



December 2011

Dear Friends,

First and foremost, thank you for your generosity over the past years. As the new Executive Director of Algoma Family Services I am humbled by the support from our community. You have opened your hearts to the needs of children and youth who struggle each and every day with their mental health. The benefit of your donation is immeasurable and we thank you for helping our local young people in their quest to gain some semblance of wellness.

You can be assured that the 420 local children, youth and their families who benefited from your support last year are eternally grateful.

Your donation has made a difference in their lives; developing social and life skills in local youth, helping teen girls manage their depression, allowing clients access to mountain biking and rock climbing at our summer day camp, bringing families together to learn parenting and coping skills and providing a safe place for women who have been abused to express their feelings through art therapy.

Much of my career was spent in the hospital sector as a registered nurse where I witnessed many positive changes in the delivery of healthcare. Yet the challenges of mental illness continue to be complicated and misunderstood especially as it impacts on our children. Why is it that we feel shame and disgrace in the face of mental illness? Why as a society do we regard mental illness as socially unacceptable?

This stigma creates a huge barrier for local families and the result can be deadly.

Teen suicide and mental health issues have never been so prominent in the media, or around the dinner table. We have heard from many Canadians who have championed the cause, Margaret Trudeau, Valerie and Catherine Pringle, Sheldon Kennedy, Theo Fleury and most recently Allan Hubley an Ottawa City Councillor whose 15 year old son Jamie experienced much pain due to his depression and bullying that he took his own young life last month.

We know that there are 'Jamies' in our neighbourhoods - help us to help them. Help us to eliminate the unnecessary suffering and resulting tragedies.

Your support will serve to decrease the waitlists and long wait times for our services. Families seeking services in an emergency department do not have to wait days.

Why then do we tolerate wait lists when it comes to mental health emergencies?

Young people cannot afford to wait, they need to start treatment and the sooner the better. **Their lives may depend on it!**

That is why I am asking for your help today.

You are very important to the children and youth of Sault Ste. Marie and the Algoma District, **you** are their Champions. Please continue your generous support of early intervention and prevention programs as this positive intervention will be the defining moment for young people suffering with mental illness in Algoma.

During this season of hope and family celebration, please consider a gift that will help us to intervene early allowing our local children and youth to get the help they so desperately need. They are deserving of the best care so that they in turn can become champions and experience a happy and healthy life. Thank you! Merci!

Best wishes for a healthy and joyous Holiday season.

Warmest regards,



Pierrette Brown, Executive Director
Algoma Family Services