

2004 Fall Conference - Fairy Godmother Presenters

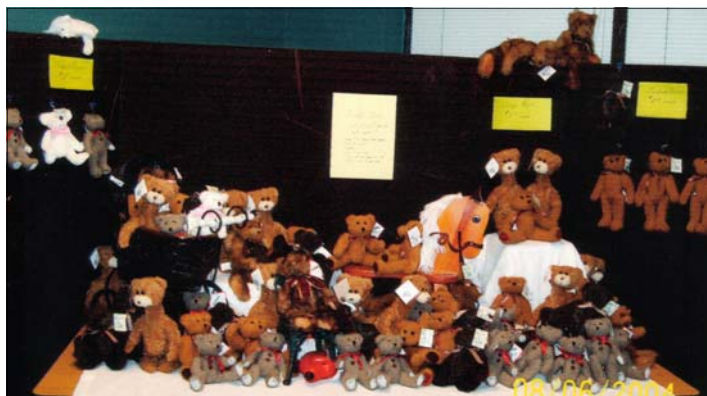
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Janet Christensen, Unlimiting Potential
2004 Fall Conference Presenter
**Kindness is the Root of Love & Peace
a Teddy Bear Project**

I am one of the fortunate recipients of the \$100 to create a community project. Attached are a couple of photos for the project, and I will be dropping the Roots bear by your office on Monday.

It was a wonderful experience to create my community project with my granddaughter, Morgan who is 9, and her step sister, Alicia, who is 12. Together we went on a 'bear hunt' to find teddy bears to give to children who needed a special friend. We collected new and good-as-new teddy bears from different stores, friends and family. With our \$100 we managed to get 55 teddy bears of all different shapes, sizes and colours. The girls tied a ribbon around the neck of each teddy bear. These teddy bears were donated to the Christmas toy drive, the Children's Hospital and to the London Police. We are sending one special Roots bear to the conference, for someone to give to someone they know who needs a special friend. We chose the Roots bear to symbolize kindness as the root of love and peace.

We had a lot of fun with this project. Morgan and Alicia learned first hand that you don't need a lot of money to change lives. You



only need a big heart.

Rev. Lori Hisson, Unity Church of London
2004 Fall Conference Presenter
Bearable Profits

Unity of London had the opportunity to purchase 500 stuffed teddy bears for one dollar each. I used the one hundred dollars from the Women's Conference to pay for the purchase of 100 of the bears.

Our church pledged to give back to the Women's Conference all monies made from the sale of those first one hundred bears. The bears sold for \$350! We gratefully bring back to the conference \$350 to seed future ideas. Unity is about seeing our ideas become manifest in a positive and empowering way. Blessings to you.

Cathy Blackwell, Clarica Financial Services
2004 Fall Conference Presenter

A Little bit of Help goes a Long Way

Over a year ago I met a lady who came into my life, I believe, for a special reason. I also came to know her family well. They all inspired me and really helped me understand one of the most misunderstood conditions of mankind, and that is mental illness. As we got to know each other, this woman taught me so much. I had always thought I understood mental illness but was I wrong.

The thing that struck me most and continues to impress me is the attitude of this woman. We all have bad days, we all get down from time to time. I sometimes have a personal 'pity party' when something, like my hair for instance, doesn't go quite right. What I learned from this incredible person is that small things really don't matter. She is very positive about life and takes all things in stride.

As a financial advisor I meet with many people from every walk of life. It is in itself amazing. However, this person has left such a profound impression with me that I wanted to do something for her and her family. She is married and has 3 little boys. Her boys are very sweet and her husband does what he can. As for material possessions, they don't have much. What they do have is a mother who remains positive and driven to help herself and her family.

As a result and with the support of the Women's conference project I was able to provide them with a couch and chair for their living room, a desk for the boys bedroom, new to them bedding, and boys clothes and toys. I also treated her to a special lunch which she really enjoyed. These are small things to many of us, but this family definitely could not afford to do or have them.

I plan to take this amazing woman for lunch every 2 or 3 months just to treat her and I guess in a way to thank her for all she has taught me. I have about \$20 left from the \$100 given me, and I will donate it at the Evening of Sharing in November. The Evening of Sharing is a program that I started in 1992 to support the Salvation Army in Strathroy and Area for Christmas Care. This program has grown over the years thanks to the dedicated volunteers who have joined with me to ensure the success of our fund raising efforts. The \$20 will go a long way towards our totals to ensure that a family has a good Christmas this year. With some careful thought and

creative imagination, you can make \$100 go a long way, and make a big difference to someone's life.

One year later... I had lunch with Ronnie about 8 months ago, but have changed jobs and lost touch. I understand that she is doing well, as one of our advisors is working with her and her family. I know that with the money from the Fairy Godmother Project and a little extra she and her family had an experience they had never before experienced. It was one of love, compassion, and true caring in spite of her mental illness and the other challenges that she and her family continue to face.

Ellen Mallett, homemaker
& reader of The Londoner
2004 Fall Conference Presenter
Children's Knitting Project

At the very first Community Spirit Project, our local newspaper, the Londoner, sent a reporter who wrote a story about our project. Attached is the newspaper article with photo. When the newspaper published the story, they also asked readers to write to them, stating what they would do with \$100, to improve some part of our community.

Ellen Mallett was the person chosen to receive \$100 from the newspaper, and her project was to teach knitting to school aged children, in her local public school. The knitting project was run at noon hour, and 42 students learned the eye/hand coordination, math, reading a pattern, and space and volume.

The \$100 seed money was used for materials, and as well, local businesses offered to help. Ellen gathered together knitting needles and wool from various donors, and organized a group of women from her school, to go with her and teach some children the art of knitting.

The children enjoyed learning how the fine art of knitting is executed. Ellen attended the 2004 fall conference to tell her story, which added a new dimension to the scope of projects available in our city.

Susan Morel, Goodwill Career Centres
2004 Fall Conference Presenter
GoGo Grannies of South Africa
The Aids Pandemic, Africa

Susan pledged the \$100 to the 'Sole to Soul' walk for AIDES. Others matched the pledge and turned it into \$300, and in the end the total event raised \$30,000. The John Gordon Home (for those dying of aids) retained 50% of the funds and the other 50% went to the Stephen Lewis Foundation. The recipients of the funds were the Go Go Grannies of South Africa.

By the year 2010, it is estimated there will be 13 million orphans in Africa, due to the AIDS Pandemic. When I heard this I remember feeling absolutely overwhelmed, 13 million children orphaned without the love, care, guidance and values so traditionally instilled by parents. I felt lost and utterly helpless in this information. What could I do in what felt like such a horrendous, hopeless situation.

The John Gordon Home here in London, supports HIV/AIDS infected individuals. In their wisdom, they wanted to reach out internationally. The annual Sole to Soul AIDS Walk now splits the donations, with 50% going to the John Gordon Home and 50% going directly to South Africa through the Stephen Lewis Foundation. This years funds were generated to be donated to a program called the Go-Go Grannies, in Johannesburg, South Africa.

The GoGo Grannies are a group of Grandmothers all grieving the death of their children and now left to raise their orphaned grandchildren, many with HIV/AIDS. These grandmothers were once isolated and at a loss as to how to raise their grandchildren. They formed the Go-Go Grannies to provide support for each other, combine the limited resources, and collectively raise their grandchildren. I chose to contribute the \$100 to someone who was registered for the AIDS walk. He turned the \$100 into \$300 which contributed to the \$15, 000 that went to the Go-Go Grannies.

"There's a tremendous amount of hope in Africa against all odds. In fact, you wonder how they manage such courage and hope all the time. They suffer so much indignity, illness and death, yet in the midst of it all they keep battling, they keep struggling, they keep helping each other, they keep working

toward a better future for their kids. It's quite amazing. They have this absolutely irreversible conviction that one day they will break through, and they're right except that it's taking a terrible toll along the way." Stephen Lewis, as reported in the Q Magazine September 2004.

If the people facing this pandemic can keep working together to move forward, I can certainly do my part...from volunteering for AIDS Walk to donating funds regularly, to sponsoring an orphaned child. We are all one on this planet, of this I'm sure, as sure as my heart told me. I've got to do something!

Pat Graham, Avon Canada
2004 Fall Conference Presenter
Girl Guide Diversity Camp
with 75 Afghani Women

The \$100 went to support the Girl Guide's Diversity Camp where they invited 75 Afghani women and children to the camp. They slept in tents and experienced nature, looking at the stars and Jupiter through a telescope. This was the first time for many of them to be able to live and play without fear.

Sheila Jackson, Light Vision
2004 Fall Conference Presenter
The Wilds of Pelee Island &
Outdoor Centre for Conservation

Sheila donated the \$100 to the Pelee Island Centre for Conservation, in a project to turn 40 acres into wetlands. Students came and helped with the planting and learned about the environment as well.

Kym Wolfe, London Military Families
Resource Centre
2004 Fall Conference Presenter
Gemworks—2 CD players

Gemworks is a programme that exists in the Limberlost area of London. It is an area of much poverty and cultural diversity. It's mandate is for children of all cultures to understand and respect each others' virtues and beliefs. They requested a CD player which would add music to their programme.

At their request it had to be shared with a similar group in the Marconi Avenue area. Canadian Tire was approached and both groups received an excellent CD player. The Canadian Tire money was returned to the project as seed money.

Teresa Mayo, Oliver & Associates Real Estate
2004 Fall Conference Presenter
Hugs for Sale: \$100—\$2000
Suicide Education & Prevention

If you have ever lost someone you love to suicide, you will understand the impact it has on the ones left behind. Last year my nephew Mark took his life. He left behind his wife and two young children, his parents, and a brother. He left a huge gaping hole in the lives of his aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews and friends. We all struggle to make some sense of this tragedy, and are left with feelings of helplessness.

Some of us tried to reach out for help only to find out that there really is not much available. The resources are limited, not much money, not enough staff, time and education. The people at the Canadian Mental Health Associations are wonderful, hard working people who do there very best with what they have.

After speaking to Trix VanEggman about the needs for her organization, I decided that the \$100 gifted to me was going to be used to try and educate others about suicide. My hope is to get much needed information into the schools. Many young people are suffering, mostly in silent desperation. My nephew was 34 when he ended his struggle with life, however this did not just happen at age 34, it is often a life long battle, that wears you

down to point that you believe that death is the only way you will ever find peace.

The guilt that is left with the family of a suicide victim is horrific. The some of the questions you ask is why didn't I see this coming, I should have done something, if only..... You spend a lot of time beating yourself up over the 'shoulds'.

We have the power as healthy stable adults to reach out and help others who are not as fortunate. We need to educate people about the warning signs of suicide. We need to understand the difference between a bad day and an ongoing downward spiral. We need to open our eyes and stop denying that someone is hurting. We must not be afraid to reach out and talk to them, ask the tough question "Are you thinking about suicide".

We must listen and take people seriously when they express or exhibit behaviour that is destructive. It is our obligation in this life to be there for each other, to laugh, to cry to listen to share and go beyond ourselves to support each other.

We are all in this together and if we can save even one life than we spared so many, much suffering and grief, and that is worth more than anything. Helping each other not just in the good times but even more importantly in the bad....., a phone call, a few kind words, a smile a hug could make all the difference between life and death. A little can mean a lot.

Our theme was "Hug someone today" so I would like everyone to give the person beside you a big hug that says I CARE AND YOU ARE NOT ALONE!!!!!! That cell hug would have cost you \$10. We sold hugs and spread some love and joy for \$10 a person.

To date we have raised approximately \$2,000 for the Canadian Mental Health Association. This money will be put toward education, and grief counseling. However, we are not done yet we have other projects in mind to raise more money for this worthwhile cause.

Hollie Maxfield, Red Cross Trainer
2004 Fall Conference Presenter
Computer for a Shut-In

Hollie used the \$100 to help assemble a computer for a disabled woman who was usually shut in at home. It was believed that a computer and connection to the outside world would greatly improve the quality of her life. The computer was delivered on Saturday, October 23. Cable was hooked up on the 25th.

Mark from Nerds on Site, (computer guys...) called to say he is scheduled to finalize all hook-ups loading of software. It has been a long, hard process, but looks like we will come in just under the wire.

A quick update on Kimberley's progress: She has been ill again the past couple of days, but also has many wonderful days where she is able to get out and shop and visit with friends. I am hoping she can stand the massive excitement generated at the Women's Conference! Apart from knowing it will be the best medicine for her, I know connecting with people again will get her back into society. Kim had been an active paramedic before falling ill. Thanks to the Rotary Club of North London, Rogers Cable, and Nerds on Site, she can now stay connected with her world.

Paula Morand, Small Business Centre
2004 Fall Conference Presenter
Community Spirit Projects in Kyrgystan

Last fall I attended your conference through my job at the Small Business Centre, and responded to the Community Spirit Challenge. It was amazing how that challenge moved me into something much bigger. The money was used to make a quilt with pictures of hope on it, to take with me in June to the country of Kyrgystan where I was traveling on a mission trip.

While there for two weeks, I taught seminars to women on self-employment, goal setting and the central theme of wanting more in their lives. I found that the women made their living by selling sunflower seeds for 3 cents US per day. On one of the last sessions, I decided to in a small way replicate the community challenge, right there in Kyrgystan.

The women and youth—350 of them—

worked together in small groups for 3 hours. They came up with such wonderful ideas, many of which could begin without any money. I asked that the women devised a plan about how they could improve things, with \$25 US being the prize. A young girl named Mariya wanted to be educated in Canada and then return to Kyrgystan, to improve the orphanage and the environment of orphans in that country. There is a website www.mariyashope.com, and donations can be made at any Bank of Montreal with the funds being disbursed at the discretion of Mariya's Hope, to aid the children of Kyrgystan. I ended up funding two of the strongest ideas, and their projects are operating right now.

Mariya was a vibrant fifteen year old girl who stood out. At the end of the first day she came to me and told me that she wanted more from her life. She wanted me to pray for her. She sincerely wanted a family because her parents were dead and she was living in an orphanage.

Through those 2 weeks my heart was breaking over the difficulty of the lives of children in the orphanage. From then, we decided to help, and launched Mariya's Hope, a campaign to help the orphanage take in more homeless children. We also wanted to make it possible for Mariya to come to Canada where she could study and live with a caring, loving family.

The 6 minute video tape we made will tell about the community challenge and what happened to me as a result. We are now living in Newfoundland and are opening a new location of Teen Challenge, which is a Christian drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre.