

VITA CENTRE

ANNUAL REPORT 2010-2011



For pregnant and
parenting youth

Vita Centre: Legally known as Vita Manor

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

This is a very special year for us as we celebrate 20 years since Vita Centre was founded as Vita Manor. There have been many changes over those 20 years, but our desire to help pregnant and parenting youth in our communities remains at the heart of what the organization accomplishes everyday.

The way that help is provided looks different in 2011, as we keep in tune with needs of our youth today. The residence that was part of the founding organization has remained dear to the heart of many supporters of Vita Centre, and in some areas we have seen a downturn in support for the organization since we gave up the residence. We are not alone in the struggle to make a residence a relevant service to youth, and now see other programs asking similar questions about the viability of a residential program.

In my report last year I shared with you the consultation and planning process that brought about the development of an entirely new program, our office relocation and changes in staffing. This report reflects on the activities of the last operational year (July 2010 to June 2011), the successful implementation of those ideas and plans, and shares some thoughts on what may lay ahead.

The Executive Director of Vita Centre, Lana Burchett, who joined us last fall has demonstrated strong leadership and runs the day to day operations very effectively, and the board continues to appreciate the energy and enthusiasm that she brings to her role. Lana has a network of contacts in other not-for-profit organizations and we are continuing to explore partnership opportunities that may benefit the range of our programs.

We are very pleased with our current location at 75 Watline Road, Mississauga, where we relocated to last September, and invite any interested parties to drop by to visit the centre. The classroom area is slated to undergo some renovations over the next year to add some additional space for counseling our students as part of the education completion program provided through a partnership with Vita Centre, Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board and Peel Public Health.

Our volunteers and Early Childhood Educator are responsible for minding the infants of our students during class time. The purpose built child minding area at our new location is a welcome addition to provide this resource.

We now use tracking tools to look at the statistics of all the services offered through Vita Centre and are pleased to see some growth in the areas of community counseling and the G.A.P. program.

We have an amazing cadre of volunteers without whom we could not accomplish the goals and objectives of Vita Centre. One of the most enjoyable events we run each June is the volunteer appreciation night where their contributions can be publically acknowledged and individuals recognized and thanked.

We have considered the best way to use our volunteer Board Member's time and talents, and have put forward a change to our by-laws to be voted upon at this AGM, to reduce the overall number of Board Members from ten to eight for this coming year and seven in subsequent years. It is an ongoing challenge to find volunteers who are committed to board leadership and we have been striving for some time to achieve a full compliment of Board Members. We will ensure that only half the board will be up for (re) election in any one year, so that there is always good continuity and historical memory within the makeup of the board.

We do not fully know what the future may hold, if we will go back to the early days of "Vita Manor", with a residence of some sort, but we do need the continued sponsorship of all our supporters to deliver the essential programs that we offer today.

Vita Centre like all organizations in tougher economic times has experienced less success in fund raising events and reduction in donations. To counter this and to provide greater certainty for the future we are actively investigating the possibility of developing a social purpose enterprise to provide additional sustainable funding.

There is much to be done! We count on the continued support of our major funders, and hope that Vita Centre will again receive consideration when organizations are making decisions around donations.

As President of the Board I wish to thank the staff of Vita Centre, the volunteers, board members and committee members who continue to work hard for the success of the organization. We have done a lot in the first 20 years and I wonder what we can accomplish in the next 20!

Christina Boyle, President 2009 - 2011

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

It has been a great honour and privilege to be a part of such a remarkable organization as Vita Centre. Our accomplishments over the past year are due to our caring and professional staff, our supportive board, our compassionate volunteers and our generous and thoughtful donors. Without your assistance we would not be able to make such a positive life lasting impact for pregnant & parenting youth.

We have had, like many other organizations, a challenging financial year with the tough economic times. However, with the continued funding support of Catholic Charities, the Region of Peel and the United Way of Peel, we have been able to maintain our program services and to also enter into a new partnership with the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board and the Peel Health Department to deliver the PACE (Parenting and Catholic Education) program. Our staff team is also active with several committees and networks in the social & human service area to increase awareness about the issues/needs of pregnant & parenting youth and to position Vita Centre as a leading "champion" for this client population.

Our agency continues to seek new opportunities for developing financial resources that will ensure our agency operations are sustainable long term. One of those was our recent feasibility study for the operation of a Social Purpose Enterprise and we will continue to explore this option with the development of a business plan in 2011-2012. We are also exploring shared services with other agencies who share a similar mission.

Some of the highlights of this past year were the relocation of our offices to 75 Watline Ave., our official grand opening held on December 8th, 2010, along with our first ever Diaper & Baby Wipes drive. Thanks to great support from the community, we were able to stock up our donations cupboard to meet the needs of clients who often have to choose between buying food or diapers & wipes. We look forward to another successful drive this coming fall. In addition, we were able to provide over 30 families with a Christmas basket of presents & food through sponsorship by local families, businesses and community groups.

Thank you to everyone who helps in making Vita Centre possible!

Lana Burchett, Executive Director

TREASURER'S REPORT

The preceding year has been financially challenging for Vita Centre as the organization experienced a significant decline in revenues. As a result, Vita Centre's expenses exceeded revenues by \$24,143. Throughout 2009, Vita Centre made a strategic decision to discontinue the Vita Youth Parent Connection program which was funded by Service Canada. The termination of this program accounted for much of the decline in revenues that Vita Centre experienced in 2011. Last year Vita received \$225,305 of funding for this program. Offsetting this loss was the realization of significant cost savings from the cessation of the program. In 2010, expenses associated with this program amounted to \$195,863.

Vita Centre continues to review programs, policies and administrative expenses in order to identify opportunities to reduce expenses while maintaining programs being offered. The organization also maintains a reserve of \$250,000 to facilitate future expansion of the agency.

In partnership with the Region of Peel and the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board, Vita Centre launched a new program in 2011 which contributed to the increase in expenses. Vita Centre incurred \$33,122 for the child-minding, rent and other service delivery expenses associated with the Teen Parent Program.

A grant of \$10,000 was provided to the organization to explore the feasibility of operating a social purpose entity. The evaluation of this venture is ongoing.

I would like to thank the staff and volunteers for their efforts over the past year. It is the continued hard work of these individuals that will contribute to the ongoing success of the organization in the future.

Mathew Farrell, Treasurer

REVENUE BY SOURCE

22% Fundraising Activities
32% Catholic Charities
22% United Way of Peel
3% Donations KOC and CWL
1% Other Income
6% Individual donors & corporations
14% Region of Peel
100%

EXPENSES BY PROGRAM

36% Support in Community
16% PACE Teen Parent Program
15% Volunteer Development
18% Growing As Parents
15% Fundraising Program
100%

COMMUNITY SUPPORT PROGRAM REPORT

Our community support program provides assistance to pregnant and parenting youth to connect to community resources and to address issues which impact on the quality of their lives and that of their children. This work requires meeting with the clients, assessing needs and providing support. Sometimes this support is for an emergency situation while others are long term. In some situations the father may also be involved. All counseling services are free.

Parenting, housing, personal care needs and self esteem are the most common issues the counsellors deal with. This year, over 785 face-to-face meetings and more than 2,500 phone contacts were held with clients. In a recent survey of clients, we found that 85% were single with no ongoing partner support and over 90% expressed their primary reason for contacting Vita Centre was for pregnancy care & support followed by parenting/life skills. Their greatest needs when asking for help were: baby equipment & supplies, housing search, income support, parenting information and developing a safety plan. Over 80% expressed that they felt better prepared to cope with their current situation as a result of our counseling services and over 90% were very satisfied—with 100% stating that they would recommend our services to others.

"Vita Centre has helped me greatly. They provided me with baby clothes, food, diapers, wipes and a stroller. The staff is friendly and supportive. They make you feel loved and wanted. Their services make me realize that there are people who care for others. I am strong and well because of them. My baby and me appreciate your services. Thanks for the good work.".....S.K.

Our counseling team visits schools to educate staff and students on teen pregnancy prevention. They are often accompanied by a young mom who speaks of her own personal story. This year there were 20 school presentations reaching 895 young people. The team also liaises with other service providers to promote the Vita Centre's services available for clients who are experiencing unplanned pregnancy or are in need of parenting support.

The Community Support Program at Vita Centre continues to employ two Community Counselors, Rima El-Kaissi who has been with Vita Centre for four years, and Maria Hernandez who has been with Vita Centre for two years. Maria is commencing a one year maternity leave in September 2011 with Carissa Gravelle filling the position on a contract basis.

GROWING AS PARENTS (G.A.P.) PROGRAM REPORT

The Growing as Parents program is a series of 12 parenting and life skills sessions that are run twice weekly in the community in Brampton and Mississauga. The program is facilitated in an open format, and it runs concurrently so that parents are welcome to join at any time during the series. It takes place three times a year: Fall, Winter/Spring, Spring/Summer.

Participants are 15 to 30 years old, pregnant or parenting, with children between the ages of 0 to 6. The program is free with bus tickets and a snack provided. Child minding with an E.C.E and Vita Centre volunteers is also provided so parents can leave their children for the duration of the two hour weekly sessions.

The curriculum for the program can include such topics such as: Discipline, Early Literacy, Healthy Meal Time, Oral Hygiene, and Children's Safety, etc. G.A.P is facilitated by Stephanie Bellini who recruits volunteer guest speakers who have expertise on various topics related to parenting and life skills.

Participants were asked to complete program evaluation surveys from 2010 to 2011, with 100% indicating that G.A.P helped to improve their parenting skills. In addition, 100% expressed overall satisfaction with the program. G.A.P participatory rates continue to grow for both programs as interest in the community continues to spread.

"I feel more confident in dealing with my daughter's ever changing temperament. My daughter was interacting with other kids and gave her socialization skills. I also enjoyed having contact with someone who was over the age of 6! The different topics really helped with the present, as well as thinking about the future."

P.A.C.E. (PARENTING & CATHOLIC EDUCATION) TEEN PARENT PROGRAM

In this our newest program, up to 15 students between the ages of 15 to 20 attend an alternative school situated in our Mississauga office. The big attraction for teenage moms, during pregnancy and following birth, is that they are able to bring their babies with them and concentrate on their school studies and classroom work while child minding is provided in an adjacent room under the care of a paid early childhood educator with assistance from volunteers or placement students. Some of the babies are as young as six weeks, and because the teen moms are close to their little ones they are able to provide feedings and ease the anxiety of their separation.

The school program is overseen by the Dufferin Peel Catholic District School Board who provides a teacher, classroom equipment and the school curriculum under the direction of the principal of Archbishop Romero School in Mississauga. Classroom hours are Monday to Friday, 9:45 am to 2:30 pm. Peel Public Health provides the services of a Public Health Nurse who visits every Friday and a school board's Social Workers are available on Mondays and Wednesdays. Vita Centre is responsible for providing the classroom and child minding services, along with counseling support, and these costs are funded through donations.

The ability to provide this level of care is an important investment in the future stability of these young parents, and reduces the risk of them dropping out and not completing their high school education. Many of these students also face issues with housing, low income, and abusive relationships.

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM REPORT

Thank you to our volunteers for giving us your time and talent. You have guided the agency, raised funds and enabled us to deliver our programs and services. You have truly made a difference in the life of every young mother and child we serve. This year, Vita Centre had approximately 96 volunteers working with the agency with over 5,400 volunteer hours contributed. These volunteer hours were spent providing client support (40%), board & committee support (24%), bingo support (28%), and administration & promotion (8%).

Our annual Volunteer Recognition reception took place in June, and volunteers were asked to complete a survey to determine service outcomes which are reported annually to the United Way of Peel as the funder of this program. The 2010 survey revealed that 75% expressed a very high level of satisfaction with their work with Vita Centre. All of them felt that they were making a difference, with 92% feeling that their experience increased his/her connection to the community, and 88% having a better understanding of the issues facing young parents. Over 50% also felt that their volunteer experiences had increased job readiness and networking skills.

"It is my greatest pleasure volunteering at Vita Centre. As a mother and grandmother, I know how important it is for young mothers to have all the tools needed for positive parenting. So it is my greatest joy that I get an opportunity to child-mind while the mothers are attending the GAP program. Volunteering for me is very rewarding and fulfilling. It touches my heart."..... J.N.

Admin & Promotion	439.5 hours
Board & Committees	1317 hours
Client Support	2172 hours
Bingo	1484 hours
Total Volunteer Hours	5412 hours

Support in Community	249 hours (12%)
Growing As Parents	657 hours (23%)
P.A.C.E. Teen Parent Program	1266 hours (5%)



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We also thank St. Joseph's Parish and St. John of the Cross Redeemer Church who have so generously supported us this year by providing space for hosting Vita Centre events.

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Lana Burchett, *Executive Director*
Chandra Vaidyanathan, *Volunteer Co-Ordinator*
Stephy Reid, *Reception & Program Administration*
Sabino Noronha, *Accounting Co-Ordinator*

Rima El-Kaissi, *Community Counselor*
Maria Hernandez, *Community Counselor*
Stephanie Weisbart Bellini, *G.A.P Facilitator*
Feliza Cabasa, *ECE, PACE Child Minding Lead*
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