

NEWSLETTER
Spring 2011



THUNDER BAY
Family Network
...nurturing strengths, dreams and enthusiasms

**Special
Interest:**

- Family Networking Wednesdays
- New membership structure
- ICAN!

Thunder Bay Family Network is an affiliate of Planned Lifetime Advocacy Network (PLAN)

www.plan.ca

*"Nothing about me
without me"*

South African Proverb

Introducing the "Connection Café"

At Thunder Bay Family Network, we work very hard to maintain our commitment to a family directed philosophy and provide a grassroots approach in all that we do. Being open to feedback allows us to seek out new opportunities to support families in our community. One consistent theme has often been the lack of opportunities available to simply gather together and build relationships with others who also share the joys and challenges of having a family member with a disability. This information and sharing piece is so important and speaks to the heart of what TBFN is all about.

We are very happy to announce a new opportunity for families. Starting June 8th, we will be holding a Connection Café on the second Wednesday of each month. From 12pm-2pm, anyone can drop in and enjoy some food and conversation, perhaps even a game of cards or two, with other family members. We have chosen to hold this networking over the lunch time period in order to try and accommodate as many people as possible, including those who are working and have a lunch break, those

who have children in school, and for many who indicated they find it difficult to come out for evening events. There will be homemade soup available each week for a small cost, with the proceeds going to our ICAN program, or you can bring your own lunch to enjoy. These events will be held at the Northwood Kinsmen Centre, located at 609 North James Street.

TBFN sees this not only as an opportunity for families to connect and build relationships with each other, but also a way for us to continue to gain feedback and information on what families are looking for and the current needs and concerns affecting them.



Charitable Status Update

We are pleased to announce that on April 1st of this year, Thunder Bay Family Network officially became a charitable organization. We are now able to receive donations and issue receipts for tax purposes.

Donations are a perfect way to honour a loved one and support the goals of TBFN (peace of mind, relationship building, and building capacity) or assist a family with building a circle of support around their loved one.

I CAN! Program

The ICAN! program is designed as a fun and relaxing opportunity for individuals with disabilities to get together and experience Independence, Confidence, Achievement, and Networking. It has been wonderful to see this program continue to grow and new faces are popping in all the time.

Recently, a new Working Group has been formed that will assist staff in the planning and facilitation of ICAN as well as helping it grow and become even stronger. As a result of the initial planning, a new structure for ICAN has been formed that will make things much more consistent and yet still keep the program flexible in activity planning. The first Wednesday of each month will now be devoted to a community outing while the last Wednesday of the month is all about fun food activities! All other Wednesdays will continue to be our regular drop ins with various activities planned.



St. Patrick's Day fun!

Please visit our online calendar at www.tbfn.ca for upcoming activities. ICAN! is held each Wednesday from 7pm-9pm at the Northwood Kinsmen Centre. The cost per visit is \$3 or \$10 for a month. Anyone over the age of 12 is welcome. If you, or someone you know, has a special talent to share with our ICAN! group, or would like to volunteer in some way, we would love to hear from you. For more information please contact Sharon Bak at sharon@tbfn.ca or 577-0034.

I CAN Hope!
I CAN Dream!
I CAN Achieve!



Easter treats!

"We eat cheese, have a card game, and talk"

ICAN Participant

We Can With Tyze Project Update

In November of last year, Thunder Bay Family Network was fortunate to receive short term funding for the purpose of beginning to develop support circles, or networks, utilizing an online tool called Tyze. Tyze is a safe and secure social networking site designed specifically to enhance the functioning of support circles.

Eleven families participated in the project and began the process of developing circles of support and/or enhancing community connections for their child with a disability. Although the funded portion of the project ended on March 31st, the Board of TBFN has extended the project for another three months. This will allow families more time to develop their community connections as well as increase the sustainability of those support circles which are currently in the beginning stages of

development.

The following comments are from a mother involved with the project and her words speak volumes as to the value of networks: "We joined the TYZE project in January and it was a perfect time to get all my info about my son on the World Wide Web, for all who joined his circle of support. It is very important to provide family members and friends with details about his daily activities, goals and dreams for the future and private information (in the vault), prior to leaving for a long deserved vacation. It gives me peace of mind to know that his guardians will have the necessary information to continue with what I started and worked so hard to achieve so far. Connecting with his friends, past and present, is also important. We are able to communicate, and plan for outings and get together."

How Tyze is Unique

Every network is created around a specific person and situation.

Designed to strengthen relationships, not count them.

Secure, closed networks, so that no-one has access to Tyze networks unless invited.

Ongoing training and mentoring for network connectors.



www.tyze.com

Notes from a new Board member

Hi there. I'm Paul Meyer and I am taking this opportunity to introduce myself as your newest Board member. Some of you may remember me from my days with the Ministry – closing the facility and helping introduce the concepts of individualized planning and funding through the Choices Project. When I was asked by Debra Johnsen to join the Board it was an easy decision. Deb overwhelmed me with her usual enthusiasm and optimism, and I learned I would be joining JANET STEWARDSON, SUSAN GLIDDON and LINDA KONTUNEN, all people I have known and respected for years. When I came aboard in December, a lot of the Board's energy was focused on the TYZE PROJECT, using computer technology to help build family connections and support circles. I learned more about the ICAN GROUP and the many activities they offer. I was intrigued by TBFN'S affiliation with PLAN, providing a long term planning tool for individuals and families. It was the PLAN book 'SAFE AND SECURE' that really got my attention. It spoke to an issue that had been very much on my mind through all my involvement in the developmental sector – 'What happens after I'm gone?' While I don't have a family member with disability, I'm at an age where I fully understand Deb's driving passion to achieve 'peace of mind'. Whatever else I may bring to the table, I am committed to supporting the Board in addressing this fundamental concern as a major priority. Recently the Board set aside some time to reflect on its past history and to begin to chart a course for the future. The Board reaffirmed its mission as first and foremost a network for families – people connecting with people. There was discussion about whether TBFN should grow and seek resources to eventually become an agency, another service in the landscape of agencies already in the community.

By unanimous agreement, the decision was No. TBFN will remain a grass roots organization, retaining its autonomy to bring families together without the limitations and mandated structures of a more formal agency. The Board did recognize however, that we do need some basic resources to carry on its work, and is negotiating to enhance the current half-time Co-ordinator function to a full time position. With a dedicated Board, an active membership, and one staff co-ordinator, the Board feels well positioned to meet the challenges of the future. During the course of the discussion, I had an opportunity to voice my own vision of what TBFN could be. Above all, I see TBFN as being a welcoming place for families, both in terms of its physical environment and its friendly and supportive attitude. I think many families already have to endure the sometimes sterile and rigid environments of the service system, and need a place where they can come together in a more relaxed and informal setting where they can meet, share information and experiences, and find mutual interests and support. Once TBFN is more broadly recognized as a place where people want to be, the Board can focus on expanding some of the things it already does well. Workshops on topics of real interest – such as aging, long term planning, transitioning from the school system etc. Theme nights, where we bring together families with a particular interest – e.g. from young families new to the system, to families with all ages of adult members, exploring employment or recreational options etc. The list is endless. One of my personal favourites is to host a 'Golden Oldies' event where we bring together the many veterans out there to acknowledge and share their stories. The Board will be looking for your ideas through the coming summer with a view to offering an interesting array of events and activities for the fall. One more thought before I sign off. The Ministry

by Paul Meyer

of Community & Social Services has enacted new legislation which will eventually change the way supports and services are delivered. I mention this for two reasons. First, I am already finding that there is a lot of confusion and speculation out there about how this will be done and what it all means. Don't panic folks. While it is true that the legislation is about to come into effect, many of the issues and questions about how it will be delivered have yet to be determined. We do know that Lutheran Community Care Centre has been designated to play a key role in accessing the new system. The Ministry will be working at the local level over the months ahead to implement the rest of the new Act. We will continue to meet with the Ministry representative to help bring more information as it becomes available.

Secondly, after reviewing the legislation, I am convinced it provides the opportunity for some much needed changes that many of you have talked about over the years. Ironically, the philosophy and thinking behind the Act closely parallel many of the concepts that were introduced through the Choices Project. The Act provides new options for individualized planning, opportunities for direct funding of personal support plans, more choice and control over needed supports, and a new relationship with service providing agencies. The new Act shifts the focus back onto individuals/families to develop a support plan that truly represents their wishes and support needs. As I said earlier, there are many unanswered questions, but I personally see this as a very encouraging and long overdue development in the history of developmental services.

So, to those of you who have stayed with my rambling thought to the end, I'll close by saying I hope to meet and talk with you again in the near future.

"We make the world we live in and shape our own environment."

Orison Swett Marden

Message from the President

Another winter has passed, with a very slow spring, but I know one thing for sure – I'm looking for "Joy" from here on. A recent health challenge has invoked this need to search for smiles and laughter within me.

As Chair of this family-led organization, I struggle with many of the same issues that resonate within other families. Developing a network of support around my son is paramount to his wellbeing and making sure that we've crossed all those "t's" and dotted the "i's" regarding our wills and financial planning. It always seems just out of reach – that search for Peace of Mind.

Thunder Bay Family Network is described in the new Safe and Secure book as "a growing and evolving network of families that seeks to implement innovative strategies to support and

strengthen families. It is a not-for-profit corporation led by families to ensure a safe and secure life for all."

One thing is for sure -
We Are Growing! We Are Evolving! We Are Trying to be Innovative!"

It takes work and courage to try new things and be reflective and truthful regarding what is working and what needs to change. Our recent change to fee structure is just one small example. We want TBFN's foundation to be free from funding restraints which will allow greater flexibility in responding to the needs identified by the membership. It is that "family led" base that provides the Board of Director's motivation in all the work that we do.

As Thunder Bay Family Network continues its work connecting individuals and families, we will be

by Debra Johnsen

implementing more innovative strategies to nurture their strengths, dreams and interests.

We know that new legislation governing developmental services is taking shape and TBFN is trying to stay ahead of how this will affect individuals and families. We are looking for the opportunities that will help engage, excite and motivate us all in making sure that people with special needs are treated fairly while living in their caring community.

And, in closing, I'm just a Mom, like many of you. Just someone who knows that the individuals we support have wonderful gifts to share. I want to leave this world knowing that there is an organization, whose foundational focus is fixed on these values that I hold close to my heart.

Message from Staff

I cannot believe that it is already spring and the long, cold winter has passed. Although a bit of a chill remains in the air, I find myself comforted by the warmth of caring connections around me. Over the past few months, I have been fortunate to witness first-hand the value of the support networks that have begun as a result of the We Can with Tyze project. I have seen the joy that comes from a group of caring individuals coming together with the sole purpose of enhancing the life of another. No matter how big or small the contribution may be, each act of kindness, assistance, or friendship holds so much value to the life of the person at the centre of a circle.

We have been lucky to have three wonderful staff members working for us during the duration of the Tyze

project. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Samantha, John, and Robin for all the hard work and dedication put in to not only network building, but the ICAN program as well.

I must also take a moment to say a huge THANK YOU to the TBFN Board of Directors. Just over a year ago, I was hired as Development Officer and the experience continues to be a magical one. Their support, guidance, and passion continue to keep me motivated and enthusiastic. This truly is a dream job!

Many exciting things are happening at TBFN, so be sure to check our website calendar regularly for all the details. As always, please feel free to contact me with any ideas or questions. I wish you all a joyous spring!

by Sharon Bak



"Insanity: doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results."

Albert Einstein



New Membership Structure

In April of this year, the Board of Directors for TBFN completed a series of planning sessions. One of the results from those sessions was the formation of a new membership structure as well as a shift to a fee for service model. We are very excited to present this new information to you and hope that this new model will provide increased flexibility in planning for the various needs of individuals and families.

Organizational Supporter (for community groups, agencies, etc.) - \$50
 Newsletters
 Information on events
 Updates on TBFN activities

Basic Membership (for individuals and families) - \$10
 Newsletters
 Family networking opportunities
 Book – *Safe and Secure* (as quantities last)
 Notice of events, workshops, seminars, and family information sessions
 15 % discount on all workshop/seminar fees
 Ability to vote at our Annual General Meeting
 Opportunities to purchase specialized services (see below)



“A man doesn’t plant a tree for himself. He plants it for posterity”

Alexander Smith

For an additional \$30 you can receive the following information from PLAN Canada:

- ◆ Three bulletins on topics relevant to planning for a good life
- ◆ Two PLANfacts connecting you to the PLAN community
- ◆ Monthly e-zine updates with the latest RDSP and community news
- ◆ Three ActionPLAN ezines highlighting PLAN’s policy and advocacy work
- ◆ For an additional \$9.99 you receive a subscription to Abilities Magazine

Thunder Bay Family Network Services and Fees

Service	Fee
Tyze Network (no staff support)	\$70/yr
Tyze Network (with staff support)	\$120/yr
Future Planning Consultation	\$75
Network Facilitation	\$35/hr for a Community Connector to develop a circle of support
Workshops/Seminars	Fee will depend on cost, 15% discount for TBFN members
Beyond Graduation Workshop	Fee will depend on cost of workshop, 15% discount for TBFN members

Volunteer opportunities



Volunteers are the heart and soul of many organizations and Thunder Bay Family Network is no exception. We are currently seeking volunteers to assist with our ICAN! Program as well as other activities as needed. If you have a few hours to spare and are looking for a satisfying and rewarding opportunity, please contact us for further information.

For more information on volunteer opportunities please contact Sharon at 577-0034 or via email at sharon@tbfnc.ca



Every second Wednesday, beginning June 8th! Join us at the Kinsmen Centre at 609 North James Street from 12pm-2pm!

Thunder Bay Family Network

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Kinsmen
Northwood Centre
609 James St. N.
Thunder Bay, ON
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PHONE:

807-577-0034

E-MAIL:

info@tbfm.ca

For updates and a
calendar of events
please visit us at

www.tbfm.ca

*"Believe you can and you're
halfway there."*

Theodore Roosevelt

Thunder Bay Family Network

Our Mission:

*"We will nurture the
strengths, dreams and
enthusiasm of families,
creating inclusive, caring
lives for all members*

Our Goals:

*Peace of Mind
Relationship Building
Capacity Building*

The Final Word

Becoming Visible 2011-Faithful Friends

by Vicki Cammack (Founder and CEO of Tyze)

Research repeatedly verifies the old adage – a faithful friend is the medicine of life. When it comes to our well being there is no disagreement, things go better with belonging. There is bountiful evidence that we live longer, get sick less often, heal more quickly when we have a supportive social network. We have more academic success, better employment opportunities, healthier diets and happier lives because of the people who love and care for us.

Our formal systems of health and social care frequently operate in isolation from the powerful human ties that care for us and help keep us well. These systems are constructed on a professionally dominated paradigm that is focused on doing things for us and to us, as quickly and efficiently as possible. This paradigm, so very effective in acute and emergency situations, is ill suited to our growing complex health and social challenges.

An aging population and an increasing incidence of chronic illness are examples of intractable challenges that reveal both the fiscal and human limitations of our formal systems of care. There is simply not enough money to provide the care needed over time. Even more importantly, the spiritual and emotional nourishment, the daily monitoring and support, and the deep knowledge of our personal preferences and needs that are required to achieve true well being, cannot be provided by health and social care practitioners working in prescribed hours, away from our homes and our loved ones, and often for our rural citizens, away from their communities.

Our challenge is to find ways for our formal and informal systems of care to collaborate and actively co-create health and well-being. We need services that strengthen not supplant our human bonds. This requires deep shifts in the culture of professionally provided services to focus on assets versus pathologies, to expect contributions versus compliance and to cultivate resilience versus short-term solutions. Over the long term, policy and shifts in resource flows will be required to scale and sustain early efforts.

As a starting place I would like our formal systems to make visible their inability to solve their fiscal and human resource challenges without the contributions of the individual, their families and friends. In turn, I would like those of us on the informal side of the care equation to value our knowledge, accept our responsibility and visualize our power to contribute to solutions.

