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## Collingwood Hosts First OASIS AGM - May 7 & 8, 1998

The First Annual General Meeting and conference of Ontario Agencies Supporting People with Special Needs will be held in Collingwood on May 7th and 8th, 1998. The conference promises to be a colorful and exciting kickoff to the inaugural year of development for this new provincial umbrella body.

OASIS was established in November of 1996 with six founding agencies. It is expected that by conference time membership will have grown to twenty five agencies representing virtually every part of the province. The agency is currently operating without paid staff in an effort to keep operating expenses very low.

The activities of OASIS have been extensive over the past year due to the efforts of a very hands on [Board of Directors](#). Work has been done on: setting up an extensive web site as a resource base for agencies; dramatically improving communications among member agencies; the sharing of ideas and systems through a Best Practice resource base; lobbying government on various issues; linking with sister organizations; taking a lead on issues related to WCB increases and developing admin. cost benchmarks; creating options for a less costly group insurance package and much more.

What makes OASIS different than other provincial level support groups is that it is agency focused with the idea of agencies supporting agencies to improve ways of supporting people with developmental disabilities. OASIS has worked hard to link with consumer oriented groups and other provincial bodies to balance perspectives and ideas as they are presented to government.

The 1998 conference will initiate a "Best Practices Fair" as a cornerstone from which agencies can display ideas, practices and systems for others to see and share. This will be an annual feature of the conference. Over time the Conference planners are hoping to develop the Best Practice Fair into a unique showpiece as a means of setting the conference apart from other such gatherings.

Readers will find the full conference schedule inside. The conference sessions on May 7th will be buffered with a wonderful noon hour fashion show (with lunch) put on by the staff and the people they support at E3 Community Services. That same evening OASIS will host a sit down dinner and an evening of entertainment including a performance by the Black Cap Theatre Company, Karaoke, casino and silent auction.

Friday morning sessions will begin with a MCSS overview by Brian Low, Director of the Developmental Services Branch of MCSS. Mr. Low has indicated that he will field questions from the audience. The morning activities will conclude with the AGM and lunch. Participants can plan on leaving no later than 1:30pm on Friday May 8th.

Both OASIS agency members and non-members alike are invited to attend. There are relevant sessions for volunteer Board members, agency supervisors and general management.

Please ensure your accommodations are booked early as rooms are limited. Bookings should be done through the OASIS block booking with the Vacation Inn in Collingwood. See inside pages for more details.

## Legislation - The Best Medicine

Starting in 1997, a refundable tax credit based on eligible medical expenses will be available, for up to \$500 or 25% of allowable medical expenses, whichever is less. This credit will be available to workers with at least \$2,500 in earned income and will be reduced by five per cent of family net income in excess of \$16,069. Individuals claiming this refundable tax credit may also claim the medical expense tax credit. The list of expenses eligible for the medical expense tax credit now includes:

- 20% of the costs of adapting a van for the transportation of an individual using a wheelchair to a \$5,000 maximum;

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- Accessible housing moving expenses, to a maximum of \$2,000;
- 50% of the cost of an air conditioner prescribed by a medical practitioner as being necessary to assist an individual in coping with a severe chronic ailment, disease or disorder, to a maximum of \$1,000; and
- Part-time attendant care, increased from \$5,000 to \$10,000.

And there's more good news on the medical expenses front. Say good-bye to the \$5,000 limit on a deduction from income for attendant care expenses that are necessary to allow an individual to work.

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#### **Featured Best Practice - Parent Education Advisory Committee**

The North Bay Association for Community Living identified a need to support parents regarding education of children with special needs. It was felt that although the "Boards of Education state that parental choice is respected, parents sometimes agree to a placement because they feel pressured or because they are unsure of their options. The best possible way of supporting these parents would be to link them with other parents who have had personal experience with the education system. The PEAC is made up of these parents. Representation on the committee reflects both school boards, English and French and covers primary and secondary levels. There are six members on the committee and each member must be the parent/guardian of a child with a developmental disability.

The members of the PEAC or 'Parent Delegates' are linked to other parents through a referral process administered by Community Living. Once a delegate has been linked, he/she will assist the parent by providing information on their rights within the education system, discussing options, attending meetings if requested, and providing general support.

Community Living provides the Parent Delegates with training on Ministry of Education rules and regulations, information on School Board Policies, and the IPRC Process, and acts as a general resource to the PEAC Committee.

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#### **Member Agency Highlights**

Barrie and District Association for People with Special Needs - B.D.A.P.S.N. has been investigating new opportunities to provide employment for the individuals they support. One area of great success has been the development of a grounds maintenance business. Three adults and one support staff maintained two highway rest stops for the Ministry of Transportation this past summer. This group has received high praise from the Ministry of Transportation and many passing through the parks. Thanks to all who contributed to this very exciting and uplifting initiative.Cambridge Association for the Mentally Handicapped - will receive \$20,000 from Ronald McDonald Children's Charities towards a Snoezelen Room at the Carol Currier Centre. Caregivers and families find Snoezelen a wonderful experience to relax, enjoy and share. This room will be open to community use for those with special needs at a minimal cost. Although there is a shortfall of \$12,000, it is hoped that donations may help to reach the target. More information is available by calling (519) 623-7490.

Community Living Huronia - After a long career as both a community service manager and a direct service manager, Paul Muldoon is thrilled to be functioning as an Executive Director with Community Living Huronia. Paul is married with four teenage children.

Collingwood Community Living will host the first Annual General Meeting of Ontario Agencies Supporting Individuals With Special Needs (OASIS). This milestone event will be held May 7, and 8, 1998 at the Vacation Inn Resort, Collingwood. Due to the overwhelming success and interest that OASIS has generated, the first Annual General Meeting promises to be exciting and informative.

Kingston and District Association for Community Living has enjoyed tremendous success in its volunteer recruitment. To date, 112 volunteers, from all walks of life, are contributing to the expansion of math, reading and computer skills, network of friends and overall community involvement for the people they spend time with. Thanks to the dedication of the staff at Options and the coordinator of Volunteers for KDACL, for enriching the lives of so many with the new relationships and experiences afforded to them by these volunteers.

Lambton County Association for the Mentally Handicapped have held a Move-A-Thon which generated funds which will be used towards the purchase of a much needed new van with a wheelchair lift. The LCAMH team of supervisors and assistant supervisors raised \$1,433. and the team of Supported Employment Services and Supported Independent Living raised \$931. Move-A-Thon co-chairman, Fred Sturge, thanked everyone involved, on behalf of co-chair, Rosemary Churchill and himself.

Norfolk Association for Community Living has completed renovations to amalgamate the Human Resources Development Canada building and Multi Service Employment Centre creating "The Employment Centre". This federally sponsored community project presents numerous opportunities for people supported by the Association in need of employment.Also, the Norfolk Association is proud sponsor of the sale of a book of poetry written by Julie Roberts, entitled "Poetry through Motion".

Julie spent the first 18 years of her life in silence being deaf, mute and autistic. Through Facilitated Communication, Julie has broken through the barriers of communication and is presently working on her second book, which she hopes to complete in about a year.

Ottawa-Carleton Association for Persons with Developmental Disabilities is attempting to assure the survival of the National Archives paper re-cycling program. This program provides job training for 59 adults with developmental disabilities and is now being threatened with closure due to forced caps on production levels. Please write today to the Honourable Sheila Copps, Minister of Heritage, Parliament Buildings, Ottawa, Ontario and voice your support.

Windsor Community Living Support Services are now on the net and can be reached world-wide through its new website: <http://www.mnsi.net/~wclss/>. This site provides information on WCLSS' philosophy, services, and publications.

Woodstock and District Developmental Services recently sent four students to the Sheraton Hotel for the 10th Anniversary of the Ontario Literacy Conference "Literacy the Next Page". This conference provided the students some stimulating and enjoyable opportunities to develop their skills, learn new information and network with people who share an interest in the commitment to adult literacy. We were all proud to be a part of a worldwide effort to ensure that people everywhere have the basic skills they need to achieve their full potential.

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#### **OASIS Annual General Meeting - "Manoeuvering Through The Next Millenium"**

#### **ACCOMMODATIONS**

The conference is being held at Vacation Inn Resort on Highway 26 West, Collingwood, Ontario. Accommodation is available at the following rates:

- Standard Room - \$70.00
- Studio - \$95.00
- 1 Bedroom Suite - \$110.00
- 1 Bedroom Luxury Suite - \$135.00
- 2 Bedroom Suite - \$139.00
- 1 Bedroom Condo - \$135.00
- 2 Bedroom Condo - \$150.00
- 3 Bedroom Condo - \$180.00

Above prices are per night, per room (per person) and exclude taxes. Call the Vacation Inn Resort directly to book your accommodation - telephone number (705) 445-9422. Note that in order to access group rate prices, you must specify that you are booking through the OASIS block of rooms.

#### **BEST PRACTICE FAIR**

The OASIS Best Practices Fair promises to be a cornerstone of the conference. . It will provide an opportunity for member agencies to share ideas and shop for solutions. The fair will consist of between 20 and 30 displays featuring a range of systems features, Best Practices, professional services and conference memorabilia. Several of the tables (booths) will offer draws on wonderful prizes, some of which are valued at more than \$300.00. We are encouraging participants to dress up the displays with props, pictures, slide shows, hand-outs and whatever else might accentuate the theme. We are suggesting you make at least 50 copies of hand-out materials and that they include a full description of your practice, project or service. Please confirm your participation by contacting Susan Fry at (705) 445-6351, extension 227. At that time, we would appreciate it if you could provide a contact name and theme name.

#### **AGENDA**

Wednesday, May 6th

7:00-9:00 pm Registration

Thursday, May 7th

8:30-9:15 Registration/Continental Breakfast

9:15-9:30 Welcome - President Annie Oliver

9:45-10:45 Sessions:

- A101 Fundraising Show & Tell
- B101 Strategic Planning
- C101-C102 Crisis Communication

11:00-12:00 Sessions:

- A102 Web Site Development
- B102 Social Accounting
- C101-C102 Crisis Communication

12:00-1:30 Lunch & Fashion Show

- A103 Legal Changes to FBA
- B103 Future Look
- C103-C104 Clear Writing

3:00-4:00 Sessions

A104 HR & Management  
B104 Managing Change  
C103-C104 Clear Writing

4:00-5:30 Best Practice Fair 6:30-7:45 Dinner 7:45-8:30 Black Cap Theatre 8:45-11:00

Entertainment Friday, May 8th

9:00-10:30 D105 MCSS (Brian Low) 10:30-12:00 General Meeting of OASIS 12:00-1:30 Closing Lunch

#### **SESSION DESCRIPTIONS A**

##### **101 Fund Raising Show & Tell**

This is a show and tell workshop. Participants are asked to bring along 30 copies of their best fund raiser to share with the group. Also of interest - have you been successful in getting families and/or siblings involved in fund raising or developed an inventory of resources they might represent?

##### **A102 Web Site Development**

This session will feature a demonstration of the award winning web page design program PageMill. In addition to a demonstration of PageMill, the session leader will take us through other software programs required for fully developing a web site; including how to transfer information to the internet service provider. The presenter is an authority on this software and works with Adobe system out of Toronto.

##### **A103 Legal Changes to FBA**

Terry Hunter, lawyer from Simcoe Legal Services will lead us through a series of current changes to FBA legislation processes and procedures. This session will have great relevance to agencies as they go about adapting to the significant new requirements of the program.

##### **A104 H.R. & Management**

This will be a two-part presentation. Part One will discuss the evolution of our Human Resources Department within a growing complex organization and how the use of H.R. technology has assisted the department in meeting these ever-changing demands. Part Two will describe how our organization responded to a major "restructuring" and the process used to train and support a group of personnel who saw their supervisory responsibility increase.

##### **B101 Strategic Planning**

Board and staff of the Brantford Association for Community Living will explain how they developed a new strategic plan by using a Quality Improvement Workshop conducted by Accreditation Ontario. This workshop identified Strategic Goals that the Organization must meet if outcomes were going to be a reality for the people being supported by BDACL.

##### **B102 Social Accounting**

Social Service Agencies are always having to justify their economic impact on the community. In this Session, the Council of Metropolitan Toronto will show a process and a tool that can be used to ensure your agency has the information it needs when asked to present before City Hall. Yes, you can fight City Hall!

##### **B103 Future Look**

Every social service has a natural life span. The service is born, it matures and then it loses its ability to meet changing needs - it dies. We put energy into developing a social service to meet important needs. We work hard to make the service effective and efficient. Once we have the service running at peak performance, we get the pay-off for our efforts - effectively meeting needs. Things change. Our service no longer meets the needs the way it used to and slowly its effectiveness begins to diminish. Old age sets in and our service needs to be retired. But, retiring a service is a threatening business. We need something to take its place. The purpose of this presentation is to explain how non-profit organizations can experiment with new service while managing the old. It suggests that there are ways of borrowing resources from the present to test new ideas for the future.

##### **B104 Managing Change**

Mike Balkwell was very instrumental in the formation of OASIS and we are very pleased to have him join us at 1st Conference to talk about Managing Change. His comments will be directed to the distinct roles of Board Members, Executive Director and the Service Staff in dealing with change, and how they can support each other in the process.

##### **C101 - C102 Crisis Communication**

Ever been faced with the media calling, demanding a statement about - a fire, a death, a national story looking for local comment, an individual that is lost, an issue around a bingo or lottery... and didn't know what or how much to say - or even who should say it. This session will look at characteristics of a crisis, the media's agenda, opportunity and risks, and defining your key messages (and you will be involved).

##### **C103 - C104 Clear Writing**

This is a hands on workshop that will teach you the techniques needed to design letters, brochures,

newsletters. If you want to communicate with your membership in a clear written format, then this Session is imperative.

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#### Featured Web Site - Sex and Disability: Review of Sexuality Resources

*An article taken from "Abilities" Magazine, Winter 1997 written by Cory Silverberg.*

##### Newsgroups

Newsgroups are lists where people post letters and others can respond. There are a number of disability-related newsgroups that focus on specific disabilities, and a few general ones.

There is a newsgroup devoted to sexuality, alt.support.disabled.sexuality. Unfortunately, like most groups with the word "sex" in the title, this list is bombarded by pornography advertisers. You have to sort through the junk mail to get to the legitimate posters. A much older newsgroup is misc.handicap in which sexuality issues are brought up occasionally, and there is no Internet junk mail to cut through.

##### Professional Websites (not for profit)

These sites are usually maintained by publicly funded health centres, Independent Living Resource Centres, hospitals or other organizations involved in disability. They provide information free of charge.

Sex Information and Education Council of the U.S.: <http://www.siecus.org>. SIECUS maintains a number of online bibliographies, including one of the most comprehensive sexuality and disability lists available on the Internet. Each title comes with a brief description and complete ordering information. Interstitial Cystitis Association Page:<http://ichelp.com/tversion.sex.htm>. This is a specific sub-section of the ICA's page that deals with some sexuality issues. Sexual Health Network:  
<http://www.sexualhealth.com>. The website for an organization dedicated to providing accessible sex education and resources to people living with disabilities and to professionals. The site seems new and there is not as much information as first appears, but it's definitely promising. WebAble:  
<http://www.yuri.org/webable/index.html>. WebAble is a large, general resource for disability information on the Internet. It includes a few links to sexuality sites and is well worth the visit. Professional Websites (for profit) These are sites designed to sell you stuff, whether it's books, equipment, dating services or subscriptions to magazines. These sites can provide some information, but usually the good stuff is only available through the mail with a credit card number. Of course, browsing is free, and some are more interesting than others. <http://www.azstarnet.com/~dqnser/netrel.htm>, a dating service site. <http://www.dateable.org>, another dating service. <http://incontinent.com>, a site mostly about incontinence, but with a lot of other interesting information. <http://scoi.com/medpart/sexafter.htm>, selling a book about sex following hip replacement surgery. <http://www.tmcpress.com>, advertising a book about sex and prostate cancer.

Cory Silverberg is a worker-owner of a community-based, accessible sex store in Toronto, Ontario (tele: 416-504-7934).

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##### Issues

*Article written by Alan McWhorter from the Community Link  
Kingston & District Association for Community Living*

The Ministry of Community and Social Services is in the process of restructuring the entire transfer payment system involving hundreds of agencies. This will significantly alter the relationship between agencies and people who receive services. The Ministry sees individual approaches as the crucial part of a philosophical change that is driving this process. The Ministry views this as an accountability process for agencies.

Point of Access: The most immediate effect upon consumers and agencies will be the requirement for both to deal with a third party that controls access to the system. To get the services of an agency, the consumer will have to go through a point of access. Exactly how that will work is not yet decided. What is clear is that agencies will no longer be able to make unilateral decisions about who they will or will not serve. For consumers, this has been billed as one stop shopping. Consumers are concerned that the point of access may be a narrow gate with a long line-up. In fact, the mechanism itself is neutral. Depending on how it is run, it may deliver, as promised, easier access and a wider range of choice for consumers, or it could function to restrict choice to a narrow range of standardized options.

Individual Service Agreement (ISA): For each individual, one Individual Service Agreement will specify all services provided with Ministry funding, regardless of whether there is one or many agencies involved. The ISA may be a multi-party agreement signed by the consumer, family and agencies, but the government will not be a signatory. Rather, government will sign contracts with agencies based on aggregates of all individual ISA's involving the particular agency.

This gives the consumer unprecedented leverage, provided the individual knows what he wants and how to use the process. In the new system, funding will be identified on an individual basis. This is not direct funding to individuals, but it will require agencies to account for how dollars are spent in

terms of deliverables specified in an Individual Service Agreement (ISA). The government will allocate dollars under contract and will see that those dollars are spent for what the ISA says the consumer will get.

One thing is clear: consumers will be able to exploit the situation only if they are knowledgeable and assertive. Consumers are a special interest group that needs to get organized, educated and informed. Policy changes at Queen's Park can have a whiplash effect on consumers as they do on agencies, and the buffers both groups have relied upon will not be incorporated into the reshaped service system.

Levels of Support: This is a tool developed by the government to measure and determine how much support, ie., funding dollars, a particular individual should be eligible to receive. Levels of Support (LOS) mainly catalogs needs for physical support or intervention that translate as paid staff hours. The instrument has been extensively field tested and determined to be reliable as a predictor of cost in that type of service context.

The initiative is overdue. Resources should be distributed more rationally. Wide variations in cost exist from one agency to the next providing similar services to clients with similar needs. On the other hand, the LOS questionnaire forces family and caregivers to focus on the person's deficits. There has been widespread protest that it demeans and reduces people to labels. Protest has produced a marked change in government rhetoric on the subject, but no change in direction.

Associations for Community Living see our job as facilitating community presence, participation and interdependence. Our role involves helping communities adapt to people with disabilities and vice versa. Community development is our main approach, but LOS emphasizes physical skills and hands-on care and largely ignores the community context. Using the LOS measuring stick, activities we see as our central mission may not even be considered eligible. LOS does not measure enabling support that a person with a developmental disability may need to establish a home, but it does measure what might appropriately be called (medical) homecare. That, more than the demeaning qualities of the questionnaire, gives cause for concern.

Downloading of Day-Care and Pre-School Programs to Municipalities: Next year the administrative transfer will be completed, and by 1999 we will be dealing entirely with municipal authorities. The implications of this change depends largely on municipal priorities and politics. Municipal authorities have no history with programs such as itinerant pre-school resource teachers and will need to be educated quickly.

For Associations, first contact with families is often when the child attends pre-school. Many of the parents get involved in the Association at that stage, and that is a major source of new members and future leaders of our Association. The program is serving more children now than ever, and the waiting list is too long. Time is precious for young children and must not be lost in the transition.

Ontario Disability Support Program Act - Employment Supports: Functions of the Vocational Rehabilitation Services Branch, including allocations, licensing of programs, etc. will no longer be carried out by government. Instead, a service coordinator to carry out those responsibilities will be contracted through a competitive process. The coordinator will be community based, but the type of organization or individual for this role remains undefined.

The new system will be focused on competitive employment. Funding will be secured at current levels and increased for supports to employment from \$18 M to \$35 M. There will be a wide range of supports available from skills training, to aids and devices, to on-the-job supports. Consumer choice, direct funding and portability will be emphasized, although it is unclear how that will apply to people of special concern to our Association.

There is no mention of sheltered workshops, and it is generally assumed that they will not be considered employment services in the future. Existing sheltered workshops may be permitted to continue as adult day programs.