

2024



The Teresa Group

InTouch

The new year presents more opportunities to engage, help, make a difference, and lift people up.

The Teresa Group continues to be mindful that HIV amongst children and youth exists and there is still a lot of work to be done to ensure the rights of children and youth impacted by HIV/AIDS. One of the many reasons the staff at the Teresa Group strive to make sure that children and youth impacted by HIV are at the core of the programs we offer. The stigma and discrimination they face is still an issue very relevant to children and youth living with and affected by HIV/AIDS.

What a year we've had operating the programs and services that help so many. Camp Mandala, the Back-to-School Backpack Program, Clarins Scholarship Program, Stewardship Scholarship Program, celebrating Black history, truth & reconciliation, World AIDS day, and our Annual General meeting.

We look forward to engaging with members of our community, funders, donors, and our clients.

Your continued support and contributions is helping us ensure our support to all the communities we serve at the Teresa Group is meaningful and impactful.

The Teresa Group Staff

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.



Camp Mandala 2024 was fun, engaging, inclusive, and another memorable experience. The overnight summer camp experience for children and youth affected by HIV giving kids a chance to connect, engage, and have a special time at camp. With over 40 children and youth from Toronto and Ottawa, and 20 Youth Camp Counsellors the annual trip to Camp Mooreland's was another memorable time. We even have a brand-new Camp logo!



"I felt really good when I told my story at the open stage and after everyone was saying good story and high fiving me" (Camper Aged 11)



Hearing the Voices of Children

Clarins Scholarship

This program offers partial tuition support to youth who have completed high school and have been accepted into a post-secondary program at a college or university. The program is funded through a generous donation from Clarins Canada.

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“I wanted to thank you for this opportunity that you have granted students such as myself, who are ready to take the next step in their education and need the support that you provide.”

Stewardship Scholarship

The Stewardship Scholarship program is the newest educational support program to launch. This program offers partial tuition support to youth who have completed high school and have been accepted into a post-secondary program at a college or University. The program is funded through a generous donation from Chester Devon.

“I am writing to express my heartfelt gratitude for your generous donation to the Clarins and Stewardship Scholarship for students entering their first year of university. Your support is making a profound difference in the lives of young individuals who are striving to overcome not only the challenges of higher education but also the additional hurdles posed by their health conditions.”



Infant Formula Program

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 Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. For more information visit our website or contact with Gloria McEyeson at gmceyeson@teresagroup.ca, 416-596-7703 extension 314.

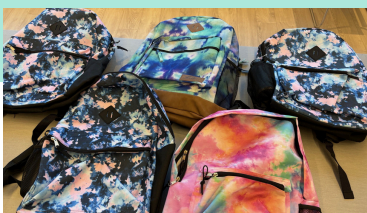


Welcome Home Baby Bag

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, 416-596-7703, extension 320, for more information.

Backpack Program

The annual Back-to-School Backpack Program invited the children and youth in August to come and collect their 2024 new Backpack. This program provides new backpacks, lunch boxes, and water bottles for children and youth from kindergarten to grade 12. With support from donors and foundations we were able to support over 170 children and youth.



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Hearing the Voices of Children



Holiday Programs - December 2024



The Teresa Group ran its annual Holiday Programs December 14 and 15. With over 1000 children, youth, and families coming through we had a great time celebrating the holiday season and sharing gifts with everyone. From Toys to Gift Cards, Food Hampers, and New Clothing we were able to support the many clients we serve.

We handed out 124 Hampers to Families, 227 Toys to the boys and girls, 101 Gift cards to the Youth, and all clients received brand new clothing. It was a special seeing first-hand how grateful the families were to have the support and knowing they have family in the Teresa Group.

The success of these programs is because of the incredible partnerships we have. With heartfelt thanks to the Toronto Prep School, Spearhead, Toronto Star Charities, Toronto Police, MacKenzie Financial, and Patagonia.



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.



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**BLACK COALITION FOR
AIDS PREVENTION**



Black History Month



February 22 2024

In February to celebrate Black History Month a group of clients came together to acknowledge this important recognition. Led by our resident art instructor, Laneigh Ramirez, clients painted pictures of influential figures within the Black Community. Intentional discussions around this critical month and the recognition of the Black community helped round out the program with engagement and shared learnings.



This past year the Teresa Group was thrilled to welcome new staff members to the team. Claudia Medina joined as Programs Manager, Kim Vaz as Family Support Coordinator, Hajjarah Nagadya as Family Support Coordinator, and Robb Walker as the Philanthropy & Communications Manager. The team is growing and excited to continue to diligently work to operate the vital programs and to support the many clients of the Teresa Group.



Hearing the Voices of Children

TRUTH & RECONCILIATION DAY

National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and Orange Shirt Day takes place on September 30. Orange Shirt Day is an Indigenous-led grassroots commemorative day intended to raise awareness of the individual, family, and community inter-generational impacts of residential schools, and to promote the concept of “Every Child Matters”.

On September 28th children and youth came together to make their own Every Child Matters T-shirts, eat traditional Indigenous foods and learning about Indigenous culture through drumming, singing and dancing.



Mothers Day Event

This past may a group of Mothers came together for an evening of social networking, conversation, and even had time to do design some art together. The Teresa Groups support groups provide a safe and supportive environment to connect, engage, and learn. Mother's Day created a perfect opportunity to come and celebrate what it means to be a mother and connect with peers.



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



WORLD AIDS DAY

On November 9th children and youth came together to learn about activism and to start an AIDS Quilt. With engaging speakers to discuss activism and discrimination and an artist to guide the children and youth, they created some incredible panels for our quilt. We came together to reveal our quilt and continue conversations with the children and youth about World AIDS Day and how it continues to affect so many.



Annual General Meeting

The Teresa Group held its Annual General Meeting in September. The coming together of community members, staff, board, and donors was important. We were able to share updates of the last year and together celebrate how far the organization has come and ways we continue to support the Children, Youth, and families we serve.



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



Volunteers

For further information about volunteering with The Teresa Group please visit our website www.teresagroup.ca or contact us at
T: 416-596-7703
E: info@teresagroup.ca

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Donor Engagement



Early Days at The Teresa Group – as recalled by Joyce Henry

I felt so honoured at the September 2024 AGM to be awarded a Penelope Holeyton Champion of Hope Award “in appreciation of support and contribution that made the dreams of many children and their families a reality at The Teresa Group”.

I first met Penelope when my husband, Grahame, and I joined Grace Church-on-the-Hill late in 1979, on our return to Toronto after 3 years living in Fiji. Five years later we moved to St Clements Avenue and decided, in 1990, to become members of St Clement’s Church where Penelope was now a member there, as she too lived nearby.

Penelope shared her vision of starting a support group for children and persuaded a group of people (including myself), primarily from Grace Church on the Hill or St Clements, to meet several times in her basement to explore the varied needs of children in our city. I remember meeting Dr. Stan Reed from Sick Kids Hospital in her basement, when he came to talk to us and answer our questions

After a number of meetings in Penelope’s basement, under her determined leadership, The Teresa Group – Child and Family Aid was incorporated in November, 1990 and Penelope became the Executive Director for the next 10 years.

Dr. Reed has said “She (Penelope) was very definitive about it (the proposed group) and was clear that it should not be incorporated into the bureaucracy of the hospital. She wanted a stand-alone project that was autonomous and had a close relationship with SickKids.”

Working with the HIV/AIDS Comprehensive Care Clinic at the Hospital for Sick Children and other community agencies, the mission of The Teresa Group was defined as being to provide practical assistance and emotional support to children and their families affected by HIV/AIDS through trained volunteers. The name/association with St. Teresa was initiated by Penelope herself.

Although I think I am the only person originally involved still attending St Clement's, a number of parishioners at that time became active in the early days, like myself, on the Board of Directors, or else trained to become volunteers working with children and their families. As a result, St Clement's Outreach and ACW have continued to financially support The Teresa Group over the years and many parishioners remember Penelope.

As soon as The Teresa Group obtained an official charitable organization designation, I personally became responsible for the initial fundraising (despite no previous experience in that field). The members of the first Board were each "persuaded" to provide a list of friends/acquaintances to whom we could mail a request for financial assistance. (And, to this day, I still remember being so disappointed that some of my friends/acquaintances, to whom I sent personal letters, failed to respond - perhaps because of the negatives associated with HIV/AIDS at that time!)

As soon as there was sufficient money, The Teresa Group moved from Penelope’s basement and took over, for an office, a one-bedroom apartment just off Bay Street, south of College Street. I, at the time, was working a little further north on Bay Street. So about once a month I would hop on a Bay Street bus and go down to meet Penelope for an Indian lunch in a nearby hotel to act as a sounding board about various decisions. I even remember having a discussion about whether Penelope should or should not hire Wendy Firth, who subsequently became a stalwart of the organization!

A few years later, for personal reasons, I had to resign from the Board but have remained in close contact over the years, trying, at the very minimum, to attend the AGM every year.

I often find it quite overwhelming to think I helped support Penelope as she initiated, in her basement, almost 35 years ago, an organization that has been so successful and received international renown, serving children everywhere in such a steadfast way.