

**Family Services à la famille Ottawa – 312 Parkdale Avenue
Celebrating Our 90th Anniversary
(The 6th of 9 articles leading up to our Birthday Celebrations in May 2005)**

*Did you know..... We helped start Ottawa's Community Resource Centres?
(1964-1974)*

Under our previous name, Ottawa Welfare Bureau, our agency provided relief services for over 40 years, often visioning a renewed mandate of providing counselling and advocacy services. Perhaps this vision expressed our hope of developing a system for preventing families from reaching the point of dire need, as so often seen in the first 40 years of our work. Finally, in 1955, our counselling work began under our new agency name, Family Service Centre of Ottawa-Carleton (FSC), under the direction of Executive Director, Miss Florence Christie.

Miss Christie resigned in 1964 and FSC chose Evelyn McCorkell to take her place. FSC had been at 251 Bank Street for several years, but by the end of this decade, they would be on the move again, settling in Tunney's Pasture and then later, Ross Avenue. This decade brought a number of "firsts", but one thing that remained constant from this point on was FSC's reputation as a premier place to receive counselling, as well as a pioneer in community building.

Ms. McCorkell worked hard to improve agency casework practices, but also felt that our agency needed to be more integral to the community. As a result, an active outreach policy focusing on preventive work became the vision of FSC during this time period. In many ways, this focus mirrored the visions of earlier years when there was a sense of optimism that with the right effort and enough support, many of the stressors that inflicted families and neighbourhoods could be eradicated. This approach was embraced by Family agencies both in Canada and the U.S. Consequently, the Family Service Centre of Ottawa-Carleton began to forge new partnerships and expand its reach into the community.

The most notable example of FSC's expansion into community outreach was the highly successful After-4 Program. Initially launched by the Central Volunteer Bureau, it was one of the first after-school programs in the province aimed at providing a positive, healthy atmosphere for Centretown

children, usually from lower income families. In 1966 FSC accepted full responsibility for running this program and experienced terrific success. The program initially involved volunteers organizing events, activities and games for children, but staff were also able to connect with parents via this program and found that many were dealing with multiple problems. The After-4 Program thus allowed FSC to reach out to families who might not otherwise have connected with the agency, providing an opportunity to offer a variety of creative services to support local families, including outings and family events, in addition to providing core counselling services. An unexpected bonus was that this dynamic service was a lot of fun for staff too. Despite rave reviews the program ended in 1971, but its success had convinced School Boards of the need for community programming and After-School programming. FSC had pioneered the way to establishing another important community service.

In this 6th decade of FSC history, the agency developed two other innovative approaches that continue to represent a core part of the services we offer today. Family Life Education was introduced in 1967-68, and in 1971, FSC was a leading contributor to establishing the organizations we now know as our Community Resource Centres, 15 of which operate throughout Ottawa today, providing social and health services. Two FSC staff members, Gus Fraser and Joan Gullen, were instrumental in the operation of our outreach programs. Joan was the leading community advocate of her generation, whereas Gus Fraser's name became synonymous with Family Life Education. Another invaluable staff member during this time was Moe Turner. Joining the organization in 1967, he offered both clinical supervision and leadership, eventually becoming Associate Director. Mr. Turner served the agency for over 26 years.

The Family Service Centre maintained its position as a leader in family counselling during this decade and began to also direct professional skills toward group counselling work. Efforts made in the next decade would play a major role in shaping the kinds of services FSC would offer up to the present day.

(Next issue, Decade #7, 1974-1984).