements of decision and recommendations), relevant assessment data, consultations with school personnel and other professionals, and any information gained through observation of the student. Consultations with parents and students are an important part of the process.

The Ministry recommends a collaborative team approach, where information on a student's strengths and needs can be shared, and plans can be made on teaching strategies, accommodations, technology supports, and assessment techniques. Parents and students should be part of the IEP team. Parents and students 16 and over, must be consulted on the development of the IEP, and sign a form to affirm they were consulted in the development process.

The principal must see that the IEP is complete, that copies are sent to the parents and student (if 16 or older), and that all relevant school personnel are aware of the IEP's content. The principal is responsible for ensuring that the IEP is implemented. However, parents also need to check that all teachers are aware of and understand the contents of the IEP. Parents and students should collaborate with teachers to make sure the provisions are implemented. If students themselves understand and accept the IEP provisions, this can go a long way toward successful implementation.

The IEP must be reviewed and learning expectations updated at least once in every reporting period (i.e. each term where there is a report card). According to The IEP Resource Guide (2004), "If certain strategies cease to be effective, it is imperative that the staff working with the student seek out and implement new teaching methods and accommodations". Once again, parents and students are to be consulted if there are significant

changes to the student's learning expectations or accommodations.

In 2000 the Ministry of Education issued standards for Development, Program Planning and Implementation of IEPs. Between 2001 and 2003, the Ministry conducted reviews of IEPs prepared by school boards across Ontario. On the basis of information gathered through these reviews, and consultations with educators and parents, a revised IEP Resource Guide was published in 2004. The complete guide can be found at: [www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elementary/sec/speced/guide/resource/index.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elementary/sec/speced/guide/resource/index.html) ldao

## At a Glance:

**If students themselves understand and accept the IEP provisions, this can go a long way toward successful implementation.**



- *Every special education student in the publicly-funded school system needs to have an Individual Education Plan (IEP). IEPs are working documents that are created by school boards, parents and often students to increase chances of academic success.*
- *IEPs may be prepared without the prerequisite of an Identification Placement and Review Committee (IPRC), but the written decision of the IPRC is the only guarantee that a student will be entitled to services he or she requires.*
- *Parents and students 16 and over, must be consulted on the development of the IEP, and sign a form to affirm they were consulted in the development process*
- *Parents and students should collaborate with teachers to make sure the provisions are implemented. If students themselves understand and accept the IEP provisions, this can go a long way toward successful implementation.*

# Keeping Peer Pressure Positive

By Andrea Craig, BA, B. Ed.

**W**hen most of us hear the term “peer pressure” we think of it in negative terms. For both parents and educators, the words conjure images of poor school attendance and illegal activities such as shoplifting, vandalism, and the use of alcohol and illegal drugs. However, not all peer influences your teen encounters will be negative ones. Parents should learn to identify and promote positive peer interactions, and actively discourage negative ones.

As children begin to move into adolescence, it becomes increasingly evident that parents have less effect on them. Even in close families, teens become less connected with parents and more dependent on their friends. As teens begin to shift their relationship focus away from the family and live for social time, their peer relationships become the most important component of their lives. Adolescents are at a point when they are questioning adult authority and turning to their peers for acceptance and validation. This can be a very scary thing for a parent to face, but it is important for parents to recognize that peers have the potential to be an extremely positive influence in a teen’s life.

Peer groups give teens affection, attention, understanding and self-worth. These groups are a place for teens to learn about themselves and understand who they are, independent of parents and siblings. Teens deeply feel the need for a peer group that they can identify with as currently experiencing the same emotional, social and developmental issues as they are.

According to Russell Barkley (AD/HD in Children and Adolescence. April, 2005), parents are merely shepherds leading their children. We can lead them throughout their lives into positive situations, give them the tools to make wise decisions, and teach them values and morals; but realistically, during adolescence, peers

have the strongest influence. Ideally, parents should embrace positive peer influences and take advantage of them. Parents can choose communities, situations, and schools where their children are surrounded by positive role models and involved in positive groups or sports, thus increasing a teen’s chances of positive peer group interaction. Peer relationships can be responsible for many positive outcomes such as continued attendance at youth groups, 4-H clubs, sports, and church groups. Peers can actually reinforce family values and keep high standards for each other, as they often will not accept certain behaviours within the group. As a parent, your teen’s friends are your best possible allies.

## **What Can Parents Do?**

**Have an Open Door Policy.** Be there for your teen when they want to talk. If they know that you will be open-minded and willing to listen, they will be more likely to come to you. Teens often see their parents as emotionally unavailable, uninterested, or liable to nag them. Reinforce the idea that you want to support your teen and be their parent as well as a friend.

## **Abandon the Idea that all Peer Pressure is Negative.**

Positive peer pressure can work to your advantage and should be encouraged. However, some peer groups may have a negative influence, so parents must discourage these particular relationships

and encourage a teenager’s involvement in extra-curricular and other positive activities.

Whenever possible, allow your teen input into decisions that you make regarding their rules and limits. If a teen feels personally connected with the rules, they will take more responsibility for following them.



### **Encourage the Growth of Your Teenager's Talents and Abilities.**

This will aid in improved self-esteem. Your teen's feelings of self-worth are directly related to the activities and the friends they choose. To feel good about themselves, teens need to feel like they are a valued and an important person. You can take advantage of community groups, coaches, church, school, etc for help in this area.

### **Encourage Positive Ties Within the Community**

This includes such activities as volunteer work. The more constructive situations that youth are involved in, the more self worth they will have. This is a pre-determining factor of the friends and the choices they make.

### **Keep Learning**

Become involved in parent education programs or support groups that will help you understand your teen's motivations and behaviour. Adolescence is a difficult time and there is no reason to experience it without support from your community. Make an effort to learn about the things your teen cares about. Showing interest in that new skateboard, friend's lives or that

cool new music group may just create a bridge between you and your child.

### **Be Proactive.**

Think about all of these complex issues before your child reaches adolescence. Be prepared for the changes they are about to face and be willing to support them. Above all, show them your love.

High school and adolescence can be a very stressful time and peer pressure is just one of the many factors that will surface. Remember that during this life change your teen will need constant support and understanding, from you as well as a social circle of friends and community. As peers play a very important role in your teen's life, take the necessary steps to educate yourself and ensure that your teen's peers remain supportive and positive influences.

### **References:**

Barkley, Russell. *AD/HD in Children and Adolescence: Nature, Diagnosis, and Management*. 2005

Lingren, Herbert G. Adolescence and Peer Pressure. <http://ianrpubs.unl.edu/family/nf211.htm> ldao

## **At a Glance:**

**Many parents tend to think of "peer pressure" as a negative thing**



- *Many parents tend to think of "peer pressure" as a negative thing, but parents can learn to identify both positive and negative peer interactions and promote positive relationships in their teens.*
- *Relationships with peers are most important for a teen because they turn to each other for acceptance and validation, but parents can still have a positive influence during this period.*
- *Writer Russell Barkley suggests that parents can embrace positive peer influences and take advantage of them by choosing communities, situations, and schools where their teens are surrounded by positive role models and involved in positive communities.*
- *Parents can remain a positive influence on their teen using several methods that include: continuing to learn, being prepared for changes, encouraging positive activities such as volunteer work and being available to speak with them.*
- *The teenage years are a time of change and parents should offer constant support and encourage a positive support circle.*



# THE CHILD ADVOCACY PROJECT

**T**he Child Advocacy Project (CAP) is a free legal service dedicated to protecting and enhancing the legal rights of children and youth across Ontario. CAP lawyers:

- Assist students who are involved in the Special Education Process
- Children and youth who are at risk of being suspended or expelled
- Young people who are living independently

CAP lawyers provide summary advice, advocacy, mediation and full representation for children and youth in IPRC meetings, and appeals before the Special Education Appeal Board and the Special Education Tribunal. They offer support with suspension and expulsion hearings, appeals and in test case litigation related to everyone's constitutional right to education.

CAP is a registered project of Pro-Bono Law Ontario and is conducted in partnership with the legal aid clinic, Justice for Children and Youth, and Ontario's largest law association, The Advocates' Society. The volunteer lawyers who take CAP cases are all experienced and trained in the field of Education Law.

CAP assists youth and families who cannot afford a lawyer. Each family is assessed on a case-by-case basis. While CAP lawyers

work for free, clients will need to pay for administrative or disbursement fees.

At the first meeting, the CAP lawyer will discuss the extent of their involvement in your case. CAP lawyers can accompany a child to an IPRC hearing and communicate with school boards. As a province-wide program, CAP will try to locate lawyers in local communities who can work with your case.

Since its inception two years ago, CAP lawyers have helped over 90 children and their families. It has been a valued resource for low-to-modest income families who want to ensure their children are receiving the level of educational support that is guaranteed to them by law.

Pro Bono Law Ontario is a non-profit organization that coordinates the volunteer efforts of lawyers from the private bar. For more information, contact Pro Bono Law Ontario at 416.977.4448, ext. 226. Or call, toll-free 866.7256. E-Mail: [CAP@probononet.on.ca](mailto:CAP@probononet.on.ca)







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# LEARNING For Its Own Sake

By Carter Hammett

**W**ay back in the 15th century, an astronomer named Copernicus, who was schooled in the humanities, turned the universe inside out by daring to assert the earth revolved on its own axis. In ancient Athens, works by artists, musicians and architects triggered critical responses in the masses, causing them to reflect on their social organization, and in turn, create something called democracy.

Indeed, this is a far cry from the value education holds in North American societies today. Market-driven, continuing adult education is seen primarily as a speedy vehicle to a career in a fickle economy that's based on over-consumption. Learning for its own


sake, and humanities courses that provide a foundation for critical thinking, appears to have virtually disappeared.

That's one of the messages of the Workers' Education Association (WEA), which recently unveiled a new adult education program called "University in the Community" (UIC) in partnership with the University of Toronto's Woodsworth College and the Davenport-Perth Neighbourhood Centre. Twice-weekly, 20 students attend two non-credit, university-level humanities courses within a community-based setting.

These free courses are meant to be accessible to stakeholders such as single mothers, youth-at-risk, new Canadians and others desiring university-level education, but for whatever reason, cannot enroll.

WEA board member Anne McDonagh describes the program as "deliberately not training".

"Adult education in Canada is associated with training or getting a degree to get a job," she says. "It's very fragmented here. The idea



*Anne McDonagh, left, editor of Learning Curves, at a ceremony earlier this year where she won the University of Toronto's prestigious Arbour Award for her work with University in the Community.*

of civic education and humanities courses doesn't even arise. Here, education is all about individualism, the-what's-in-it-for-me factor, and getting it as fast as possible."

Unlike most adult learning programs, UIC offers courses for knowledge alone says WEA president Wendy Terry.

"Humanities courses are geared to people with big questions, such as, 'what is the meaning of life?'" she says. "Courses like literature, art history, religion and philosophy provide answers to some of those questions, and provides the opportunity to form learning communities."

UIC is modeled on the Clemente Course in the Humanities begun in the United States in 1994, and now offered in 32 sites across North America. Founder Earl Shorris, in an essay called 'In Defense of Practical Education,' compared training without an education in the humanities, to a building without a foundation. He argued that the humanities pushed mathematicians, scientists and physicians to think beyond the limits of routine learning into new modes of thought, which in turn changed nations.

While the goals of UIC may not be as lofty as that, several participants have been inspired to further their education by enrolling in university full-time, says Terry. "If people show potential, sometimes teachers will enroll them in the bridging program at Woodsworth," she says. To participate in the program, learners must be over 18 and be able to read and understand a newspaper in order to participate in the program. Classes, which are limited to 20 students fill up quickly, and priority is given to learners who have already taken previous classes says McDonagh.

University in the Community is one of two projects conducted by the Workers Education Association. The volunteer-run group also publishes an adult education newspaper called *Learning Curves* eight times a year, which serves as a platform to notify students about the political and pragmatic impact of Adult Education. The paper took a sharp look at spending cuts in continuing education by the Harris government, and reported on the recent Liberal review of postsecondary learning in Ontario. The paper also contains practical career and training advice, and is distributed to over 500 commercial, postsecondary and employment outlets throughout the GTA.

The WEA is part of an international community of associations, originally founded in Britain in 1906. Originally designed to educate unionized workers, WEAs today offer community-based, informally-run, liberal arts courses in dozens of countries throughout Europe, Asia and Africa. For its first 70 years in Canada, WEA continued this vein, but in the 1960s this role was handed over to community colleges, which put a focus on training. The Canadian WEA re-invented itself as a referral service for adult learning from 1985-1997 and then again with the publication of *Learning Curves* in 1998.

"These projects make the invisible, visible," says Terry. "Take a disparate group of learners like we have, and you create a learning community. It's a tangible expression of learning."

To learn more about the Workers Education Association phone, (416) 923-7872 or email, [learningcurves@hotmail.com](mailto:learningcurves@hotmail.com) or visit the WEA web site at [www.weacanada.ca](http://www.weacanada.ca) ldao

## At a Glance:

**"University in the Community," offers free, non-credit, university-level courses in Toronto.**



- *The Workers Education Association (WEA) of Canada recently launched a new program called "University in the Community," which offers free, non-credit, university-level courses in Toronto community-based settings.*
- *These courses are in the Humanities (including, art history, music, literature, etc.) and are offered to people who do not have regular access to education, such as people with disabilities, single mothers and new Canadians. Humanities courses help people think about big questions, such as "What is the meaning of life"?*
- *There are two different courses offered every semester, which is ten weeks long. These courses are designed for people who enjoy learning for its own sake. They are not training programs.*
- *WEA Canada also publishes a free adult education newspaper called Learning Curves, which is available throughout the GTA.*

# NEWS From Around the Province...

## Peterborough

### LDA Peterborough Awarded Showcase Ontario 2005 Volunteer Sector IT Merit Award of Excellence

On September 20, The Learning Disabilities Association of Peterborough's (LDAP) "Computers for Literacy Development Program" was recognized as a Merit Award winner in the Information Technology Association of Canada (ITAC) Voluntary Sector category for the 2005 Showcase Ontario Awards of Excellence.

The awards recognize and acknowledge the excellent work organizations are doing with information technology (IT) to improve accessibility, effectiveness and outreach. The awards are part of the Partnership Platform initiative, a project of the Information Technology Association of Canada for Ontario (ITAC Ontario), the Coalition of Ontario Voluntary Organizations, and On Target, which seeks to bring IT solutions to non-profits through cross-sector partnerships.

The Showcase Ontario Award was presented to LDAP at Toronto's Metro Convention Centre, during a special recognition ceremony at Showcase Ontario, a forum where expertise for all sectors is shared, engaging the public, private and voluntary sectors in achieving the goal of optimizing the delivery of IT services. For more information please visit [www.showcaseontario.com](http://www.showcaseontario.com)

LDAP's "Computers for Literacy Development Program" provides assistive technology opportunities to students experiencing reading and writing difficulties and promotes the possibilities of using technology as a tool to help students with learning disabilities. Using this computer-tutoring program, volunteer tutors assist students with developing learning strategies through the utilization of specialized adaptive computer technology. Students work on study skills, phonemic awareness, reading and creative writing. Individual program plans are created to work with students based on their individual needs, goals and learning style.

Volunteer tutors consist of student teachers, educational assistants and early childhood education students attending college or university, that are looking for hands-on practical experience working with children to enhance their own knowledge of educational assistive technology as well as teaching those with LD.



## Lambton County (Sarnia area)

### LD Guru Richard Lavoie Speaks in Sarnia

The Learning Disabilities Association of Lambton County presented an evening with award-winning LD consultant and renowned speaker, Richard Lavoie, November 15.

The topic of Mr. Lavoie's presentation was "On the Waterbed: The Impact of LD on the Family". His presentation covered several concerns, including parental acceptance of learning problems, effective communication strategies with children, conducting meaningful parent/teacher conferences, initiation of a "work ethic" in the classroom, dealing with conflict, teaching the "hidden curriculum" of social skills and other subjects of import to parents with LD children.

Mr. Lavoie's philosophy indicates that parents experience a wide variety of intense and conflicting emotions when endeavoring to deal with children who learn differently. Educators and parents should work together on these issues with a spirit of sensitivity, cooperation and common sense of purpose. In order to create such an environment, parents, educators and other professionals must gain an understanding of and sensitivity toward each other's life in order to effectively understand and help a child who struggles in school.

Richard Lavoie serves as a consultant on learning disabilities to several agencies and organizations including the Public Broadcasting Service, New York Times, National Centre for Learning Disabilities, Girl Scouts of America, Child Magazine and others. He is a member of the Professional Advisor Board of the Learning Disabilities Association of America.

His numerous television appearances include the *CBS Morning Show*, *Good Morning America*, *ABC Evening News* and *Disney Channel Presents*.

He is probably best known for his dynamic videos, *How Difficult Can This Be?*, *The F.A.T. City Workshop*, *Last One Picked*, *First One Picked On: The Social Implications of Learning Disabilities* and *When the Chips are Down*. His latest video is *Beyond F.A.T. City: A Look Back, A Look Ahead—A Conversation about Special*

*Education.* As a speaker, Lavoie has reached over 500,000 parents and professionals throughout North America.

**Editor's Note:** This workshop was presented as this issue of *Communiqué* was going to press. We intend to have more information available about this presentation in a future issue.

For more information contact The Learning Disabilities Association of Lambton County, phone: 519.541.9687 or email: [ldalc@xcelco.on.ca](mailto:ldalc@xcelco.on.ca)



**London**  
**ADHD Expert**  
**Dr. Gabor Maté**  
**Speaks in**  
**London**

The Learning Disabilities Association of London was honoured to present a session with Dr. Gabor Maté, who facilitated a seminar on

“Understanding ADD and Other Childhood Developmental Problems”, November 18.

This day-long event was divided into four sessions that addressed topics of import to parents, educators, psychiatrists, psychologists and pediatricians. Subjects included: The Origins of Developmental Disorders: A Bio-psycho-social View, Understanding the Behaviours of Troubled Children, The Peer Factor in Development and in Learning, and How to Promote Healthy Development in Children of All Ages.

Through his column with the *Globe and Mail*, his own practice, his best-selling books and popular seminars, Gabor Maté has demonstrated the intimate connection between the mind and body in illness and health.

His best-selling book *When the Body Says No*, has been published in eight languages on five continents, and explores the effects of stress on well-being--particularly of the hidden stresses we all generate from our early programming. Through his entertaining, yet rigorously argued- and defended presentations, he has sought to educate people about the connection between stress and diseases including diabetes, multiple sclerosis, arthritis, cancer, heart disease, and ALS, among others. Dr. Maté is also an expert in ADHD-three of his children have the condition. He has treated hundreds of adults and children with ADHD, giving countless seminars to parent groups, doctors, teachers, and other professionals.

Dr. Maté is also a physician and psychotherapist who is in great demand as a seminar leader. His revolutionary perspective and

dynamic presentation will empower those in attendance to promote healthy development, rather than just address symptoms. For more information, visit [www.drgabormate.com](http://www.drgabormate.com).

**Editor's Note:** This workshop was presented as *Communiqué* was going to press. We will have more on this presentation in a future issue.

**Windsor-Essex County**

At the annual Laubach Literacy conference June 18, 2005, Dr. Joe Casey and Rand Hodgkinson were acknowledged by the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (LDAC) for their work with literacy. Rand Hodgkinson received LDAC's National Leadership Award. Dr. Casey was recognized with LDAC's National Education Award.

Dr. Casey is certainly willing to present at conferences on learning disabilities. He can be reached at either 519-253-3000 ext. 2220 or [jecasey@uwindsor.ca](mailto:jecasey@uwindsor.ca)

The Learning Disabilities Association of Windsor-Essex County congratulates both Rand Hodgkinson and Dr. Casey on this outstanding achievement.



# THANK YOU

## to our Donors and Funders!

**G**rateful acknowledgment is offered to the following donors who have supported LDAO during the period January 1, 2005 to December 31, 2005. Your support helps us to provide a level playing field of opportunities and services for children, youth and adults with learning disabilities.

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### **LDAO Library Project**

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### **Annual Golf Tournament**

LDAO wishes to thank the Consulting Engineers of Ontario and their many company partners for their ongoing support. Since 1990 this group has had a fun day of golfing, a great lunch and auction, raising to October 2005 a total of \$142,730

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#### **In Memoriam**

##### *Erika Chesser*

In loving memory – The Pugliese Family, The Sparks Family, The Whitty Family, Kolawole Deru, The Eccleston Family, Bill Arvanitis, Fenia Ciccone, The Colantonio Family, C. Harold Bedford, Lisette & Sarah Cernitti, Jenny Tymczyszyn

##### *Michael Thompson*

In loving memory – George F. Golesic, The Esposito Family, The Gauthier Family, The Rouleau Family, The Ribout Family

## **Special Time-Limited Projects Acknowledgements**

#### **Virtual Services Partners – 2001 onward**

With start up funds from the Ministry of Citizenship, our virtual presence was launched in 1998. Additional support came from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. We thank them for their start up funds. We continue to solicit funds to support this communication vehicle and thank Microcomputer Science Centre Inc. for its sponsorship of what has now become the LDAO website.

#### **Job-Fit Project - 2004**

With funding from Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, LDAO re-wrote our LEAP manuals and this project is being used in the Destination Employment programs being offered by our national body, LDAC, in all provinces

#### **Adult Employment Brochure - 2004**

With support from the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship, LDAO was able to create a brochure, *Learning Disabilities on the Job!*, to address some of the issues regarding employment for adults with LD. It has been distributed widely throughout the province by our chapters and employment agencies.

# LDA Chapters in the Province

## LDA Chatham-Kent

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Web site: www.sarnia.com/groups/lda-lc

## LDA London Region

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