

# **Citizen Advocacy of Ottawa-Carleton**

## **2001 Annual Report**

**A**t **Citizen Advocacy**, our **vision** is of a community that welcomes and values the participation and contribution of all of its citizens, including those who live with physical, psychiatric, and developmental disabilities.

**O**ur **mission** is to assist people living with a disability who need help in enhancing the quality of their lives by overcoming barriers to personal choice and community participation.

**O**ur **guiding principle** is to focus our resources on individuals who may be vulnerable because they lack a support network or who may have difficulty accessing needed services.

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**W**e strive to achieve our mission through **four key goals**:

- ⇒ *To match individuals (protégés) in supportive relationships with volunteers (advocates).*
- ⇒ *To encourage self-advocacy and self-reliance while recognizing the interdependence of everyone in our community.*
- ⇒ *To advocate for the needs and rights of people living with disabilities.*
- ⇒ *To maintain an efficient, effective and healthy organization to fulfill our mission.*

**O**ur report to you provides information on the activities of the Board of Directors and Staff of Citizen Advocacy during 2001 as they relate to each of these four goals.

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**Matching individuals** in supportive relationships with volunteer advocates from the community continues to be the number one goal of Citizen Advocacy. The manner in which we establish these relationships has been evolving to include:

- ▶ one-on-one long-term matching - our core activity,
- ▶ group matching in the Group Advocacy Program targeted toward people living in high support group homes,
- ▶ short-term matching for individuals that have a specific short term need for advocacy support, generally practical in nature, and
- ▶ the newest endeavour for Citizen Advocacy, the Chance for Choice Program targeted at older adults who are vulnerable and who may be at risk of abuse and neglect.

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**The Group Advocacy Project** was initiated in September 1997 with the hiring of the first project coordinator. The project was concluded in February 2001 with the completion of an evaluation. The approach of the Group Advocacy Project has been incorporated as a feature of the overall Citizen Advocacy of Ottawa program.

There were many things learned through this project. The objectives were far reaching. We found that advocacy was a concept that was not easily embraced by organizations and the people they employed, particularly by those who were providing supports and services to other people who are dependent as a result of complex disability. The range of perceptions of vulnerability varied broadly from that of the service providing agency, front line staff, consumers, family members or personal advocates. The challenge of implementing an advocacy support service for people who are the most dependent on a “service system” was daunting.

Given the many challenges, there was much learning and many rewards for members of the advisory group and staff. The need is clearly evident, and we will heed the advice from the members of the advisory group and the community as we move slowly towards building this program for those who may need or want them.

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**The Chance for Choice Program** was initiated in 2001. With the support of the Ontario Trillium Foundation and the City of Ottawa, and under the direction of the **Chance for Choice Advisory Committee**, this project applies the concept of citizen advocacy to the situation of older people who are living with disabilities and who are vulnerable and at risk of abuse or neglect.

Estimates of the rate of abuse/neglect of older adults in Canada vary between 4% and 10% of the older adult population. Ontario has no formal reporting system. If the rate in Ottawa mirrored that identified in a United States' Administration on Aging Study, we could anticipate some 17,500 to 43,000 incidents (5 times any "reported" rate).

Having a disability is a major risk factor. Both the severity and incidence of disabilities increase with age and, as people with disabilities are four to ten times more likely to be victims of abuse, the risk of abuse climbs higher with age. The Chance for Choice Program aims to provide a steady, supportive friendship to the older person with a disability at risk of abuse to help reduce vulnerability and, in cases where abuse is suspected or proven, to provide support to the older person in deciding whether, when and how to address the problem.

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**Screening and matching** - getting to know people who want to become a volunteer advocate and those who want to have a volunteer advocate is a key activity of the Citizen Advocacy program, designed to create successful advocacy relationships. Bringing the strengths and assets of an advocate into a relationship with a person who has a disability and who has been marginalised in community life is community building at its most micro level - the individual.

**Support and follow-up** with advocates and proteges also contribute to successful relationships. Whether it is through individual contact, program, social events (such as the picnic, Christmas Party or Thanks-a-Bunch - all well-attended events), or educational opportunities for advocates to share their experience with one another - these activities all form part of the strategy to support a successful match experience.

**Recruiting** people to become volunteer advocates is another critical element of the work of Citizen Advocacy. Along with the "traditional" approaches to public awareness and recruitment, Citizen Advocacy continued to build a workplace recruitment strategy during 2001. To strengthen this strategy, a Corporate Liaison Think Tank was held during

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the fall. A number of individuals from the corporate community were invited to share with us their knowledge and experience and to give us advice on how to refine this strategy. Facilitated by former mayor of Ottawa, Jackie Holzman, the “think tank” was a great success and led to the development of a **Corporate Liaison Advisory Group**.

As the year drew to a close, three new Citizen Advocacy videos were in production to support recruitment and fundraising initiatives for the future. To support future strategic recruitment initiatives, a new volunteer recruitment video will tell the story of Citizen Advocacy through the testimonials of many advocates and proteges who agreed to be part of this project.

For purposes of increasing financial support, a second video builds on the story of advocacy relationships and illustrates, for the purposes of increasing financial support, the need for and benefits of investing in Citizen Advocacy. And finally, to assist with our need to strengthen our capacity to reach and serve the Francophone community, a bilingual version of the video will be produced.

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All of the activities identified so far in this report resulted in 98 people who expressed an interest in becoming a volunteer advocate or being rematched in 2001, 60 of whom submitted their names to volunteer. At the end of 2001, there were 30 new advocacy relationships and 16 potential advocates in screening or ready to match. We experienced a small increase in the number of people being supported and a broader range of advocacy relationships with new matches in our Chance for Choice Program and the Group Advocacy Project.

***Encouraging self-advocacy and self-reliance*** is achieved on a number of fronts within Citizen Advocacy.

For some, the ability to become a self-advocate and increase self-reliance occurs naturally over time through many Citizen Advocacy relationships. Through these relationships, proteges develop greater feelings of self worth and confidence, experience a decrease in isolation and an increase in community participation. With the support and friendship of their volunteer advocate, they are able to express their wishes and dreams more freely and take steps to realize them.

Proteges tell us that they feel, many for the first time in their lives, accepted and

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valued for who they are. Their dreams for their own lives are respected and taken seriously; and they have someone in their lives that they can trust to help and support them.

The tangible changes that result run the gamut from dramatic improvements in mental and physical health through to increased safety and protection; improved home life and housing; greater mobility; and increased access to education, training and employment.

Opportunities for developing self-advocacy and self-reliance are also available through the **Consumers Advisory Committee**, a standing committee of the Board. The Thanks-a-Bunch annual event is an example of how consumers have taken an idea to reality - creating an event that illustrates the value of Citizen Advocacy relationships. This experience has provided committee members with an opportunity to enhance their understanding of developing and implementing plans and evaluating outcomes.

December 3<sup>rd</sup> was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in 1992 as the International Day of Disabled Persons. The day aims to promote greater understanding about disability issues and increased awareness of gains to be realized through full and effective integration of persons with disabilities. It provides an opportunity not only for governments and organizations of disabled persons but also for all persons within society to focus on the freedoms and potentials of persons with disabilities. On December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2002, A Celebration of Abilities was held as a special Citizen Advocacy event to bring attention to this important day with a focus on the abilities of people living with a range of disabilities. The dinner event featured **Mike Nemesvary as the guest speaker**. As the first quadriplegic to drive around the world unassisted, Mr. Nemesvary provide the audience with a presentation of his 'Round the World Challenge', a fitting illustration of the abilities of people who live with a disability.

**Advocacy** - Advocacy is a process of defending or promoting a cause on behalf of oneself and/or others. The two main levels of advocacy are individual and systemic. Although the core business of Citizen Advocacy is individual "social" advocacy, as one of the region's few cross-disability organizations, we are called upon to engage in efforts to promote systemic change. As a cross-disability organization, our consumers are often confronted with issues within one or more of the mental health, long-term care or

developmental service systems. We are often in a unique position to bring forward the perspective of consumers from across these systems and have been asked to do so on many occasions.

For example, Citizen Advocacy has continued to put forward a unique perspective on behalf of individuals with developmental disabilities through continued participation in the restructuring implementation activities related to developmental services in Ottawa. During the past year, the Executive Director completed work on the implementation of a “person centered planning project” for people with developmental disabilities.

Citizen Advocacy is also a participating partner in the Partnership for Participation and Inclusion Coalition. The Coalition is a group of individuals and organizations in the City of Ottawa with a common goal to improve the quality of life for citizens of Ottawa living with disabilities. The Coalition is founded on the belief that individuals with disabilities have the right to access the same opportunities available to the rest of our community. The Coalition’s current focus is with people who have a physical disability, people who are deaf or living with hearing loss, and people who are blind or living with a visual impairment.

Citizen Advocacy was also asked to provide its advice and perspective to the work of the Mental Health Reform Task Force Advocacy and Education Work Group. The

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mandate of this group is to provide recommendations to the government regarding the function of advocacy as a feature of the new mental health system.

### ***Maintain an efficient, effective and healthy organization***

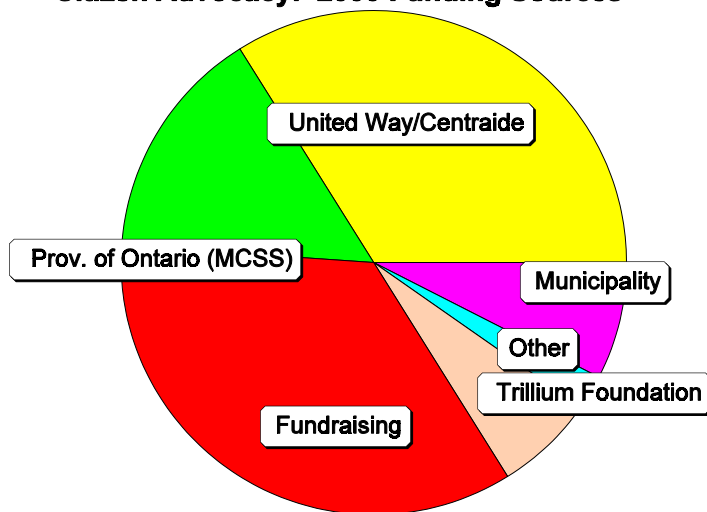
In addition to the activities of delivering the Citizen Advocacy programs during the past year, attention of the Board and Staff was also directed at settling in to **1 Community Place**, the new home of Citizen Advocacy. With our partners, the Family Service Centre and Rideauwood Addiction and Family Services, in 2001 we embarked on the first year as co-owners of our premises. This bold initiative is the first step towards taking some measure of control over future administrative costs.

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All of the aforementioned activities have contributed to the health of Citizen Advocacy as an organization. To sustain the work and maintain the health of the organization, fundraising and fund development have also become matters of strategic importance. Notwithstanding the support we have received from our funders (United Way/Centraide Ottawa, the Ministry of Community and Social Services and the City of Ottawa), the proportion of our revenues which are self-generated now exceeds the proportion from our largest funder, United Way/Centraide, as evidenced by the chart on the following page.

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**Citizen Advocacy: 2000 Funding Sources**



unfortunate and tragic events of September 11<sup>th</sup>.

It is worth noting that fund-raising or self-generated revenues, account for 35% of total revenues. Sources of revenues from special events include our signature fundraiser **An Evening in the Maritimes** as well as *A Celebration of Abilities*, weekly bingo at Bingoland South, grants, memberships and donations. Although plans were well underway to add an additional special event to the calendar, The Capital City Celebrity Tennis Tournament, this event was postponed due to the

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We trust you will agree that the report of the activities of the past year has demonstrated a busy and productive period in the history of Citizen Advocacy in our community. Additional programs, a new home, co-ownership, increased fundraising, a strategic focus on volunteer recruitment, fund development and enhancement of Francophone capacity, have positioned Citizen Advocacy for the challenges of the future.

This position would not be one of strength were it not for the contributions of many. Our advocates represent some of our community's most outstanding volunteers. The activity and commitment of members of the Board of Directors gives support and direction to staff. Consumers of Citizen Advocacy invariably teach all of us about strength and courage. Committee volunteers strengthen our ability for action. Funders and donors provide the financial and moral support that reflects the value of the Citizen Advocacy model as do members of the broader community through their support of one or more of our many special events and fundraising ventures. And lastly, we cannot underestimate the importance of the dedication and commitment of staff to the vision and mission of Citizen Advocacy. Together, we are Citizen Advocacy of Ottawa.

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Michele Casey	Secretary/Receptionist

\* resigned during the year  
 \*\* appointed during the year

***An Evening in the Maritimes Honorary Chair 2001*** - Jim Watson

***International Day of Disabled Persons, Honorary Chair*** - Russell Mills

***An Evening in the Maritimes Honorary Co-Chairs 2002*** - Penny Collenette & Jim Watson

**The Board of Directors** expresses its appreciation and gratitude to the following corporations, local businesses and individuals for their support and assistance in 2001.

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The Lucy Grossmann-Hensel Foundation;  
The C. Clifford Taggart Foundation; and  
The Belvedere Foundation

**Thanks to the following supporters, many of Citizen Advocacy's matches were able to enjoy some of Ottawa's fine entertainment:**

Xentel DM Incorporated  
Sixth Chord Productions Inc.  
Lions Club of Cumberland  
Savoy Society of Ottawa  
Optimist Club of Nepean

**Special thanks to the following committee members for their support and contributions:**

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