



*Respite in a safe and happy environment for children diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder*

## **2015 ANNUAL REPORT**

FOOTPRINTS 4 Autism is a respite-only outreach program for families with children who have been diagnosed on the Autism Spectrum. FOOTPRINTS 4 Autism is unique for it is a volunteer-driven program dedicated to giving the families of children affected by Autism the precious gift of time in a low-cost program that fosters a safe and happy environment for the children. FOOTPRINTS 4 Autism was established in 2004 as an outreach ministry of Dunbarton-Fairport United. In 2009, the program expanded to a second location at St. Mark's United Church in Whitby.

Under the guidance of qualified Program Consultants/Supervisors, and supported by an Operations Manager, a Strategic Consultant and a dedicated Steering Committee, the program trains and utilizes volunteers ranging in age from 14 – 75+ to provide creative, stimulating, and skill-appropriate activities for children on the Autism Spectrum. In doing so, FOOTPRINTS 4 Autism provides the parents and siblings of these children with a few precious hours of 'time away' to recharge, attend to household tasks, or to simply spend some quality time with each other.

### **Taking Bigger Steps in 2015**

We are very grateful to The Durham Community Foundation for their continued support. In 2015, The Durham Community provided funding for a pilot program Together We 'Hang'. A social program for youth on the Autism Spectrum and their peers. Participants are paired with a volunteer for a social gathering fostering inclusion, acceptance and friendship. In partnership with the Pickering Library, FOOTPRINTS ran the weekly drop-in program from April-September. We are very excited to announce Together We 'Hang' will run again in 2016 – thank you again to The Durham Community Foundation.

### **Together We 'Hang' Program Feedback**

**Parents:** Do you think your child enjoyed this program? What did your child take from this program?

***"Definitely. Learning to socialize with peers better." "Yes. Had some fun and greater ease with peers." "Amazing. Maybe more than one day – maybe twice per week."***

**Participants** (youth on the Autism Spectrum): What did you like best about this program?

***"Game playing." "Video games and talking to others about them."***

Do you think you benefited from this program?

***"Yes." "Yes, because it helped me make some friends."***

### **Volunteers:**

***"We could do a play for the parents." "Maybe have this program in the afternoon on weekends during the school year." "Hope it continues. Loved the kids and the program was amazing."***

***"Movie out with the kids was great – had an amazing time, all went well."***

Heading into 2016 expansion of our program is still precedence. As of December 31, 2015 we have seven families on our waitlist for our Whitby respite session. This is enough to run another program at St. Mark's. As Pickering Friday night numbers were low (due to children aging out and moving), we did attempt to move the Friday program to Whitby. However, we struggled with getting enough volunteers. To succeed a respite session needs a pool of fifteen volunteers willing to commit to that session. In addition to expanding our Whitby program, we have seen a need to start a program in Clarington that would serve families living in the east end of Durham Region. Volunteer recruitment is always a priority – for child care volunteers and steering committee volunteers.

Continuing to offer outstanding programming, FOOTPRINTS 4 Autism realized the following targets to the benefit of the children and their families:

- 45 children and their families received support from the program
- 2360 hours of direct respite care was provided in Pickering and Whitby in 2015
  - 1548 hours at FOOTPRINTS Pickering
  - 812 hours at FOOTPRINTS Whitby
- 158 Child Support Volunteers provided 4402 hours of time to the program (*in direct care, training and program oversight responsibilities*).
- 41 new Child Support Volunteers were recruited and trained in 2015
  - A total of 663 hours were spent in training all volunteers
- 11 Steering Committee volunteers gave 695 hours of time to program operations and management
- Camp Great Strides 2015 – Investors Group, Pickering and Baagwating Community Association provided funding for camps
- Recipient of \$14,900 in funding from the United Way of Durham Region
- Secured Operations funding from the Andrews Foundation, Harry E. Foster Charitable Foundation, Durham Community Foundation, the Rotary Club of Pickering, George Lunan Foundation, The Catherine and Maxwell Meighen Foundation
- Bridge Street United Church Foundation – received funding for sensory packages to develop a Sensory Integration Program
- The Georgina Foundation – received funding to purchase four tablets and apps to maximize participants language skills
- Unity For Autism – secured funding for 2016 Camps and their expansion to offer a full-day option. Over the last few years attendance at our Summer and Christmas Break Camps has been dwindling. Feedback from parents - they need full-day camp

### **Thank you to Our Faith Communities**

For the past eleven years FOOTPRINTS has had two very good homes. Without the support of our church families we could not offer such an amazing program. Thank you to Dunbarton-Fairport UCW and to St. Mark's UCW for always thinking of FOOTPRINTS. To both congregations and Rev. Jeff and Rev. Deb – thank you for your faith in our program and for your patience and understanding when accidents happen.

We are extremely grateful to the United Church Mission Outreach Ministry and Social Issues Project for their continued faith in our services. And, thank you to Faith United Church in Courtice for their continued financial support in 2015.

*FOOTPRINTS Staff (as of January 01, 2015)*

- Julie Cashin-Oster: Operations Manager, Fund Development/Marketing
- Michelle Lounsbury: Program Consultant/Supervisor, Whitby
- Nicole Santorufo: Program Consultant/Supervisor, Pickering (Alternate double Saturday)
- Savannah Eberth: Program Consultant/Supervisor, Pickering (Alternate Saturday mornings)
- Michele Boothe: Program Consultant/Supervisor, Pickering (Friday night)
- Tom Little: Strategic Consultant

*FOOTPRINTS Steering Committee (as of January 01, 2015)*

- Corrine Brook-Allred: Chair
- Bev Crane: Vice-Chair
- David Green: Treasurer
- Sandra Halls: Secretary
- Ellen Thomson: Events/Fund Development
- Sharon Buchanan: HR – Operations Manager
- Sandra Chase: Support Treasurer (member, St. Mark's United)
- Sandy MacKenzie: Fund Development (member, St. Mark's United)
- Patricia Moore: HR – Program Consultants and Alternate Consultants
- Lynn Ikeda: Assistant Treasurer

***What are families saying about FOOTPRINTS?***

*“The 1:1 ratio and the fact that I can leave my children and feel comfortable that they both will engage in the activities that are appropriate and that FOOTPRINTS’ staff let them take the lead for their learning.”*

*“I love the activities and the photos. I feel that I can still participate and know what they have done through their time at FOOTPRINTS when I see and can share the photos. I use the photos to talk about our day and create a social story around them to prepare for their next day.”*