

Reach for the Rainbow named BMO Winter Gala beneficiary!

Reach for the Rainbow is honoured to be selected as the beneficiary of the upcoming 2008 BMO Employee Charity Winter Gala to be held in Toronto on November 14th.



BMO employees lead and manage the BMO Employee Charitable Foundation, and choose every charity that is supported. Because all administration costs are covered by BMO Financial Group, every dollar raised in these efforts goes directly to charity, benefiting thousands of people in need.

Karen Kingsley, BMO marketing specialist, suggested Reach for the Rainbow as this year's beneficiary because her sister, Mandy was a YMCA John Island camper and staff volunteer through Reach for the Rainbow. Mandy still speaks of the great times she had at John Island, kayaking and participating in camping activities. For Karen and her family, it meant a lot to see Mandy accepted as a fellow camper.

Why not explore the ways in which you and your employer may be able to help Reach for the Rainbow transform the lives of even more children and youth with disabilities? 🙌

The End of the Rainbow

Can you name that newsletter?

This newsletter comes to you under the temporary name of "Inside the Rainbow", but we're on the search for a permanent new name, and we need your help! Have any ideas? Submit your suggestions for newsletter names to info@ReachfortheRainbow.ca. The winning submission will receive a free copy of



the stunning pictorial book: "The National Parks of Canada", foreword by David Suzuki (2004), and will be announced in our summer edition of the newsletter.

You're invited ...

Get connected at Reach for the Rainbow's new Facebook fan page. If you're a camp counsellor, a camper, a partner in integration, a parent, or a supporter, you'll appreciate this chance to connect with other Reach families and friends online. Become a "fan" and share your Reach for the Rainbow stories and your favourite camp photos with the rest of us. Help spread awareness about our programs and the benefits of inclusion! Find us at:



www.facebook.com/pages/Reach-For-The-Rainbow/43559308920.

Don't forget your free calendar

Don't miss a date in 2009! Get a free Reach for the Rainbow calendar. Contact Laurie Pringle at LPringle@ReachfortheRainbow.ca or by phone at ext. 124 for your copy.

Happy holidays to all of you – from all of us!

Thank you for supporting the children and youth who depend upon Reach for the Rainbow programming. We wish you peace, happiness and belonging during the holidays and all year long. 🙌

Give the **Gift of Belonging** all year long!

- Yes, I want to make a monthly Gift of Belonging of: \$5 \$10 \$15 or \$_____
- I have enclosed a cheque marked VOID. Please debit the above amount from my bank account or
- Please charge my credit card Visa Mastercard Amex

I would like to make a single gift. Please see over...

CARD NUMBER _____ EXPIRY _____

SIGNATURE _____

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____ EMAIL _____

We guarantee you can contact us to change or stop your monthly gift at any time. A tax receipt for the sum of your annual contributions will be sent to you at the end of each calendar year. Reach for the Rainbow is a registered charity #11911 1748 RR0001.



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Everyone wants a Rainbow kid

by Lucinda Hage

Congratulations to Lucinda Hage who won \$5,000 to be donated to Reach for the Rainbow. Her article, Everyone Wants a Rainbow Kid, was chosen as the winning submission in Imagine Canada's "You Give. We Thank." contest, part of the first annual Thanks & Giving campaign, aimed at encouraging philanthropy during Thanksgiving. Our thanks go out to Lucinda, and Thanks & Giving partners Imagine Canada, Maclean's Magazine, CanadaHelps and contest sponsor Investors Group. The November 17th edition of Maclean's is available on newsstands now.



My son Paul is putting his warm socks and a sweater in his bag. Tomorrow he is going to YMCA Wanakita in Haliburton, operated by the YMCA of Hamilton /Burlington, with his buddy Alex for the fall cleanup. It's a great way for Paul to give back to the place where he has been a camper and volunteer for twelve years.

This is the latest in a long list of benefits our family has experienced thanks to Paul's involvement with Reach for the Rainbow.

As I look back on the last decade, the impact integrated camping has made on Paul's emotional and psychological development has been truly astounding. Paul wasn't an easy kid to raise. His neurological condition, Tuberous Sclerosis Complex, brought with it a difficult seizure disorder, a significant intellectual disability, autistic behaviour and aggressiveness. This left Paul isolated from the kids in our neighbourhood and placed him in a segregated

class in school. The Boy Scouts didn't want him and neither did the Sunday school.

For self preservation and with the help of Reach for the Rainbow, I enrolled Paul at YMCA Wanakita when he was ten years old. That first summer, I asked his counsellor if he was the only one working with campers through Reach. Oh no, he replied. I have to alternate with other counsellors – everyone wants a Rainbow kid!

Excuse me. Are you saying you want Paul? I could feel a weight lift from my chest as a smile filled my face. Every summer since then and some March breaks in between, Paul was treated like a regular kid. His role models were well trained young counsellors and the campers who accepted and valued him for who he is. They encouraged him to try new things, come out of his isolating shell, have fun and celebrate the joys of summer – without parents!

Now that Paul is 22, I have a deeper appreciation of how camp helped Paul develop his feelings of self worth. From an early age he learned to trust his Reach counsellors and the entire camp experience. He learned how to interact appropriately with his peers and to

believe in himself. Each summer Paul grew a little more and so did my expectations of him.

The positive experiences of camp contributed to other opportunities for Paul. When he was sixteen he was hired by Parks Canada as a summer student to work on the Trent Severn Waterway. Paul is still there and he is now referred to as a 'canalie' – one of the 'guys'. He had his first holiday without parents – a week on a houseboat with other young adults. This year Paul was hired part time by the Holiday Inn. With the support of a job coach he not only does a good job vacuuming, his positive attitude motivates other employees.

In the early years our family life was like a roller coaster. There was, however, one constant – each summer Reach for the Rainbow enabled Paul to go to camp – to a place where he belonged.

My heart is filled with gratitude to this organization. I could write more about how camp benefited my sanity and my marriage but space and time constraints prevent it. Besides, we still have some packing to do: Hey Paul, don't forget your sleeping bag! 🙌

Making Ontario a truly accessible and barrier-free province

Reach for the Rainbow (RFTR) is excited to announce the creation of our new Community Investment Initiative, thanks to a grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

As part of the new initiative, three volunteer-based advisories in London, Hamilton and Sudbury will help RFTR better understand and respond to the needs of families in areas outside of Toronto.

The three advisories will collaborate with local agencies working in the field of disability issues, families, and corporate contacts. They'll promote awareness of disability and integration, expand RFTR's year-round program offerings to these areas, and ultimately lay the groundwork for successful province-wide fundraising initiatives.

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Brett Rutledge, a former Sr. Program Coordinator with Reach for the Rainbow, takes on the new role of Community Investments Manager. He will work together with Jamieson Scott, RFTR's new Development Coordinator, to promote the goal of integration province-wide.

Roughly 82% of RFTR participants reside in outlying regions of Toronto. And program statistics show that the areas of Hamilton, London, and Sudbury have a long-standing commitment and clear need for our services. By increasing communication with these areas, RFTR can engage local communities, increase integration opportunities and respite for families, and enrich lives across the province.

And this is just the beginning! Our hope is to eventually launch even more advisory committees throughout the province.

If you live in the London, Hamilton, or Sudbury areas and would like to join an advisory committee, please do not hesitate to contact Brett Rutledge at ext. 150 or brutledge@reachfortherainbow.ca.



Discovering potential all year long

Year-round programming is a vital part of Reach for the Rainbow's integration opportunities for children with disabilities. Working with existing programs and providing the one-to-one support of counsellors, Year-round programming opens doors for children who want to take part in gymnastics, Saturday morning clubs, trampoline clubs, dance & drama classes, as well as various other community-based programs.

One of Reach for the Rainbow's largest Year-round programs takes place at the Mississauga YMCA. Each year, about 30 swimmers join integrated lessons with one-to-one support from a qualified YMCA Aquatics Instructor.

The pool is an organized hub of activity, inclusive of children and youth through Reach for the Rainbow. Marija

Marcinko explains, "It's a wonderful, wonderful atmosphere! Not only has Joseph learned the skills of surviving in the deep end, he has tons of fun. He is accepted and part of the community."

But it doesn't end there. Our Sibling's Workshop Series guides brothers and sisters of our camp and year-round participants through interactive play and discussion circles.

Adolescents and children learn how their sibling's needs are similar and different from their own, and how these impact their own role within the family structure. Themes include finding quality times with family members, turning negative scenarios into positive ones, coping with teasing and facing obstacles with counter-advocacy and inclusive strategies.



Did you know?

- In 2008, a total of 883 Reach for the Rainbow children and youth with varying disabilities received 1:1 support at 61 residential and day camps throughout Ontario.
- 84% of overnight campers and 63% of day campers returned from 2007.
- 88 new overnight campers and 113 new day campers joined our programming.
- A \$41,850 grant from Canada Summer Jobs enabled the training and placement of 12 summer students.



Why the Gift of Belonging is so meaningful

by Helen Manning –Reach for the Rainbow Parent & Board Member

Reach for the Rainbow has allowed my daughter Hannah, who has Down syndrome, to become an athlete in her own right ...

When Hannah was 10 years old, I decided that an integrated camp experience would be more suitable for my daughter so I enrolled her in an Island Day Camp. After two days I was contacted by the staff and informed that "Hannah could not cope." I felt strongly that it was not that Hannah who could not cope (she had been attending other camps for several years), but that the staff were unable to creatively integrate her into their programs and totally underestimated her abilities.

Six years later, I found Reach for the Rainbow who integrated Hannah seamlessly into a wonderful two-week overnight experience at one of their partnering camps in Muskoka. Since its inception in 1983, Reach for the Rainbow has had incredible success

providing meaningful opportunities for children, youth and adults with disabilities in Ontario. From the first 20 campers in 1987 to 883 in 2008, there are increasing numbers of families seeking support, thus straining Reach for the Rainbow's resource base. However, current initiatives cannot be maintained, nor new ones undertaken, without new sources of funding.

It is for this reason that I would like to invite you to give the *Gift of Belonging* this holiday season.

Help sustain Reach for the Rainbow's vital work and create new programs in regions throughout Ontario where integrated programs do not exist. Help eliminate barriers and provide a future where *all* children are able to enjoy every opportunity to *Reach for the Rainbow* and fulfill their dreams.

Simply send in your donation along

with the attached reply form. And remember, you *can* create possibilities and transform the lives of some remarkable children and youth with your gift today!

Do you have someone who's hard to buy for this holiday season?

Consider giving the *Gift of Belonging* in his or her honour. Reach for the Rainbow will send a seasonal greeting card to the person on your shopping list, indicating that you have given the priceless *Gift of Belonging* to a child with disabilities this holiday season. To make a gift donation, simply visit ReachfortheRainbow.ca and click on the "Donate Now" icon – or contact Laurie Pringle by phone at ext. 124 or via email at: LPringle@ReachfortheRainbow.ca

Give the Gift of Belonging today!

Yes, I want to make a one time Gift of Belonging of: \$25 \$35 \$45 or \$_____

I have enclosed a cheque made payable to "Reach for the Rainbow" or
 Please charge my credit card Visa Mastercard Amex

CARD NUMBER _____ EXPIRY _____

SIGNATURE _____

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____ EMAIL _____

Reach for the Rainbow cares about your privacy. We will never rent, trade or sell any of your personal information. Reach for the Rainbow is a registered charity #11911 1748 RR0001.

I would like to make a monthly gift. Please see over...



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