

## **Executive Director's Report**

### **The Year 2003/04 in Review**

The following quote was taken from materials circulated by the very active Communities in Bloom Association of North Bay.

“We will be a world leader --- in inspiring pride, creating beauty and sustaining the earth. Imagine the celebration!”

This quote easily evokes an image of the celebration that would ensue if Communities in Bloom were to realize a role as a world leader in achieving these goals. The festivities would at the very least merit a speech from the Mayor, fireworks and dancing in the streets.

The first of the two objectives mentioned seem attainable. Inspiring pride in the community may be as simple as convincing people to take a moment to visit the waterfront and acknowledge that the view is not only spectacular; it's also ours to call home. Creating beauty, while not effortless is achievable. Mother Nature makes this possible with a wide array of colours and fragrances at our glove tips.

But how would one organization sustain the earth? This is a far- reaching goal. It is a goal which makes it apparent that this group is not working in a “vacuum”. In order for the earth to be their catchment, they are seeing themselves as one piece of a mecca of groups trying to sustain one piece of the earth. The essence of this message is potential success through association.

Big Sisters of Nipissing has developed a new-found respect for this type of association. We have also developed a vision similar to the aforementioned potentially celebratory, Mayor Vic Fedeli. During his campaign he used the term 20/20 vision as a way to describe a goal oriented view. The term was meant to help us relate to his plan of growth and development. While the phrase was predominantly related to economic, environmental and social growth, perhaps it may be used as a reference to the physical, intellectual, emotional, and social/cultural growth we intend to promote.

Big Sisters' vision while perhaps not 20/20 is improving, as we begin to see ourselves in a light that we may have shunned in the past. Rather than take infinite pride in being separate, distinct worker bees, busying ourselves with the duties at hand, we are focusing on achieving our mission by collaborating with others. Partnerships are the priority when “sustaining the earth”, or in our case “sustaining the health of the children of the earth” is our task. We not only affect or sustain this health through the one-to-one friendship we

can arrange, but through the resources offered by other agencies whom we contact through a growing number of associations.

### **The Impact of Big Sisters on Socio-Economic Development**

Currently five Public Health studies state that “The health of children in Northern Ontario is being adversely affected by low income levels in the region.” One may wonder how child poverty, or many other socio-economic issues that affect children could be addressed by the simple act of placing a Big Sister in the child’s life. As an association it is important for us to disseminate the message that the Big Sister role is not meant as a simple presence, but as a role that can encompass multiple levels of growth support through increased access to community resources. The Big Sister should be considered as a “bridge” to increased growth and development.

One important way that we have intervened in the lives of children to deliver resources formally inaccessible to them is by providing sponsorship for program involvement through the Little Sister Achievement Fund. Delores Klingspon continues to campaign the North Bay area for funds with which to introduce children to arts, sports and scholastic opportunities which may help them to avoid barriers to their development.

We have attempted to lessen the barrier between children of low income homes and children with advantages by disbursing this money among as many Little Sisters as possible. We have also attempted to enhance this fund by creating a Recreation Mentoring program which would allow more than 40 children per year to participate in programs related to physical, intellectual and social/cultural growth and development.

### **How Has Change Been Made Possible?**

In 2003-2004 we were proud to be partnered with the Ministry of Community and Social Services for the purpose of providing mentoring services to children under the age of six. This was also an opportunity for us to build credible working relationships with well respected colleagues in the North Bay area.

The vision and strength of our current Board of Directors has made this possible. During the 2002-2003 Executive Director’s Report I commented on each of our Director’s strengths separately, and praised their individual characteristics and contributions. However, in keeping with our growth toward working as a collaborative force, I would like to thank our Board for their collective strength and determination to make a positive difference in the lives of local children. This is a Board who works hands-on when needed to be present at events hosted by our organization, and who works behind the scenes, to make difficult administrative decisions. Each decision, whether it deals with an immediate concern or goal, or is part of a vision for the future, is made with the best interests of the children in mind.

It goes without saying that equal to the importance of this role, is that of Big Sister volunteers. Their care and commitment to children is the foundation on which this agency is built. Again, Big Sisters have other commitments, but they choose to dedicate part of their lives to Little Sisters. This is an unselfish act in and of itself, yet in addition to this these volunteers help us to fundraise, and recruit more Big Sisters. We are also grateful to bingo volunteers, and general volunteers for their commitment to our agency.

Our achievements also are attributed to our staff who bring pertinent education, and experience to their roles. We prioritize professionalism while at the same time striving to create a welcoming environment in which the Big and Little Sister relationship may thrive. I would like to congratulate Suzanne Kaye for her promotion to Program Manager. This is a well-deserved recognition of Sue's commitment to her role. She has worked as my "right hand", continually filling in where I may show weakness, with great judgment related to volunteers and children, superior presentation skills and the insight to offer her help in areas such as providing input to proposals, and offering hands-on help to fundraisers which are outside of the expectations of her role. I am also appreciative of Sherry Labelle-Lamoureux's patience, as her role with the agency continues to evolve as a result of project timelines.

We are grateful for the help of Dr. Floyd Robinson who continues to lead our Program Development working group to build a Mentoring Model which will justify our role as community leaders and child advocates. We are extremely fortunate to have this University of Toronto Professor Emeritus as a part of our committee.

All of these commitments may serve to create an atmosphere in which we will potentially deserve the title of "leading mentoring agency in Canada..." as given to all BBBSC agencies in the recent mentoring report released by Big Brothers, Big Sisters of Canada.

And once again this is a far-reaching goal. It is a goal that cannot be achieved while functioning apart from others. However as a collaborative force working together it may be possible for us to "Become world leaders in sustaining the health of the children of the earth."

Imagine the celebration!

Darlene Jamieson BA, Executive Director

One man may hit the mark, another blunder; but heed not these distinctions. Only from the alliance of the one, working with and through the other, are great things born.[Antoine de Saint-Exupery](#)  
(1900 - 1944)