

# ANNUAL REPORT 2007-2008

For the year ending May 31, 2008

*From the President*

## Building our exciting future

by Bernie Martenson

What a year! We have seen a few lows mixed in with the wonderful highs, but we are now very well positioned to continue building our future. I would like to tell you about some of the things that have happened this past year.

### Partnerships

We have been partnering with the Kerr St. BIA (Business Improvement Area) for a couple of years. In September 2007, we distributed flyers promoting our program to all 200 merchants of the BIA in advance of Literacy Day on September 8. We asked them to post the flyer, which uses simple language and is designed for adults with lower-level reading skills. We also set up an information booth during the street fair and Kerr Street Ministries 5K run on September 8.

For the first time, we joined the Town of Oakville's CORE (Community Organizations in Recreation and Education) group. This allows us to rent meeting facilities at reduced rates and gives us free listings in the Parks & Recreation guide and on the Town website.

### Events

In September 2007, we participated in the Halton Region United Way agency fair, with an information booth at Halton Region headquarters for four days.

We held our annual book sale at Hopedale Mall at the end of May, and the proceeds were our best ever, with more than \$11,000 in sales. Mayor Burton and Councillor Alan Johnston, and Barbara Burton, CEO of the Oakville United Way, were on hand to officially open the sale. Many thanks to our amazing and dedicated committee members for an outstanding book sale.

Canada recognizes volunteers during National Volunteer Week in the spring, and to celebrate and thank our treasured volunteers, we advertised in the Oakville Beaver's special volunteer section. We also hosted a volunteer appreciation evening on May 1 with Sandra Saville, Registered Dietician. A number of our volunteers attended for an evening of nutritional information, fun, prizes, and interactive learning and networking.

The Board held its annual strategy session in May to discuss funding, set targets for the upcoming years, and formalize future staffing plans.

Oakville Literacy Council  
905.469.8528  
[www.oakvilleliteracy.ca](http://www.oakvilleliteracy.ca)



*Event volunteers (from left) Wendy Nunn, Ann McCulloch, Karen Majerly, and Sue Lissaman at the Kerr St. BIA's street fair on September 8, 2007.*

## The word on the street this year...

"We are now on solid financial footing, with an exciting opportunity to expand and open our doors to even more students."

—Bernie Martenson, *President*

"My student has done well in spelling – he got 62 correct out of 67 last week. He has improved over the last month and said he feels he has more confidence."

—MB, *volunteer tutor, in a monthly progress report*

"Congratulations on your new website! I really enjoyed the new site, especially the testimonials from students and tutors. I will be sure to share it with all of our staff."

—Lori Sims, *CEO, Oakville Public Library*

*President's report continued*

### **Our program**

Joanne Smith-Scozzafava, the Program Manager, decided to move on to other activities in January. We were very fortunate to find an experienced literacy expert, Kathy Hall, to take over program management. We were able to serve 53 students over the course of the year thanks to our wonderful tutors.

As a United Way funded agency, we need to outline what we hope to achieve with our programs (outcomes) and track progress against those outcomes. Kathy and Karen Majerly have been building on our early outcome models, and we now have new and improved models for tracking progress and new forms to help us capture the right data.

### **Finances**

Late in 2007, the Council was in a precarious financial situation that resulted in reduced staff hours. Our situation improved greatly with a private donation of securities in December.

In addition, the Council received funds from a Bell Canada grant that supports volunteerism among employees and retirees. Marg Clements, a long-time tutor and book sale volunteer, applied for this grant on our behalf. This is our second time receiving this grant, thanks to Marg.

In the fall of 2007, United Way started a program that would provide multi-year funding to agencies, rather than requiring agencies to reapply each year. The Council applied in October for a three-year grant, and found out in March 2008 that we would continue to receive funding for three years, but at a slightly reduced level from previous years because we had not yet implemented a fully functioning model to measure the outcomes of our learning program.

At the same time we were applying for United Way funding, we also submitted an application to the Ontario Trillium Foundation, requesting a capacity building grant. We found out in March 2008 that the Council would receive a total of \$157,200 over 36 months, with the funds earmarked for building our programs and community partnerships, enhancing awareness of the Council in Oakville, and developing a self-sustaining fundraising program. The council received the first payment of \$40,000 by year-end.

It continues to be important for us to find new sources of funding, but the Trillium grant gives us the opportunity to reduce our reliance on a single source of support – United Way of Oakville.

Our biggest expense, accounting for about two-thirds of our modest annual budget of \$46,000, continues to be the two part-time staff members who manage our program and our office. In the near future, we will have to add premises costs because we are quickly outgrowing our space at Woodside Library, which is kindly donated by the Oakville Public Library.

With \$8,700 in revenue over expenses (not including the first Trillium instalment), we finished the year on May 31 in a positive position.

### **Other noteworthy items**

In May 2008, we launched our new website — it is a wonderful new site that tells our story. Please take a look if you haven't done so already. Visit [www.oakvilleliteracy.ca](http://www.oakvilleliteracy.ca).

We also completed a workplace outreach kit that can be used to educate Oakville employers about improving literacy skills in their workplaces.

### **Our people**

I would like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt appreciation for the many volunteers who support literacy in Oakville. Your dedication and commitment as tutors, committee members, and Directors allow us to help so many in Oakville who want to improve their literacy skills. Thank you for spending 4,000 hours volunteering for us!

And to our committed staff members — we could not accomplish so much without your passion for literacy and helping others.

### **The year ahead**

After a rather rocky start to our last financial year, we are now on solid financial footing, with an exciting opportunity to expand and open our doors to even more students. Please stay tuned over the year as we continue to build our links within the community, increase our capacity to support students, and create a solid funding model. It is an exciting and challenging time and I look forward to your support in this journey.

## **What is literacy?**

In 2007, The Toronto Dominion Bank released a report called *Literacy Matters: A Call for Action*. Here's a short excerpt from that report:

"There is a lot of confusion about exactly what literacy means. The traditional view is that literacy is the ability to read or write. However, this narrow description leads to a misperception that an individual is either literate or illiterate.

"In recent years there has been greater awareness that literacy is actually far broader in nature. An international experts' meeting of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2003 defined literacy as 'the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning to enable an individual to achieve his or her goals, to develop his or her knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in the wider society.'"

## Special thanks to our generous supporters

**Volunteer tutors:** 1,300 hours spent in lessons with your students this year! What an impact!

**Special event volunteers:** We appreciate your time, especially at the book sale.

**Board members:** Thank you for your ongoing contribution to the Council.

**OLC annual members:** Your support makes a big difference.

**Liaison with Oakville Public Libraries:** Brenda Reindl

**Book Sale Committee members:** Elizabeth Avery, Marg Clements, Gabrielle Garcia, Joan Heffernan, Joanne MacNair, Ann McCulloch, Linda North, Phyllis Robson

**Used book donors:** Such amazing generosity. Every book is donated!

**Special thanks and recognition to:** Ontario Trillium Foundation, United Way of Oakville, and the Oakville Public Library

**Other generous donors in 2007–2008:** Calloway REIT (Hopedale Mall); United Way workplace donors from Toronto and Peel who asked that OLC receive their payroll donations; Bell Canada Employee Giving Program; Bradley Harvey, C.A.; Communications at Work; John Watkis, Well Written Well Said; Solvr Systems; Starbucks Coffee Canada; Panago Pizza; Dominion Hopedale; IODE Opportunity Shop; Sheridan College Human Resources Interscholastic Committee; Oakville Chapters Book Club Dorval Crossing; Trafalgar Communications; Simply Audio Books; Monte Carlo Inns Oakville Suites.

## Board of Directors 2007–2008

Bernie Martenson  
President

Wendy Nunn  
Secretary

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Members-at-Large:

Jennifer Crawford  
Scott D’Cunha  
Teresa MacDonald  
Ann McCulloch  
Erin McInnes  
Chris Nind

OLC staff:

Kathy Hall,  
Programme Manager

Karen Majerly,  
Office Manager

## From the Used Book Sale Committee

## Growth continues year after year

by Co-Chairs Gabrielle Garcia and Ann McCulloch

In May 2008, the Council’s Used Book Sale brought in a little more than \$11,100! Once again, tutors, students, members, and board members came forward to support our major fundraiser of the year.

Their hard work resulted in a 9% increase over last year’s takings. Expenses were kept to a minimum with the generosity of Hopedale Mall, and also because we were able to use materials we invested in over previous years.

This year, we were especially glad to welcome a new member to the organizing committee, Linda North. Fellow conspirators Ann McCulloch, Marg Clements, Phyllis Robson, Joanne MacNair, Elizabeth Avery, Joan Heffernan and Gabrielle Garcia welcomed her fresh perspective and formidable strength.

Looking ahead to the 2009 sale, please be advised that Ann and I are cheerfully handing the mantle of Co-chairs to Linda and Phyllis. Make sure you show your support by letting them know what you can do for next year’s Used Book Sale.



ABOVE: On hand to open the sale, from left: Ann McCulloch, Co-chair of the book sale committee; Barbara Burton, CEO of United Way of Oakville; Oakville Mayor Rob Burton; Bernie Martenson; and Town Councillor Alan Johnston. RIGHT: Something for everyone at our book sale!



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The Oakville Literacy Council is a non-profit volunteer group dedicated to helping adults improve their literacy skills.

We receive funding from United Way of Oakville and the Ontario Trillium Foundation.