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▲ Rachel Daigneault and Gabriel Gratton in the company of some of our young travelers.
From left to right: Rachel Daigneault (Executive Director), Kyle, Dakota, Angel, Travis,
Maria, Zach and Gabriel Gratton (President). [READ THE FULL STORY >>](#)

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It is never easy to talk about success stories when you work at a Children's Aid Society. Our mandate to protect children from abuse and neglect rarely brings positive media coverage.

Too often people hear about horrific abuse stories, families torn apart, or sad outcomes for children left in the care of the state. When you think of the Children's Aid Society, rarely do you think of inspiring stories about courage, resiliency, dedication and love. We believe we need to change that, and we believe it is time that you hear some of the amazing stories we see every day at our Children's Aid Society.

2011-2012 was a great year for the Children's Aid Society of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry, and through this report we hope to change your vision of the work done by the Children's Aid. We hope some of the stories shared in this report about real families, children and youth will inspire you as much as they inspire us.

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We have been working really hard these past years to refine our service delivery model to include more focus on the strengths and the integrity of each family. We continue to customize our approach according to the specific and changing needs of the children and families we serve. We help families focus on their strengths and we engage them in finding solutions to the issues they are facing. While there have been many changes in the past years, our commitment to improving our services to families and to increasing positive outcomes for our children has always been at the forefront of our work. We believe that our children and families deserve no less.

Mental Health worker told us:

"... I met with a young single mom of two boys. She has used Triple P in the last couple of weeks to go out into the community, shopping and what not. Here are some things mom had noticed about herself in implementing:

'I need to remind the children often of my expectations, at their age I need to check in often and tell them what I am noticing that they are doing well, to do this I need to get down to their eye level to talk. I see my attitude changing as I'm focusing on what they do well, it's more encouraging for them and for me.'"

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2011-2012 was a year filled with training for our staff. We spent most of the fall learning about the *Signs of Safety* theoretical framework. The *Signs of Safety* model is very much in keeping with our now-established agency commitment to client engagement, empowerment, and early permanency. The learning is still ongoing, but our staff embraced this new philosophy and we are already noticing great outcomes with our families and children; employees report that it enables them to provide better strength-based services to the families they work with.

A Children's Aid Worker shared with us:

"Many parents want to learn new strategies to ensure their children grow up with confidence and think positively about themselves. The family that I am helping are new parents of three children. These parents are very excited about the Triple P program thus far and want to learn all they can about parenting in ways that are positive. In fact, just before learning about Triple P this mother said she felt like she was always punishing one of her children and she felt like a failure. Now after just three weeks of Triple P, she is beginning to learn new strategies and said she feels a tremendous amount of support and is very optimistic."

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Another very exciting project that was started in early spring is the implementation of *Triple P* in our communities. This great adventure is in partnership with the Eastern Ontario Health Unit, Valoris and many other community partners. *Triple P* is a common, evidenced based, consistent network of positive parenting instruction. The ultimate goal is for all services and agencies who teach parenting or support parenting programs to use the same materials, language and framework from *Triple P* so that parents in our community receive consistent messaging and instruction. *Triple P* is a flexible system of positive parenting and family support that has a strong basis in professional research literature across countries, cultures and sites. So far we have trained 43 of our employees in various *Triple P* courses, and through the agency funding we have helped train more than 17 community practitioners from Laurencrest, Cornwall Community Police Services, Cornwall Community Hospital Mental Health and SD&G Developmental Services. The training was great and everyone who attended was amazed at this great parenting program.

A worker from SD&G Developmental Services had this to say about the program:

"I loved this training very much and believe all my families could benefit from it. I think the presenter was amazing, extremely knowledgeable, information was clear and concise, and there wasn't a question she couldn't answer. I feel as a worker my skill level and knowledge of everyday behaviours our families present with has increased. The content of the training empowers parents, decreases dependability from the parent onto the worker, and gives practical tools the parents can use anytime in the future."

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We are still very early in our implementation but already we are hearing positive results from the practitioners using *Triple P* with their families.

We are looking forward to more training in the fall and we hope to have as many community agencies trained in *Triple P* by the end of the fiscal year next year. We will officially launch *Triple P* in our communities in the fall of 2012.

As you will read in this report, we have amazing youth who inspire us every day with their stories, their dreams and their successes. Unfortunately this was not always the case. Some years ago, after reviewing many older youth in our permanency planning, we realized that many of them had no dreams, no aspirations, and very little ambition. They didn't know what they wanted to become, where they saw themselves in two years or even five years, and they didn't believe in themselves.

We realized we needed to think of ways to inspire our youth by showing them what the world had to offer and in turn, what they had to offer back to the world. Last year we created an opportunity for some of them to travel abroad so they could see what life can be if they decide to live it! Our first edition of *Travel Your Dreams* saw eight of our youth travel to Paris and London for ten days. We had the privilege of spending time with these youth and hearing about their experience and how it had changed them. The success of this program was so amazing that we are doing it again this year, with a trip to Paris and Spain for eight

***“To accomplish great things,
we must not only act,
but also dream; not only
plan, but also believe.”***

Anatole France

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new youth who cannot wait to embark on this amazing experience. *Travel Your Dreams* is only one of the many opportunities we offer our youth. We teach our youth to believe in themselves, have high expectations and strive to be the best that they can be.

We want to see our youth succeed and live life to the fullest. They have so much to offer their communities and getting to know them has been a true pleasure for me. Charlene and Tabatha are living abroad; We are so impressed by their courage and strengths. These young women will become world leaders some day and we cannot wait to hear about their next dream. Darcy, a former *Travel Your Dreams* participant, is about to leave for a year in Serbia to volunteer with *Hockey Without Borders*. He has been through an incredible journey to get there, and we are so proud of the young man that he has become.

We could go on and on about these unbelievable stories. Last year, the final page of our Annual Report was dedicated to amazing stories from our youth and families; this year, we couldn't fit it all on one page, so this entire report is filled with great stories that we hope will inspire you because they inspire us every day. We hope it will change the way you see your Children's Aid Society. We are not perfect but we will always strive to improve our services to children and families. We do hope that through this report you will see that WE are here to help.

In closing, we would like to recognize the work of the board of directors: Gabriel Gratton, Dave MacLean, Jeanette Despatie, Vincent Foy, Peggy Campbell, Kevin Cooper, Benoit Veilleux, Stephen Gill and our two newest members, Scott Coulter and Alice Wilson-Haramis. Your dedication and commitment to the Children's Aid Society and our community is priceless. You are always so helpful and we appreciate your leadership.

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We would like to recognize the employees of the Society for their dedication to the cause of protecting children and helping families. Our accomplishments are the direct result of their tireless contributions in the service of children, youth and families. Thank you to our foster, kinship and adoptive parents for their generosity of heart in welcoming children into their families; our volunteer drivers who never tire of ensuring our children get to their destinations; and our community partners for helping us deliver services in a more coordinated

fashion so that it is easier for children and families to receive the help they need as close to home as possible. We are an agency of helpers who inspire each other to work together for the safety and well-being of children and their families. Every one of us has a role to play that is crucially important in the life of a child. It is your commitment and belief in the importance of the mission that makes the work possible, effective and meaningful. ✨

Rachel Daigneault and Gabriel Gratton

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"As I was leaving my home at the age of 15, I told myself that I would never stop working hard, and that I would never give up on my dreams. With the help of Children's Aid Society and my foster mom, I was able to make those dreams come true. I was able to discover who I am, and what my goals and passions are. The summer after my high school graduation, I went to Kenya for a month to help build a school. I am now studying international development at McGill University, and plan on giving back for the rest of my life."

Diana
University Student



"I Am Your Children's Aid."

For more information, please visit our website at www.cassdg.ca

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**Our success stories
in Quality Assurance
this year are many!**

This year has been one of establishing the ground work for new initiatives in accountability and future development in the analysis of data for the organization. These efforts will continue to yield positive results not only for us but for the families and children we serve as well as our community.

As noted by the annual statistics provided in the report, this year we have an increasing number of calls received from our community totalling almost 5000 calls this year.

We have provided service to more children and families this year through our many and wide-ranging services focussing on strength based practice and promoting engagement with families and the community. Our number of community linkages has increased by over 30% from last year for families who may benefit from contact with and information about our community partners.

As well, in 2011-2012 we engaged with 1016 families at least once and 175 families more than once for child welfare protection reasons, completing about 1200 assessments/investigations with families in our community.

These families comprised 2255 children under the age of 16 years, with about 667 of those children receiving protection assessments and family service more than once during the year. It is important to note that of these 2255 children, 2131 or almost 95% of the children, received protective and support services from CAS other than admission to care.

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Also noteworthy is that the number of community families we work with on an ongoing basis continues to decrease slightly each year with a focus on timely response and solution focussed intervention aligning with our *Signs of Safety* service model.

This year 46 children of the 169 children living with foster families, or 27.2%, were reunified with their bio or kin families or moved to their adoptive families on a permanent basis. This does not include the successful reintegration of children initially placed in outside paid resources including group homes or those who were living with other families such as kin

family placements who returned to their bio family or to independent living arrangements. This is a new statistic being gathered this year that reflects our efforts and initiatives aimed at permanency and reunification for children.

This past year has seen the full implementation of our data management system. We are actively measuring service provision and quality and analyzing outcomes through our set of established indicators from our strategic priorities. These results will be reviewed in the coming year with a view to continuous quality improvement. ✨

"I started fostering a few years ago and my experience has been amazing. Admittedly, I was skeptical at first, but if I would have let my fears guide me, I would never have met the remarkable children along the way that have changed my life. Each child has given me a reason to never quit, even when things get tough. I love these children like they are my own and they are, and will always be, permanent members of my family."

Pat
Foster Parent



"I Am Your Children's Aid."

For more information, please visit our website at www.casstdg.ca



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as of March 31, 2012

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Families helped in our community this year

Total calls received (Protection/Comm. Links/Foster/Kin/Adoption/AHS)	4,910
Family Assessments or Investigations opened or reopened	1,227
Community Links provided to families	485
Assessments/Investigations closed	985
Assessments/Investigations transferred to ongoing family service	277
Total Assessments/Investigations completed this year	1,262
Number of files opened in Ongoing (as of March 31)	275
Number of children involved in child protection work with families	2,254
Number of children involved more than once with our services	667
Number of children admitted to care this year	114

Our Children in Care

Total number of Child Admissions this year	114	
Children admitted more than once during the year	5	
0-5 years	40	11.6 %
6-9 years	32	9.2 %
10-14 years	87	25.1 %
15-17 years	99	28.6 %
Over 18 years	88	25.4 %
TOTAL (as of March 31, 2012)	346	100 %

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Types of Placement for Children in Care

Foster care	165	47.7 %
Kinship care	31	9.0 %
Outside paid resource	49	14.2 %
Medical Foster	4	1.2 %
Independent Living	67	19.4 %
Adoption Probation	14	4.0 %
Extended access with family	10	2.9 %
Other (alternate resource)	6	1.7 %

Status of Our Children in Care

Crown Ward	171	49.4 %
Society Ward	24	6.9 %
Temporary Care Agreement	6	1.7 %
Temporary Care and Custody	39	11.3 %
Extended Care	88	25.4 %
Other (OPW and OSW)	15	4.3 %
Awaiting legal wardship	3	0.8 %

Children Adopted **21**

Children in Foster Care Reunified with Family (bio/kin/adoptive) **46** 27.2 %

46 children of the 169 children placed in foster care were reunified with their families on a permanent basis this past year. This does not include the successful reintegration of children placed in OPR settings including group homes or with other families such as Kin family placements.

Our Resources

Foster Homes	115
Kin Homes	14

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From a financial perspective, it has been another very successful year for the society.

We ended in a favourable financial position. This is a result of our ongoing efforts to look for efficiencies in case management and client services to reduce costs without disrupting service delivery.

The Commission to Promote *Sustainable Child Welfare* is in its final stages of completing recommendations to the Ministry to address the financial sustainability of child welfare in Ontario. Along with the Commission, the Finance Managers group of the *Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies* continues to work with the Ministry on the funding process to resolve the various ongoing pressures experienced by the agencies across the province.

We appreciate the efforts of the Ministry for recognizing and assisting us with some of our unique needs such as the Youth transitioning to other services and the ongoing challenge of funding Child Welfare services.

Our audited statements are available by contacting our Administrative Office.

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Revenues 2011-2012

MCSS Transfers	23,934,051
Child Welfare Recoveries	992,459
Investment Income	29,797
Amortization of deferred contributions	207,431
Other	398,877

TOTAL REVENUES

25,492,615

Expenditures

Salaries and Wages	8,094,516
Benefits	1,967,840
Building Occupancy	530,514
Office Administration	386,327
Training & Recruitment	353,806
Promotion & Publicity	195,471
Professional Services Non-Client	119,542
Travel	1,103,239
Boarding Rate Payments	9,321,802
Professional Services Client	391,576
Health & Related	785,524
Client's Personal Needs	973,800
Camp/Program Fees	14,373
Miscellaneous	154,783
Technology	876,163

TOTAL EXPENDITURES

25,269,276

NET REVENUES OVER EXPENDITURES

223,339

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Travel Your Dreams

London to Paris 2011: A Journey of Growth and Exploration

Laura Fields, Youth Traveler

Many people my age do not get the chance to travel, especially people from such diverse backgrounds. Life may have handed us difficult situations, but we overcame each one to end up together in Europe.

Getting to know each other through meetings before we left, we came to understand how fun, and at times difficult, living together was going to be. With different ages and wide-ranging personality types, we learned to function as a group. While exploring two different countries, spending day and night together, we became more than a group – we became friends.

The trip was educational in more than just history. Learning to coexist for ten days with people whom I did not know before this trip was really eye-opening. Understanding, compassion, and more often than not patience, were assets. If we didn't have these qualities before leaving, we certainly had them upon our return.

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When we got back we all had a better understanding of other cultures, countries and values after learning about war, religion, monarchies and languages on our whirlwind adventure. Guided by Lisa and Rob we successfully navigated two countries in ten days, seeing so much and so little at the same time. This gave us all perspective on how much more there was waiting for us in this world. It was more than educational; above all this trip was humbling.

I strive to have many more opportunities to travel within my life, but I can sincerely state that up until this day, *Travel Your Dreams* was by far the best experience in my life. There could be nothing more I could have asked for. Thank you for this opportunity and I truly hope that many more youths in care have the chance to enjoy this experience.



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Maria Cornacchia, Youth Traveler

As a recent attendee of last year's incredible *Travel Your Dreams* trip to London & Paris, I would like to express my gratitude for being given such a rare opportunity at such a young age. Despite our differences, all eight of us youth took very valuable lessons and experiences home with us. From riding in the London Eye to climbing the steps of the Eiffel Tower, we quickly came to realize there is so much more to discover in the world outside of Cornwall, Ontario.

I, for one, came to London with a narrow perception of the world and came home realizing how paramount the world is. I came to cherish space, flora, and fresh fruits and vegetables, as these things seemed sparse in the greatly populated and industrialized cities we saw in comparison to Cornwall. It was a treat to learn about histories of other countries and how they relate to ours, especially when pressing our bare toes into the sands of Juno Beach. The beautiful architecture in France and the down to earth and humorous nature of the Brits have left a lasting impression in my mind.



As you can tell from these few sentences, the trip truly has changed us for the better. While I cannot speak on behalf of the others' own individual experiences, the excitement and awe-struck expressions I constantly saw in all of us during the trip speaks for itself. I truly feel and would take great pleasure in discovering that this trip was offered to youth year after year.

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Lisa Van Riel, Chaperone – 2011 Edition

“Wow” is the word that seems to come to mind when I think of the *Travel Your Dreams* trip in the summer of 2011. The youth, the adventure, the sights and the learning were all amazing.

This adventure was more than a trip for this group and for me as a chaperone. I believe that this experience helped me grow as a worker and this experience reminded me that having high expectations of our youth works. Throughout the ten days I was able to see these young people in a different way. I observed leaders, friendships growing and the sheer admiration and excitement they felt as they looked at the beautiful sights around London and Paris. I was inspired by the youth and I felt such pride to see how well they managed all these new and exciting firsts.

This inspiration for me didn't end when the trip did – I was eager to return to the agency to show the staff, youth and board of directors what our youth had accomplished and how this opportunity needed to be a yearly experience. I felt the need to advocate and show others how this trip gave me and these youth a new perspective and reminded them to dream big.



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Rob Ladouceur, *Chaperone – 2011 & 2012 Editions*

The opportunity and experience that I was given by the Children's Aid Society of SD&G to take eight of our youth to Europe cannot be explained in words. The relationships I had built with these young adults cannot be replaced. I have learned so much from them and developed relationships with these youth that "workers" could not possibly build in their day to day work. With amount of time that we spent together as a group, you become more of a peer than a worker.

I learned so much about myself over the course of the preparation for and during the actual trip. It is like a transformation that occurs when you are with a group in a foreign land with things you can only dream of seeing. This trip was eye opening – the highlight of my year, and I guarantee that it was the highlight of everyone's that was part of this amazing experience. I believe that this trip has the capacity to change lives and the ability to create so much ambition, hope, friendship, inspiration and the power to fulfill dreams. I hope this trip and journey can continue for years to come!!!!



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Meghan Hargreaves,

Chaperone – 2012 Edition

Selina, Dakota, Angel, Diana, Ashley, Jayme, Zach, and Christine – eight amazing youth along with Rob and I, their staff chaperones, will be heading off to Paris, Barcelona, and Madrid in July for a journey that, even though we're still in Cornwall, has already begun.

We started meeting in March, and already we have hit it off. The group is so diverse: shy and outgoing, ambitious and relaxed, funny and focused, curious and reserved. We are all so excited about the adventures and experiences that await us but we have a lot of work to do before then.

These young adults understand how lucky they are to be given this opportunity and they appreciate how it may change their lives. Many know that without this program they may never have seen Europe, and we hope after they have, they'll be inspired to reach whatever

goals they must in order to experience more of the world in the same exciting and humbling light. Before embarking on this journey and after they return, they understand and accept that they are becoming ambassadors for not only the children in care in this community, but all young people who must overcome adversity and achieve their dreams. In order to fill this role and give back to the community and the organization that has given them this opportunity, they will be volunteering, attending presentations, speaking to other youth, and contributing in whatever other ways they find meaningful. The creative and compassionate ideas that they have already developed and the leadership and teamwork they've already demonstrated has been amazing. We have encountered hurdles, of course, but none that we couldn't conquer as a group.

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As a staff chaperone, I am not only grateful for the opportunity to travel abroad as part of my job, but I am grateful for having developed relationships with eight young people who have not only inspired me, but with whom I will have a blast traveling, learning, laughing, and growing with – both personally and professionally – for

months to come. Traveling has broadened and opened my world in so many ways and I am so excited and honored to guide these young people in sharing these experiences with me in Europe in July! ✨



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Through this report we want to share some of the great stories we witnessed this year.

Permanency

2011-2012 has been a full year of planning for permanency for our children and youth in care. Permanency has helped to shape this agency and what we believe to be the most vital ingredient for the success of our children and youth. Permanency encompasses so many factors that help children and youth do well: home life stability, healthy relationships with significant people, striving for educational success, and an overall sense of belonging. Children and youth have a very strong desire to belong, to be part of a family, to have permission to be a child; they have an overwhelming longing to do well. There is no age limit for our children and youth to achieve permanency.

Travis was bored with high school but figured out he had a unique talent and he acted on it. He took a specialized course in machinery, completed it successfully and found employment in his field. He loves what he does and is so very good at it!

Zach made a turnaround in his life when he decided he was ready to work on achieving success. He accepted help from his workers, and together they developed some planning to help Zach taste achievement! Zach is currently working hard on completing his high school diploma, acts as the co-facilitator of the *Coming of Age* program and will be one of the eight youth participating in the *Travel Your Dreams* trip.

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This year alone, we achieved our goal of successfully reviewing the permanency planning for all of our children in care who have Crown Ward status.

Children in care are CHILDREN first and foremost; that is how we want our children to be known. They have the same hopes, aspirations and dreams as children in our communities. They have equal potential to do exceptionally well. They want the same things as other children and youth want: to feel wanted and special, to have a sense of support, and to have important people in their lives to share great and not so great moments with.

Brittany, a young mother, decided to make some significant changes in her life. With the help of her worker, her family and her partner, she refocused her priorities, made some changes in her lifestyle, and set new goals to raise her children and complete her high school diploma. She aspires to attend college to study nursing.

Sara took a new direction last year when she steered herself away from an unhealthy lifestyle. She went back to school and successfully graduated from an *Aboriginal Policing* program. She is currently working part time and patiently awaiting her acceptance into the police force. She is very proud of herself and continues to develop her skills to further her career and her future.

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Through our permanency quest, our agency has been able to develop strong and solid permanency plans with our children and youth. Many of our older youth who have participated in the development of their own plans have made outstanding gains and achieved goals and dreams they did not think they could. With the support of their loved ones, resource parents and staff, children and youth have done great things.

Last year, **Nicole** would not have believed the potential she had in herself, although everyone around her could see it. The major change in this last year is that Nicole finally started to tap into her potential and has gained some life experiences that are remarkable. She has travelled to Italy as part of a school trip/project, she has made huge gains in her academics, and she has decided to act on her desire to conduct some humanitarian work in Kenya this summer for several weeks. Nicole's relationship with her foster mother is one that is admirable and commendable. Her worker and foster mother glow when they speak of her.

Christine was raised being told she would not amount to anything but she proved otherwise. As a young woman, Christine learned that she had aspirations and dreams that she wanted to make come true. She enrolled at St. Lawrence College and was determined to graduate in Policing. In the midst of her studies, she had a very serious accident resulting in back injury and had to take a break from her career goals to look after her health. She nonetheless completed her commitment and will be graduating from college with excellent grades this summer. Christine plans to work for a year and then pursue further studies in law. Christine has a special sparkle when she tells her story; her courage and her ability to face adversity have helped her to achieve great things. Her future is more promising than ever!

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Education

27 of our youth were enrolled in post-secondary studies last year. We have a wealth and array of different programs that interested our youth: culinary, travel, social work, dentistry, human rights, law and engineering, to name a few. Our goal is for many more of our youth who are successfully graduating from high school to set and achieve their goals by gaining the richest educational experience that we can give them. There are no limits imposed on our youth. We want them to learn how to dream big and we will be there to support them in achieving those dreams.

Provincial Clark Award

We are very pleased to announce that one of our young ladies, Tara, was the recipient of the provincial *Clark Grant Award*. Tara will be attending college this fall and plans to study Public Relations and Music. Tara has had excellent support from her foster mother, her biological family, her friends and her worker. Tara is an avid reader and loves to learn. She has been involved in Cadets for several years and has recently graduated to be a leader. Tara plans to join the Canadian Navy when she completes her college degree.

***“Every day we work with families,
children and youth who inspire us.”***

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Adoption

We have proudly embarked on a regional adoption project with our neighboring CAS agencies, *Valoris* and *Ottawa*. The purpose of this project is to target planning for the adoption of older children, those over the age of six. This year we participated in two regional adoption events where prospective adoptive families were presented with the profiles of older children. As a result of those events, as well as our internal efforts to place children on adoption, we have a total of 21 children and youth who have been adopted, seven of whom, including sibling groups, are over the age of six.

This is a very exciting time for our agency. We are committed to the continual planning for adoption of older children because we believe whole-heartedly that every child who is available to be adopted should be given the opportunity for adoption, regardless of their age. Adoption of older children has become part of who we are as an agency and what we believe in. We look forward to sharing more great news with our readers in next year's annual report.

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Kinship

In times of need, family members and friends reach out to their loved ones to offer help and support. It is no different for the families we work with. Our commitment to our families in need continues to be to help them seek support from their own network to help with caring for their child(ren). We support the exploration of kinship as a first option to help keep children and youth close to those they have an existing relationship with. Our kinship department has great knowledge and the skill set to work hand-in-hand with our kinship families to help guide them and navigate through the child welfare system, all while providing excellent care for the children that they are looking after.

We are privileged to work with hundreds of truly outstanding kinship caregivers who touch the lives of their grandchildren, nieces/nephews, siblings, and friends. Who better to serve as mentors to children than kin! Collectively they are making a world of difference in the lives of our kinship children.

We marked August as *Kinship Awareness Month!* We hosted a *Kinship Family Picnic* at the agency for all our kinship families, recognized kinship caregivers through the local newspaper, dedicated a tree at the front of our agency in their honour, as well as sent personal "thank you" cards to kinship caregivers to express appreciation for what they do for children.

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Family Visitation Program

We made a fundamental and structural change to our family visitation program this year. We understand that families need time together and need skills to make their interactions positive, nurturing, safe and fun. Recognizing that all families have strengths, we developed a more collaborative approach to family visitation. We began by developing tools for workers and parents and we listened to our families and heard their wishes and desires with respect to their visitation time with their children.

Through engagement with our families, our agency goal is to share responsibility for resolving the situations that originally created the need for supervision during their visits. Together with the family, we develop a respectful way to build solutions and ensure safety for the entire family in the context of the visit.

We made a significant shift in our practice. We developed a new *Child and Family Worker* service in which families work together to develop skills and overcome barriers that prevent them from having safe and healthy private family time together. The *Child and Family Worker* assists the family to move forward so that they do not require constant supervision during visits, and continues to support the family so that they can maintain their success over time. The *Child and Family Worker* also helps the family transfer what they have learned during the supervised sessions to their home and community environments. The *Child and Family Worker* works closely with the family to deal with the unexpected obstacles and challenges that occur once supervision ends, and to use these as an opportunity to further develop and refine the safety planning and to enhance skill development.

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We are very confident about our decision to revamp this program. Using a strength-based, solution-focused and safety-oriented approach, we are working collaboratively with families to develop skills and environments that promote positive, safe and healthy relationships and interactions. Through the structured family visitation service and other support provided by the team, families can learn necessary skills, unlearn unhealthy and harmful behavioural patterns and responses, and increase their resources and natural support systems so that supervision is no longer required. Through collaboration, engagement and a commitment to work toward specific goals, family members can learn to interact appropriately in their family and community settings.

Psychotropic Medications

Recent research within our agency has determined that an alarming number of our children are using psychotropic medication, and that many are prescribed multiple medications. Many of our children have been using psychotropic medications for years. In many cases, there appears to be a lack of clarity among resource parents and our staff as to the reasons the medication was prescribed and the benefits and side effects of the medication, and minimal indication of regular discussions between our caregivers and physicians.

“Through collaboration, engagement and a commitment to work toward specific goals, family members can learn to interact appropriately in their family and community settings.”

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As a result, we have asked our resource parents and workers to engage in regular medication reviews with our children's physicians and specialists. Our intention is to ensure, on a regular and collaborative basis, that the medication remains both beneficial and necessary for the child and that alternate treatment strategies are explored. We may at times be asking whether medications can feasibly be discontinued to assess baselines.

These processes are not intended to question medical expertise or judgment. Like any concerned parent, our intent is to keep ourselves fully informed of our children's medical needs and well-being. We understand that long term use of psychotropic medication carries risk, and that informed consent comes with the responsibility of ensuring the child's best interests are met. No parent wishes their child to be on medication, and while we recognize

that medication is beneficial in many instances, our hope is that with a collaborative effort we can reduce or eliminate the use of medication wherever feasible.

Repatriation Efforts

We are continually making every effort to repatriate our youth who are residing in group care outside of our jurisdiction and return them to local foster family settings. This year, we successfully helped transition seven youth from group care to family-based foster care and local group care.

As mentioned, this was a very busy year for the residential sector and we believe next year will be busier with more permanency success stories, touching adoption stories, great kinship reunification stories and unbelievable outcomes for our children and youth.

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“Exchange isn't a year in your life; but a life in a year.”

It has been said that the Children's Aid helps kids, in any and all situations, but when you hear that, you don't exactly get to see the level they are prepared to go to in order to help a student's dreams come true.

I have had the privilege of receiving this help first hand, and without their emotional and financial support I never would have had the opportunity to travel half-way across the world and live for a year as a *Rotary Youth Exchange* student in Denmark.

During the past nine months, I have had the privilege of doing things that I have never had the chance to do before in Canada. Whether they are small or big things, like flying in an airplane, flying in a helicopter, sailing a boat, visiting Ikea, having the opportunity to have a mini-exchange to Italy with my class, learning a new language or going to my first concert (*Red Hot Chili Peppers*), the things that I have done this year have allowed me to break out of my comfort zone and learn to do things I have never done before. But there is more to this year abroad than meets the eye. You can count all

the little things that I have done, but the things that count the most are, in fact, the things that you cannot see to count. They are the changes that have happened within me. They may have been small changes; little things that I didn't even notice, that over time changed the entirety of who I am. It has shaped me, matured me, and has given me more life experience than I ever could have bargained for. And I am entirely grateful to the Children's Aid Society who has fulfilled this dream of mine and has supported me the entire way. The thanks that I feel can never be measured into words.

Tabatha S. Pilon



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My experience in Brazil,
thanks to CAS.

In 2008, I started an unpredictable and thrilling experience as a *Rotary International Youth Exchange* student. I put all my fears behind me and boarded a plane, not knowing what to expect. I quickly fell in love with this tropical country blessed with natural resources.

After a year in this wonderful country, I returned to Canada as a changed young woman. I now had an unquenchable desire for adventure. I quickly began making plans to return to Brazil to pursue post-secondary education. CAS has supported me every step of the way, celebrating my successes and motivating me each passing day to be the best person I can be. CAS has supported me emotionally and financially for

the past few years. Since I've been in Brazil, I've grown in ways that I'm not even sure I know how to explain. I've become tolerant, compassionate, and have a new found passion to try and change the world. When I say I have a passion to change the world, I don't mean to say that I'll ever be able to put an end to hunger or be able to create world peace, what I mean is that little by little I can share my experiences with other people hoping to at least impact their lives, even in the smallest way.

I was the first student that the CAS of SD&G sent on an international exchange, and since my time other CAS students have gone. There is one particular girl who comes to mind. Her name is Tabatha. In 2009, I was back in Canada and this shy radiant young woman was on relief at my foster mother's house. So I began to tell her

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all about Rotary and youth exchange, and how I was going back to Brazil to go to university. At the time, I thought this shy young girl couldn't care less about my life. Six months later I got a Facebook friend request, and it was her! I accepted, and then shortly after received a thank you message. She told me my experiences had inspired her, and that she too had been accepted to be a Canadian Ambassador, a *Rotary Youth Exchange Student*. I was thrilled for her, and very impressed with myself and what I was slowly accomplishing. I was helping promote world peace. Rotary has a quote that says "If every person was an exchange student, there would be no more wars." I couldn't agree more!

Looking back to 2008, I couldn't have imagined how this experience would forever change my life and the lives of other youth in care. I wouldn't have had all these wonderful opportunities if it wasn't for the wonderful people at CAS. I'm positive that I wouldn't be able to say that I am getting a BA in International Relations in Recife, Pernambuco, BRAZIL without their devotion and support. ☆

Charlene Letcher

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Over the last year the Children's Aid Society has worked diligently to develop the public relations sector of the agency in order to increase the agency's visibility, public awareness and community involvement.

Our goal each year is to further expand our reach in the community of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry so that the community members/families we serve truly understand our mandate – "We are here to help"! Mutually beneficial relationships with our community partners have grown even stronger over the past year, and more and more businesses/organizations are stepping forward to collaborate with us on many community initiatives and to help realize identified goals.

We have achieved successful results through focusing attention in three different areas – Communication, Community Events Collaboration and Special Projects:

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Communication

Open communication with our community is vital to reaching our goals. Print and radio media have assisted us greatly by publishing numerous articles and ads focused on foster recruitment, local CAS success stories and covering our community involvement/organized events. We have also maximized the use of our external website to share agency messages that are highlighted internally each month such as *'Tips on Parenting Teens'*, *'Safe Sleeping'* and *'The 2nd Annual Children's Aid Society Kids Camp Golf Tournament'*. Last but not least, we have conducted over 40 community presentations on duty to report and/or foster recruitment in order to educate and bust commonly held myths.

Community Events Collaboration

The Children's Aid Society has become an essential part of key community events in the SD&G area. Our presence was unquestionable with the Lift Off and Winterfest/Family Day events. These two community events are recognized as the largest events offered by Cornwall. For both, we were the title sponsor of the Family Fun Zone which was free of charge and offered families a plethora of activities for kids of all ages. Both were huge successes and served thousands of families in the community. In addition, we entered the Children's Aid Float in November's Santa Claus Parade, showcasing our foster recruitment message with a focus on our youth. Finally, our Child Abuse Prevention Campaign marked by the Purple Ribbon is an ever-growing phenomenon. Educating and bringing awareness of abuse prevention and related issues is the main goal of this campaign. We more than doubled our efforts last year and engaged twice the number of community partners and schools to participate in the community activities geared toward the ultimate goal of keeping children/youth safe.

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Special Projects

2011 brought about a very special project called "I Am your Children's Aid". This is usually done at the provincial level in Toronto where ordinary people such as youth in care, foster parents, staff and community caregivers are used in ad campaigns to talk about their successes with the Children's Aid Society. We believed, however, that our community is filled with

untold success stories and that local people from SD&G would best represent our community and our Children's Aid Society. As such, four local models were chosen to share their stories of success. Watch for Lise (staff), Pat (foster dad), Diana (youth in care) and Wanda (community caregiver), as they will inspire you with real life stories of resilience and hope.



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Who are our employees?

As of December 31, 2011, the Agency had 148 employees – 104 union, 8 contract, and 36 non-union. The majority of our employees (88%) are female and 12% are male. As you can imagine, this female composition brought several maternity leaves – 12 of our employees had babies last year. Nine employees left our organization in 2011, with four of them retiring after many years of service. This influenced the number of positions we needed to fill and, when added to new positions to help with our volume of service, this resulted in 41 positions being posted last year, 32 of which were filled – 21 internally and 11 externally.

Last summer, our summer employment program was formalized by opening positions to our employees' children who were enrolled in college or university, and we hired eight summer students who actively contributed to the life of the organization.

During this past year, the Human Resources department was also busy developing an orientation program for newly hired employees, enhancing our employee recognition program, and rolling out a new performance review tool for all employees. Furthermore, we were successful in negotiating a new collective agreement which will take us into 2015. ✨

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"In my 32 years of service with the Children's Aid Society, engaging with children, youth and their families has provided me with the opportunity to support them as they have fought to overcome life's challenges. Being able to follow many of our youth throughout the years and watch them fulfill their dreams has been an honor too great for words. These individuals have touched my life and have shown me the true meaning of resilience and leadership."

Lise

Children's Aid Worker



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"I Am Your Children's Aid."

For more information, please visit our website at www.casstdg.ca

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Working with families and children of our communities using the *Signs of Safety* approach.

With the implementation of Differential Response in 2006 and the resulting organizational structure, there was a need to improve communication and relationships between teams and departments, as well as achieve better child welfare outcomes for our children and families. In 2008, the search began to find a strength based model to support the implementation of the Differential Response Model. After doing research on clinical approaches used in the field, in 2009 the CAS of SD&G endorsed the *Signs of Safety* Approach to Child Welfare Practice. The model set out a common approach and process which supported joint group decision-making.

Signs of Safety is a structured approach to child protection practice that addresses the seriousness of alleged or substantiated maltreatment while maximizing the possibility of collaboration between families and workers. This approach recognizes that all families have competencies and strengths. Families keep their children safe, at least some and usually most of the time. Family members are potential partners in building safety as are other professionals, extended family and friends.

In May 2010, a formal internal committee was formed to strategize on how to implement the model across the agency. In September 2011, the CAS of SD&G successfully implemented and integrated the approach into daily practice. The approach is being integrated with staff, children, families and community partners.

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The *Signs of Safety* approach to child welfare practice emphasizes empowering families. Over the past two years, the Agency has seen an increase of 100% in referrals to ADR (Family Group Conferencing and Mediation) as an alternative to court process as well as increasing family involvement.

The Agency has committed to making *Signs of Safety* a part of our culture. The Agency continues to offer internal training on how to use frameworks, tools and joint decision making techniques. There have been committees developed to support moving the *Signs of Safety* approach forward and becoming fully enmeshed in our daily practices. Throughout our rollout of the *Signs of Safety*, we have invested in receiving ongoing support and guidance from Olmsted County, as they have worked hand in hand with Andrew Turnell (founder of the approach) for years and have more than 10 years of experience in working with the *Signs of Safety*.

“The Signs of Safety approach to child welfare practice emphasizes empowering families.”

Coming back from Olmsted County in April 2011, CAS of SD&G began to implement the *Signs of Safety* Framework into the Screening team's daily work and clinical practice. The team is using the framework to identify danger and risk, complicating factors and agency history, as well as strengths and protective factors already existing in families, to ensure that all of the reporter's information is identified.

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Since implementing *Signs of Safety* with the Screening team, we have noticed that using the framework at the referral and reporting stage has directly impacted the quality of service we provide our families.

The Screening team now invites all our teams of front line staff to these meetings, where under *SOS* we make group decisions on how to best service our families. Since implementing *Signs of Safety* with the Screening team, we have noticed that using the framework at the referral and reporting stage has directly impacted the quality of service we provide our families. In reviewing the report of alleged abuse or neglect with a team of protection workers, we are now able to clearly identify danger(s) or risk(s) to a child(ren) and identify next steps, formulate clear plans and highlight existing safety for workers who may become involved with families we work with. Our staff and families have told us that this strength based approach has really enhanced our ability to work collaboratively with them.

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Our Forensic Unit Team (mainly focusing on cases of physical and sexual abuse) has also started to implement the *Signs of Safety* approach into their daily work with families. The Forensic Team has begun to implement a *Resolution Approach* when dealing with certain cases. The Approach falls within the *SOS Framework* and focuses on developing future safety for the children in the care of their parents. We have already started to see much success with this approach.

With one family, a four year old girl presented with various bruises and marks on her body and indicated that this was caused by her step-father when she was bad. The step-father denied that he had caused the injuries to the child. At the start of the Society's involvement, prior to introducing the *Resolution Approach*, the progress was unclear as the "denial" dispute was the main focus. The family had repeatedly

indicated that they were frustrated by the process and appeared hopeless about CAS' involvement. Subsequently, a decision was made to use a *Resolutions Approach* with this family. The main focus was allowing the family to lead the direction of the case, while supporting the Society's bottom line. This enabled the family to use their supportive network to make a plan for the children in their care and ensure their future safety.

The worker with the family has stated that:

"Resolution work allows the family and their support systems to feel in control of their situation. This allows for acceptance of the Society's position and dedication to the safety plan. The words and pictures sessions allows the child to express fears and concerns in a safe and supportive environment. The process empowers the family while utilizing additional supports to protect the child."

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The step-father stated that through his experience with the Resolution Approach:

"We have learned a lot with our family parenting worker. She has helped us with different techniques on discipline and how to better understand children. We have a great worker as well that keeps in great contact with us and is very nice with us, as well as the children. We did an exercise with them and our daughter where she had her very own story book where she would draw her own pictures to show how she feels and we thought it was a great idea because children have a hard time expressing themselves with words. We had many meetings with C.A.S and our family and friends and every meeting went very well. Everyone's questions were answered and no one felt left out or ignored so this made everyone, as well as ourselves, very happy and pleased with how we were treated and respected. Thank you." ☆

"Hello, my name is Wanda. I know by looking at this picture you can't see my past, but it was full of troubled times. I used to think that it would be impossible to overcome the obstacles in my life, but with the help of the Children's Aid Society and the support of my loved ones, I have found success. Now, my addiction is to my family and my life. I am proud to be me!"
Wanda, Mother



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"I Am Your Children's Aid."

For more information, please visit our website at www.casdsg.ca



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A New FACE

A brand new initiative to help our former youth in care.

The Society is committed to ensuring that our former Crown Wards have the opportunity to succeed and to reach their full potential. Every now and then these young adults may require assistance from the Society after leaving care or terminating their *ECM Agreements*.

The Society wants to support these young people as good parents do! *The Fund for After Care Emergencies* (FACE) allows the Society to do so. The establishment of this Fund was made possible by the generous contributions of resource parents and staff. The FACE committee, made up of members of the staff as well as foster parents, reviews each and every request, big or small. The process set in place supports one point of access, minimal intrusiveness, and a quick response to requests.

In its first year, FACE has helped 10 young adults and provided over \$8,600 in assistance. The most common request was for help with tuition or loan repayment related to post-secondary school. Other requests included assistance with rent and electrical utilities. Most of the young adults tell us they receive the information about FACE from their former foster parents, which is great news.

All in all, we believe that we have had a very successful first year... and if you hear of a former Crown Ward needing a hand, don't forget to send him or her our way. We would love to help! ✨

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Summer can be a time that takes its toll on families during the long, hot months when children are not in school.

The agency recognized that there was a need to assist families in this situation both to create positive summer experiences for the children and also to provide the families with a much needed break. Summer camp is a place for children to dream, explore, imagine and learn about themselves. In 2010, the agency started a *Camp Fund* initiative in order to raise funds so that community children whose families are working with the agency can be provided with the rich experience of attending summer camp.

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As the government does not allocate funds for this group of children, the *Camp Fund Committee* raises funds through donations from the community and by hosting the *CAS Community Kids Camp Fund – Golf Tournament*. Last year, \$36,000 was raised and 84 children were provided with the opportunity to attend camp. This year, the agency's goal is to increase these numbers as well as the quality of the experience for the families. Specifically, the agency is organizing busses which will transport the parents and children to the camps. The parents will have the opportunity to share in the

excitement of meeting the camp counselors, seeing where the children will spend their time, meeting with the camp nurse and helping their child settle into the camp setting before saying good-bye for the week.

This year's fund raising activities include general donations from local businesses and organizations, the *Second Annual CAS Community Kids Camp Fund – Golf Tournament* and a very generous donation from the *Max Keeping Foundation*. ✨



