

HEALTH CARE

Demand for services puts squeeze on Erinoak's budget and space

Erinoak, Ontario's largest treatment centre for children with disabilities was forced to lease more space this month to manage its critical space shortage.

Erinoak is Ontario's largest non-profit children's treatment centre that offers a range of treatment, rehabilitation and support services to children (from birth through 19 years of age) with physical, developmental and/or communication disabilities. Erinoak serves the communities in Halton, Peel, Waterloo, Wellington and Dufferin.

According to an Erinoak press release, the number of children and families served by Erinoak has grown from 1,400 in 1995 to more than 8,000 today, an average growth rate of nearly 10% per year. Projections show that by 2011, that will increase to 13,000.

To meet current and future demand for care and address its infrastructure challenges, Erinoak needs an expanded facility—a 125,640 sq. ft. state-of-the-art therapeutic and wellness centre providing a full range of programs, services and integrated support to children and youth with disabilities and their families.

The price tag: \$50 million in government financial support.

Without this new facility, Erinoak says thousands of children with disabilities will face:

- clinically inappropriate wait times
- treatments delivered in inadequate and inappropriate space
- less treatment time

Erinoak spends \$1.5 million each year to lease additional treatment space. The new leased space signed this month will be used for an autism program and represents Erinoak's sixth site, bringing the total space Erinoak rents up to approximately 75,000 square feet.

"Without a plan for growth we are going to face an inefficient, fragmented, patchwork system of support and care for children and youth with disabilities and their families," said Erinoak board member Catherine Courson. "We're being forced to turn offices into makeshift treatment rooms, hallways are now becoming offices and yet again, we're renting more space as a stop-gap measure. We're hope-

ful that the government will recognize the urgency behind our request and not resort to band-aid solutions."

"When you look at the capital dollars the government is allocating to Ontario's health care sector it's clear they understand that investing in infrastructure is key to not only managing population growth in the region but also quality health care," adds Scott Bonikowsky, parent and Erinoak board member in the press release.

"However, we have yet to see that type of proactive planning being directed towards children's treatment centres which face urgent pressures. We believe the government needs to take the same strategic view with children's treatment centres which are such a vital part of Ontario's health care network, and invest today in the province's children with disabilities."

"We struggled 35 years ago to make sure our children were getting the care they needed. Thirty-five years later, it's still an uphill battle," says Gwen Carlson, founding board member of Erinoak. "I was hopeful that times would change and government would make sure that our children and youth with disabilities would get the services they deserve."

Visit www.erinoak.org/advocacy/ for more information about its advocacy campaign for a new facility.

Acclaim Health seeks support group leader

Do you have a special interest in the area of Alzheimer Disease or related dementia?

Acclaim Health (formerly VON), Alzheimer Services is looking for a group facilitator for their support group in the Georgetown area. This group provides support to family members who care for someone with dementia. The commitment is for two hours (7-9p.m.), on the 1st Tuesday of each month.

If interested, please call Renita Wood, educational co-ordinator for Acclaim Health Alzheimer Services-1-800-387-7127.



Little Feet in Motion

Glorious weather and enthusiastic runners— young and old— made for a great combination at the annual Feet in Motion Charity Fun Run at the Gellert Community Park on Sunday. The event proceeds of more than \$1,000 went to Halton Women's Place. Above, a few strides into the kids 1K run, the competitors are already eyeing each other. While below, Christian Jander, 6, of Acton, runs off with the crowd. Left, Mia Krmpotic, 34 months, receives her finishing medal from mom Renee of Georgetown. The adults ran a 5K Fun Run.

Photos by
Jon Borgstrom



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