

January to June 2025



Summer Greetings from the Teresa Group!
Dear Teresa Group Family,

As summer begins to unfold, I am confident you're finding time to enjoy the longer days and warmer weather that we have. At the Teresa Group, we're reflecting on a busy spring and look forward to the programs and events that the summer months bring.

This is also a great time to acknowledge the dedication and hard work of our staff team and dear volunteers. Their commitment to our mission is truly inspiring, and we are incredibly grateful for all their contributions. We've seen some fantastic results this past season, and we're excited to build on that momentum as we head into the second half of this year.

Looking ahead, we have some exciting programs and events planned for the summer, including the Back-to-school Backpack program, Summer Camp Mandala, The Clarins Scholarship Program, the Stewardship Scholarship Program and the Springfling program. We'll be sharing more details about these programs in our future newsletter, so stay tuned!

In the meantime, we encourage you to take some time to recharge and enjoy the summer season. Whether you're exploring new places, spending time with loved ones, or simply relaxing, we hope you find moments of joy and rejuvenation.

Thank you for your continued support of the Teresa Group. We couldn't do what we do without all of your support.

Sincerely,
Rajesh Pisharody

Executive Director, The Teresa Group.



Teresa Group
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Land Acknowledgment

With humility and respect, we acknowledge that the Teresa Group is situated on the traditional territories of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, the Haudenosaunee, Six Nations, and the Huron-Wendat and home to many diverse First Nations, Métis, and Inuit People from across Turtle Island. We also acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit, and the Williams Treaties signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands. We are very grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.



Each February we come together to observe and participate in Black History Month, celebrating its people, diversity, impacts, and legacy. The Teresa Group hosted the Annual Black History Month Event once again. A group of children and youth came together to acknowledge this important recognition and celebrate the community. A day of traditional foods and dance the clients were able to experience long standing traditions and learnings that are so important. The children and youth had an exceptional time engaging with each other, learning more about black history, and experiencing community.

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Hearing the Voices of Children

The Power Project

The Teresa Group hosted an event for the Power Project Program. The Positive Women's Empowerment & Resilience Project formerly known as "Circle of Care" is a collaboration agreement between five organizations. This Agreement outlines the objectives, organizational commitments, and structures of oversight and operational decision-making of the five Partners. These five partners include The Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention ("Black CAP"), Toronto People with Aids Foundation PWA, The Teresa Group, Prisoners with HIV/Aids Support Action Network (PASAN), and the Aids Committee of Toronto (ACT).

The Program is grounded in the principles of GIPA/MEPA with a goal to create opportunities to empower women living with HIV through knowledge exchange, capacity Building, and to receive peer support.



Provincial Infant Formula Program



Infant
Formula
Program

This program is funded through the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

This program is a biotechnical intervention that eliminates the risk of HIV transmission through breast milk by offering free infant formula for a year to all HIV+ new mothers in Ontario. The program is funded through the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. For more information visit our website or contact Silvana Fuentes at sfuentes@teresagroup.ca, 416-596-7703

Welcome Home Baby Bag



Welcome Home Baby Bag delivers a new diaper bag, filled with newborn stuff to new mothers while in the hospital or at home. To donate please check our website or contact with Silvana Fuentes at sfuentes@teresagroup.ca, or 416-596-7703,

Hearing the Voices of Children



An annual gathering to celebrate Mother's Day and to celebrate the "Mothers" of the Teresa Group. A day of community, engagement, and the opportunity to express through Art. Artistic expression gives people the chance to express feelings and thoughts through the art form. The results were outstanding. The support programs provide a safe and supportive space to connect, share, and learn from each other. The annual Mothers Day event was met with excitement and enthusiasm and provided a welcoming and warm space for our clients to feel like they belong.

Hearing the Voices of Children



For many years the Teresa Group has had an incredible partnership with Patagonia.

Patagonia, an outdoor apparel company, was founded 1973 in Ventura, California. Initially, the company focused on selling climbing gear, but it later expanded into clothing for various outdoor activities. Patagonia is known for its commitment to environmental sustainability and corporate responsibility, which has been a core part of its business model since its inception.

Patagonia through its generous charitable footprint has supplied the Teresa Group with new clothes for all seasons. Because of this meaningful partnership we can share these gifts with the children youth, and families we serve.

We cant thank Patagonia enough for their continued commitment and generosity.

Hearing the Voices of Children



With heartfelt Thanks to our Friend Marg Cameron for all the time dedicated to making these wonderful Quilts, Blankets, Bibs, and Pillowcases.



Membership

By becoming a member of The Teresa Group, you are contributing to advocate for the rights of children and their families affected by HIV/AIDS, and specifically the needs of children and youth living with HIV/AIDS.

Interested in membership can email the Communications Manager, Robert Walker at rwalker@teresagroup.ca



The Teresa Group works to advance the dignity and well-being of children and families affected by HIV and AIDS.

Donations

YOU as a donor can make a difference! Consider supporting the work of the Teresa Group by donating.
www.teresagroup.ca

Hearing the Voices of Children

Celebrating 35 years of Connections between The Teresa Group and Sick Kids Hospital.

This year, we celebrate 35 years of TTG and Sick Kids HIV Program staff working together for children, youth and their families living with or impacted by HIV.

The Sick Kids Hospital HIV Program was started by Dr. Stanley Read in 1988. At that time 35 boys in the Hemophilia program at Sick Kids Hospital had become infected with HIV through blood products, about 20 children were infected through blood transfusions before blood was screened for HIV, and babies born to parents with HIV were beginning to be diagnosed with HIV.

In 1990, Penelope HOLETON, and early supporters like Joyce Henry, consulted Dr. Read and identified the need for a community agency to support children, youth and their parents living with HIV. Penelope became the founding Executive Director of the Teresa Group. Thus, in turn, the important relationship between The Teresa Group (TTG) and Sick Kids Hospital began.

TTG's first actions were to find and train volunteers to connect with families impacted by HIV referred by Sick Kids Hospital clinical staff. Penelope designed the development of programs in consultation with the community, to support the families impacted by HIV. The Family Support Program included counselling on the special issues of living with HIV, Welcome New Baby Bag program and the Return to School Backpack program. There were Summer Camps, Holiday Parties, Provincial Infant Formula Program HIV positive mothers with newborns, Leading the Way, a program to support children and youth around disclosure of their HIV status and Leap for Success a tutoring program for children to support them with their schoolwork. This was a program for infected and affected children and youth aimed at fun activities and group support for living with HIV in the family.

Over the years, TTG and Sick Kids Hospital staff worked together to provide services and support programs, always protecting privacy of health and family information. We encouraged parents and youth to manage their health and the stigma of HIV. We supported parents' processes on disclosure of HIV to their children and the children when they were informed of this.

The Infant Formula Program, started by Penelope HOLETON, and continuing to this day, was also a major connection for TTG and Sick Kids hospital. Starting during pregnancy, we tried to ensure that every mother was referred to TTG for support to prevent HIV transmission through breastmilk, to manage formula feeding and to obtain free infant formula.

One of the most memorable TTG/Sick Kids connections for me were the clinic groups for youth. These groups were held during Sick Kids teen clinics and led by TTG Social Workers, Simone Shindler and Megan Porter and others. I was involved in the negotiations with Sick Kids Hospital administration to arrange permission for TTG staff, a community agency, to conduct psychotherapeutic group work in the hospital. Sick Kids Hospital administration created new policies for this. They recognized the qualifications and group leadership skills of TTG staff in conducting group work with teens living with HIV. Permission, with accountability, was given for this.

On youth group clinic days, it was exciting to see teenagers rushing into their clinics at Sick Kids Hospital to meet their new friends, all living with HIV, in a private room. With the skilled youth group leadership of TTG social workers, and support and information from clinic staff, everyone learned more about the issues for youth living with HIV. The groups were private but general topics could be discussed with clinic staff. We were so happy to hear about young people encouraging each other to come to clinics, to take their medications every day and live life as normally as possible, while managing the stigma of having HIV.

With Simone and Megan's encouragement, Sick Kids and TTG formed a research group with leadership by Barbara Muskat, PhD, Director of Social Work at Sick Kids. We conducted research on the youth groups and published an article: "Here you feel like it's not taboo": An evaluation of a pediatric hospital-based HIV support group.

Barbara Muskat, Robyn Salter, Simone Shindler, Megan Porter, Ari Bitnun, Journal of HIV/AIDS and Social Services, 2016, Vol. 00, NO. 00, 1-18.

Some anonymous quotes from youth participating in the research were: "It's like talking to someone who knows how I feel" "I feel like I'm not the only person who has this, like other kids do too" "You can just have other kids that are like you, you can just sit there and talk to them. You could see how they are and no different than anybody else".

These young people showed us the value of our community/hospital relationship in bringing together children and youth living with HIV!

What an amazing TTG and Sick Kids connection over 35 years!

**Robyn Salter, Social Worker, Sick Kids HIV Program, 1988-2019
TTG Board Member, 2000-2009, 2023- present**

