

1914 - 2014

THEN AND NOW



1910 — 1919

1914 The Big Sister Movement begins in Toronto, led by Hilda Burns, social worker. Its mandate is to work with and advocate for teenage girls referred by the juvenile court as offenders. The aim of the movement: “To correct and prevent delinquency.”

The sub-committee of the Local Council of Women’s Committee on Prevention of Traffic in Women and Equal Moral Standards became the Big Sister Movement.

The Big Sister movement accepted into the Council as one of 65 member organizations.

Hilda Burns recruits Bessie Kurata, a teacher in the Social Service Department of the Toronto to work with her. Ms. Kurata became field secretary for the area east of Parliament while Ms. Burns continued to serve the western section.

1915 125 girls referred to the Big Sisters. There were only 87 volunteers to befriend them.

1916 Membership in The Big Sister Association numbers 89.

1916

Hilda Burns to be the first president of The Big Sister Association, a position she agrees to hold for one year while maintaining her position as field secretary in the western division.

First constitution and guidelines for The Big Sister Association written and unanimously adopted.

The Municipal Council of the City of Toronto offers The Big Sister Association a rent-free, unfurnished room behind the juvenile court in the city hall for their meetings.

Treasurers' end of year report indicates a balance of \$908.

1917

First annual meeting of the Big Sister Association held at the Friends' Church on Maitland St.

1918

The Big Sister Association adopts this platform:

- Good housing
- Supervised boarding homes where girls can get comfortable and cheerful bedrooms and where there would be accommodation in which to entertain friends other than in their bedrooms
- A living wage for girls
- Shorter working hours
- Teaching of sex hygiene in the schools
- Raising school leaving age to 16, with part-time study up to the age of 18 and over
- Vocational training and vocational guidance

1919

The Big Sister Association formally applies for membership in the Federation for Community Service.

Big Sister case files number 507, total cash in bank \$1400.

1920 1929

1920

The Big Sister Scholarship fund established and five monthly bursaries distributed to five recipients during this school year (max: \$8/month).

The Big Sister Association roster lists 54 active volunteers.

The Big Sister Association joins with the Big Brothers to organize the first convention in Toronto.



1922 The Big Sister Association extends its service to young women released from prison.

Circles are formed as auxiliary groups of The Big Sister Association. Circle members support and fundraise for the Association. The women involved are particularly interested in the practical aspects of assistance – clothes, food, education allowances, and gifts at Christmas. The first five Circles are formed: Lawrence Park, Hill, Moore Park, Central (later becomes Helen Robertson Circle) and Parkdale (the forerunner of York Circle).



MRS. J. F. COMER, invitation convener of the Hill circle, Big Sister association, mails invitations to their planned shopping days on September 22 and 23



MRS. LEONARD PORTER, Mrs. Frank Coates, Mrs. J. M. Thompson and Mrs. P. W. Reschke, left to right, members of Lawrence Park circle, Big Sister Association, arrange their benefit to be held for the association on Nov. 24 and 25

1925 The Big Sister Board sets age limit at 18 for girls accepted for counselling. The range for girls accepted for counselling is between 12 and 18 years.

A year of financial crises makes it imperative to fundraise. Total budget \$10,763.

Circle reports were presented by Mrs. Emerson Coatsworth, Lawrence Park; Mrs. S. R. Hewitt, Moore Park; Mrs. M. P. McDonald, Centre; Mrs. W. G. Allan, Hill; Mrs. H. H. Blake, Parkdale.

That the anti-social girl had a right to be made socially valuable was the declaration of Miss C. Jean Walker, General Secretary, who stated that 504 little sisters made application during the past year, which ended with a total of 275 closed cases. The average age of the girl was 15 years. Success would come only through understanding of the girl and her problems on the part of the worker, and the securing of her co-operation. Illuminating descriptions of the various fields and their possibilities and characteristics were given by the Field Secretaries, Miss M. McLelland, Miss J. A. Maines, Miss M. Weir, and Miss Z. M. Collins, special Field Secretary.

Progress Reported.

An outline of the year's work was given by Mrs. Leighton Elliott, the Recording Secretary, and the Treasurer, Mrs. John McCollum, stated that the total receipts were \$12,562, with disbursements of \$11,848. Miss Chauncey Tocque presented the report of the Nominations Committee, and the following officers were declared elected: Patronesses, her Excellency Lady Byng and Mrs. Henry Cockshutt; Honorary President, Mrs. Sidney Small; Honorary Vice-Presidents, Mrs. R. A. Martin and Mrs. Recording Secretary, Mrs. Leighton Elliott; Treasurer, Mrs. John McCollum; Councillors—Mrs. F. A. Brook, Mrs. J. Coombe, Mrs. D. A. Dunlap, Lady Flavell, Mrs. A. E. Go Gibbons, Mrs. Gerhard Heintz, Mrs. W. A. J. Massey, Dr. Ma John McCollum, Miss Chauncey Toveil, Mrs. B.

BIG SISTERS MEET

Splendid Reports Read at Annual Meeting of Association

Splendid reports were read yesterday at the annual meeting of the Big Sisters Association, which met at the Y. W. C. A. Greater interest on the part of the public is being shown in the work and on account of this, the association is able to meet the needs of more Little Sisters, it was said.

The year's work was outlined by Mrs. Leighton Elliott, the recording secretary.

TORONTO BIG SISTERS CLOSE A BANNER YEAR

504 Cases Handled of Which 171 Were New; 275 Cases Closed in 1925

1926 Helen Robertson, a graduate of the University of Toronto School of Social Work, joins The Big Sister Association to provide counselling services.

The Big Sister Association receives \$5000 from the estate of Mrs. F. J. (Ethel Ames) Coombs. Terms of the will earmarks \$250/year to the Scholarship Fund.

1930 1939

1930

The Big Sister Association legally incorporated as The Big Sister Association of Toronto and York.



1936

The Big Sister Association sponsors 16 club groups that meet regularly in several areas of the city, suburbs, and in churches, the YMCA, YWCA or branches of the Neighbourhood Workers' Association.

1937

Hope Page Circle and Rosedale Circle are formed.



1940 1949

1939 - 1941

Junior Hill Circle flourishes

1941

The Big Sister Association formalizes policy that, "Funds raised in the name of the The Big Sister Association may be used only for the work of the Agency."

Rosedale Circle amalgamates with Village Circle.

The Big Sister Association leases a new office at 20 Wellesley St.

1942

Margaret Scott Circle forms. It will run until 1973.

1945

Ellen S. Bates Joy Blossom Fund established in memory of a New York-based philanthropist.

First Big Sister Association quarterly newsletter is published.



1947

Helen Robertson resigns after 20 years of service.

1950 — 1959

1950 The Big Sister Association purchases a house at 22 Charles Street and moves operations from Wellesley Street without any disruption in service.

1951 Mary Lugsdin joins staff as general secretary.



1952 Scholarship fund for post-secondary education launches. The program costs \$7000 and allows 104 girls to continue their education through secondary school.



1953 The Big Sister Association buys 34 Huntley Street.



1955 Renovations to 34 Huntley St. completed and an open house was held in May. "Teen Shop" established in the basement of Huntley to provide clothes and other necessities to the young women.



1955



—Globe and Mail.
Mrs. Gordon Tamblin (left) and her daughter, Mrs. Ruth Simmonds, are both working on arrangements for the shopping days being held by the Hill Circle of the Big Sister Association on Thursday and Friday at Creed's and Birks on Bloor St. W.



Big Sister Counselling Service, 34 Huntley Street, Toronto, has professional counsellors to help troubled teen-age girls. Psychiatric and psychological counselling is also available, when needed. There is no charge for these services.



—Globe and Mail.
A pleasant centre for girls is the Big Sisters on Huntley Street. Lawrence Park Circle of the Big Sisters' Association will raise funds with shopping days at Creed's, Nov. 24/25.

1956

Gay Venture Circle forms, the first new Circle in 10 years.

The Big Sister Association scholarships now awarded on basis of need rather than girl's ability to obtain good grades.

1957

Hilda Burns dies.

1958

Circle volunteers begin to relieve the counsellors of cooking and kitchen duty and, once a month, a Circle assumes these responsibilities.

1959

Daughters of the Hill Circle form Oriole Circle.

100 Big Sisters serve on committees.

Mr. C. F. Basil Tippet, good friend and adviser to the Big Sister Association, dies and members of Lawrence Park Circle establish a memorial fund in his memory. Fund used for advanced education bursaries.

Big Sisters pay off mortgage for Huntley Street.



—Globe and Mail.
Photographed in the attractive Big Sister House on Huntley St. were four members of the Full Circle planning their project which will help finance educational help and counselling for teen-agers. Shopping days will be held at Birks, Bloor St. W. on Sept. 27 and 28 and at Holt Renslow on Sept. 27. From left are Mrs. Harold Steele, Mrs. J. F. Connor, Mrs. Gordon Tamblin and Mrs. A. Gordon Scott.



—Globe and Mail.
Photographed at the home of Mrs. F. C. Burgess, Park Lane, were members of the Moore Park and Rosedale Circle Big Sisters making plans for two shopping days at Fairweather's, Oct. 6 and 7, for the benefit of their work with girls.

1959

16 THE GLOBE AND MAIL, SATURDAY, FEB. 11, 1956.

Plan Boarding House

Big Sisters Burn Mortgage

Members of the Big Sister Association celebrated yesterday at the 41st annual meeting of the group when a piece of paper went up in flames.

It was the mortgage for Big Sister House at 34 Huntley St., purchased in 1954. And in spite of heavy expenditures, a bank balance of \$30,328 was reported.

Another big moment during the meeting in St. Clement's Anglican Church was presentation of a minutes book to Mrs. Ben Till who represented the newly inaugurated Gay Venture Circle—the sixth circle of the association.

Two major projects under the Big Sisters' consideration are hiring of a psychiatric consultant to strengthen the organization's counselling service, and provision of protective living accommodation for working teen-agers who must live away from home.

"A major concern, and the one we should do something about first," said Mary Lagadin, executive director, "is our need for psychiatric consultation."

"The skilful contribution during 1955 of our two consultant psychiatrists has confirmed our conviction that we should strengthen our staff team with the services of a consultant psychiatrist."

"While our staff is continually searching for more understanding and more valid ways of helping, we are nowhere near knowing all the answers to some of the problems that come our way."

"Whenever possible, we consult with the Juvenile Court clinic and Board of Education psychiatrists and refer clients to the mental health clinics, but quite often service is not available when needed," she told the meeting.

Our concern is that there may come a moment in the next years this may happen—when she is ready and ripe to use help, but it isn't available the moment it is needed and we may never have as good a chance again."

Mrs. Lagadin said Toronto needs several small, family-like, well-supervised group-living facilities in accessible areas of the young working girls of 16, 17, 18 and sometimes even 19 years.

"The staff has already given thought to the possibility of experimenting with a supervised and supervised boarding house for a small group of girls," she explained.

"Such a project would take study and consultation and perhaps cooperative action with

agencies having experience in this field. Instead of waiting our turn for another 18 years, let us initiate an aggressive search for an answer to this community problem. Until we do something about it, we can only blame ourselves when we find girls living in places we cannot approve."

Last year, 674 girls and their parents were served by the Big Sisters. Just four more than the previous year.

Of the 674, 82 were assisted with burials and there with advanced education burials, said Mrs. Lagadin.

She compared economic conditions of 1913 with those of 1955. "In 1913 we can read the story of Minnie, referred to the Big Sisters as family property and home conditions poor. This 13-year-old found a factory job at \$4.50 a week, decided she could support herself, found a place to board for \$2 a week and left her dreadful home conditions to make her way in the world."

Unskilled teen-agers today can earn from \$20 to \$32 a week, while those with business training can start at \$32 to \$4 a week. They must pay at least \$15 a week for room and board. If a girl earns less than \$25 and has no other resources from her family, she usually needs help with special expenses—such as medical and dental care and glasses, said Mrs. Lagadin.

Mrs. W. J. Smallacombe, reading the president's address for Mrs. Milton B. Hastings, who was absent because of illness, stated: "We in the BSA have it in our hands to help make this era the dawn of a better and brighter day in the struggles of these teen-agers."

Recording Secretary Mrs. Jan Macintosh reported a membership of 353, including 25 associate members and eight life members.

Officers include: president, Mrs. L. O. Brithaupt; president, Mrs. Hastings; vice-presidents, Mrs. Smallacombe, and Mrs. Norman J. Robinson; recording secretary, Mrs. Macintosh; treasurer, Mrs. W. Howard Peterson.

Officers of the Gay Venture Circle include: president, Shirley Chene; vice-president, Anne McCordick; secretary, Marjorie Maxwell; treasurer, Mrs. David Ashmun; and board representative, Mrs. Till.

The newly formed Gay Venture Circle of the Big Sister Association is holding its first project, a bridge and tea, this afternoon at the home of the president, Miss Shirley Chene of Sandringham Dr., Downsview. Mrs. Milton B. Hastings, Mrs. Allan B. Ramsey, Mrs. Basil Tippet, Mrs. Frank Chene and Mrs. Wilfred Stovel will assist.

Big Sisters' Association annual meeting, St. Clement's Church, Briar Hill and Duplex Aves., 10:45 a.m.

The last embers of the Big Sisters' Association mortgage hold the attention of the foursome above, who thus ceremoniously ended a big financial indebtedness at the annual meeting of the association. From left they are: Mrs. W. J. Smallacombe, 1st vice-president; Miss Mary Lagadin, executive director; Mrs. Ewan McLean, past president; and Mrs. Norman J. Robinson, 2nd vice-president. The Big Sisters ended their financial year, after paying off the mortgage, with a bank balance of approximately \$6,000.

1960

1969

1960 Age limit raised from 18 to 21 years for girls in Huntley Street counselling program.

BIG SISTER COUNSELLING SERVICE
OPERATED BY BIG SISTER ASSOCIATION
34 Huntley Street,
Toronto 3, Ontario
Telephone 924-1457

"Youth when lighted and alive and given a sporting chance is strong for struggle and not afraid of any trials or punishments or deaths."
Carl Sandburg

1961 The Big Sister Association withdraws membership in local council of women. The aims of the organization no longer furthered the constitutional purpose of the The Big Sister Association.

1963 Big Sisters launch campaign to raise funds for the Madison Group Home. The Home requires a \$300,000 fundraising effort, many times more than any amount ever raised for a single project by the Big Sister Association.

88th Nov 1963

The Tely - Dec 14/63

The Big Sister Association has for nearly 50 years, very quietly, been big sister to a lot of confused girls who can't get on with parents or at school or are at a loss to deal with the big city.

Mary Lagadin, the executive director, puts the success down to discretion. "The girls say they have confidence in the staff because you don't moralize."

She and five co-workers run the service on a 24-hour basis from 34 Huntley St. with a psychologist and psychiatrist as consultants.

The Big Sisters began their work in 1914 as "drifted volunteers" ready to give "sympathetic guidance for young girls." Today the ladies (nearly 400 are the money-makers (many two-partners) who carry the service with the help of the United Appeal.

To celebrate its 50th birthday in 1964, the association plans to establish a residence for teen-age girls (12-20 years old) who come in them for counselling. They'll launch a \$300,000 drive for funds in February, and hope to produce \$100,000 of it from their own purses. The house will take 12 girls at a time.

BIG SISTERS LAUNCH CAMPAIGN
Examining a brochure which sets the projects of the Big Sister Association are, from left, Mrs. T. C. Brown, Mrs. L. J. Friesen and Mrs. C. M. Phipps. They attended the first all-member rally held yesterday to launch a drive for \$100,000 from members before going to the public. Funds are needed for a residence for girls who require counselling service and living quarters.

1963



Mrs. George F. Kelk, left, president of the Big Sister Association, and directors Mrs. Donald L. Mumford and Mrs. C. F. Boyd Tupper, right, are members of the all-women team campaigning for \$300,000 for the group home.

\$300,000 Goal Set by Big Sisters

A \$300,000 target for adolescent girls is the goal of a fundraising project about to be launched by the Big Sister Association. About \$100,000 of that sum will be used to purchase a big old-fashioned, home-like house in a well-established neighborhood. Therapeutic group living will be provided for approximately 15 girls between 14 and 18 years of age, who have been rejected by their families or are having difficulty adjusting to community life. The girls would find their way into the house through the counselling services of the Big Sister Association. The Association points out that accommodation is available for the seriously disturbed or for the ordinary working girl, but an unhappy teenager, who is not ready to live on her own, has nowhere to turn. While in the home, the girls who were working would overnights toward their board, and all would help with the housework. A volunteer committee of the Association will start the fundraising drive Feb. 1, with the blessing of the Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto and the United Community Fund.

1964

The Big Sister Thrift Shop opens its doors at 1743 Avenue Road, Toronto. The intent of the Shop is to consolidate the fundraising efforts of all Circles. Immediately successful, the Shop will donate the profits to Big Sister Counselling Service. Not only does the Shop prove to be a significant financial contributor, but it serves an important community relations role for the Association.

The Big Sister Thrift Shop
1743 AVENUE ROAD
[BETWEEN FAIRLAWN & ST. GERMAINE]
PREVIEW DAY
FOR MEMBERS & FRIENDS
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 1, 1964
10:30 AM TO 4 PM
NO SALES UNTIL PUBLIC OPENING
DECEMBER 2, 1964
COFFEE



**COME
TO YOUR
SHOP OPENING**

1964

12 THE GLOBE AND MAIL, WEDNESDAY, DEC. 2, 1964



Mrs. George F. Kelk, president of the Big Sisters Association, tacks up a sign as the organization's new Thrift Shop opened yesterday for business.

Big Sisters Thrift Shop Opens, Required Two-Year Area Study

A two-year study of the residential areas in Metropolitan Toronto was conducted by the Big Sisters Association before a site was selected for its new Thrift Shop. The shop opened for business yesterday at 1743 Avenue Rd., north of Lawrence Avenue.

This location, specified by the United Community Fund and Social Planning Council, was determined by three factors:

—The area residents are mainly young, middle-income couples with several children.
—It is a well-served, long-established thrift shop operated by other charitable organizations, such as the Crippled Children and the Junior League.

Almost all members of the association voted to establish the shop, from which it is hoped \$20,000 a year will be raised to support the Big Sisters Residence for Girls. Up

to now, small membership circles have worked on independent fund-raising projects, and the hand-made articles that have long been featured at bazaars will be one of the wares in-trade at the Thrift Shop. The balance of its merchandise will be good used

articles, sold at bargain prices.

Six volunteers will staff the premises, three on sales, three on pricing, six days a week. The hours will be 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and until Christmas it will be open Thursday and Friday evenings.



Students and the incoming president were among the guests at the BSA's anniversary meeting and luncheon. Mrs. George F. Kelk (left) and Mrs. George F. Kelk (right) are shown in the foreground. Mrs. George F. Kelk is shown in the foreground. Mrs. George F. Kelk is shown in the foreground.

Helps troubled girls

Thrift shop with a purpose

By MARIE FURTADO
Star staff writer

A thrift shop with a double purpose is opening Dec. 2 at 1743 Avenue Road.

First of all, it's a boon to you, for it's already well stocked with bargains, ranging from a pretty yellow formal for \$3.50 to nearly-new drapes to be had for a song.

But the real motive behind the shop between Fairlawn and St. Germaine the Big Sister Association volunteers are operating and staffing, is to raise money to give practical help to teenage girls, many of whom are already tragically bruised by life.

Profits of the shop will go for car fare and lunch money to allow girls to stay in school; medical and dental care; funds for room and board for teenagers who must live on their own; living and clothing allowances.

In short, all the essentials which the United Appeal grant to the Big Sisters can't be stretched to provide. Director Mary Lugsdin says these helps often mean the difference between a girl staying in school decent living quarters, and being drawn into a life of dope and prostitution.

If you drop into the shop and find a bargain among the household items, clothes, sports goods, jewelry and toys, it will make you feel even better to know where your money goes. Here is Miss Lugsdin's case history of one of the 600 girls the Big Sisters give heart and hope to every year:

COULDN'T MANAGE

"At 16, Joan was completely on her own in Toronto. Her family had been broken up through her parents' divorce. She couldn't find work in her small town so she moved to the big city. The scars of an unhappy home life were still deep and sore. She was starved for love and affection and far from ready to manage on her own.

"She knew no one. The room she found was cheerless. After three months, she lost her first job. Broke, feeling terribly alone and depressed, she was sitting in a restaurant when a woman noticed how poorly she looked and spoke to her. Luckily the woman had heard of the Big Sisters counselling service and told her where to go."

The counsellor realized eczema didn't help Joan's depression or chances for a job so arranged for medical treatment. A boarding place was found and money for room and board given.

"When she realized her counsellor would stand behind her for as long as needed—until she had time to grow up and learn how to manage, had friends and a place for herself in the community—her discouragement began to lift, she began to relax and take heart," Miss Lugsdin said.

"You can't work in a vacuum with teenagers. You have to start with practical help, then help them sort out their emotional problems."

TALK BY CANDLELIGHT

The bright, homey atmosphere of the Big Sisters headquarters on Huntley St. is due mainly to the work of the 300 women volunteers who belong to the association. The money they raise has provided such things as a record player and the girls can play Beatle records and make themselves hot chocolate or coffee while they wait for their counselling session.

The old house is open every night until 6, later Wednesday nights when volunteers cook and serve the girls' supper. More than 20 girls usually attend and often Miss Lugsdin clears out of her informal office to let them sit around after supper and discuss by candlelight whatever is on their minds—be it Nancy who's thinking of tinting her hair or Anne who has finally realized she is in with a wild crowd.

The Big Sisters work with girls from 12 years to 21. Some have minor home or school problems. Others are from broken homes. Out-of-town youngsters present many problems. "Too many of them aren't scared but should be," said Miss Lugsdin. "They haven't a clue that behind the city's gay glitter lies evil they may very easily fall into."

Toronto's crying need is for more supervised living places for young girls, Miss Lugsdin said. The Big Sisters will open one on Madison Avenue next spring for 15 girls but they already have a long waiting list.



BIG SISTER ASSOCIATION volunteers are opening a new thrift shop at 1743 Avenue Rd. Dec. 2. Co-chairman Mrs. James McKellar shows items members do-

nated, including a lamp, candelabra, cast iron wine presser, pressure cooker, set of Aynsley china. They also have good used clothing and sports equipment.



Katherine Smith, 4, left, and she hears the sound of the trumpet Michael Abad, 3, found on a table at the Thrift Shop.

1965

Madison House opens, the first residence of its kind in Canada. The residence is the The Big Sister Association's response to the chronic shortage of appropriate housing in Toronto for girls over sixteen years old, not living at home while making the transition to adulthood.

Kingsway Circle forms.

1966

Name changes to The Big Sister Association of Metropolitan Toronto.

1969

Oriole Circle amalgamates with Gay Venture Circle to form a larger group.



1970 1979

1970 Gay Venture Circle completes a study on the Role of the Volunteer in direct service. Recommendations made to hire a professional director of volunteers, who will develop a recruitment, training and supervision program.

1973 The Direct Service Program begins, promoting increased volunteer/client involvement. The Program will be so successful that it will become the cornerstone of future volunteer recruitment by The Big Sister Association.

Circle members become involved in the Special Friend Program offering one-on-one tutoring to the young people at 34 Huntley Street and the Madison residence.

1973 Mary Lugsdin, Executive Director, resigns after 22 years.



Big Sister Association offers the first co-operative apartment for girls.



Men moving into Big Sisters group

Men are moving into the Big Sister organization.

Gordon Wolfe, 37, the group's first male worker, who is to take over as director in the fall, says youth counselling services must change and grow rapidly to cope with stresses felt by today's children.

"Today's 13-year-olds are doing what 16-year-olds were doing five years ago. They use drugs and have sexual experiences much earlier," he said.

Wolfe, who holds a master's degree in social work from the University of Toronto, says conflict with parents is a major reason girls are referred to the association by school counsellors, children's aid services and "frequently by their older sisters."

The 60-year-old group employs 20 full-time professional social workers, psychiatrists and psychologist.

"Sun" - 23.7.73

1973

Madison House

Topic
Nov 24, 1978

Published by Third Service Community

Helping girls make it on their own

By Art Hogg

The original beneficiary of the new Madison House, the girls who have been through the program, are now the ones who are helping other girls who are in the same situation.

"I started doing and giving them a hand through their own efforts," said Gordon Wolfe, who is now the executive director of the program.

Madison House is a program for girls who are in the same situation as the girls who have been through the program.

"I'm not sure if it's the best," said Wolfe, "but it's the best I can do."

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1974

60th Anniversary celebration of the Big Sister Association is held at the Rosedale Golf Club.

To reflect the expanding youth-in-crisis counselling support they provide, The Big Sister Association changes its name to Huntley Youth Services. Both male and female caseworkers make up the professional staff, working now with boys and girls.



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Gordon Wolfe becomes the first male Executive Director.

Man is director of Big Sisters

By KAYCE WHITE
Star staff writer

Youth counselling services must change and grow rapidly to cope with space-age stresses, felt by today's children, according to the Big Sister Association's new executive director, Gordon Wolfe.

Modern parents have less control over their children, who are growing up faster than ever before, Wolfe told The Star in an interview.

"Today's 13-year-olds are having what 16-year-olds were doing five years ago," he said. "They use drugs and have sexual experience much earlier, and the drinking age has been lowered."

Executive post

Wolfe, 37, holds a master's degree in social work from the University of Toronto. For the past six years, he has worked with the Jewish Family and Child Service, (JFCS). Three years ago he was appointed executive director of the JFCS north branch office.

Wolfe says he does not believe that drug use or abuse is a problem in itself, among children who have problems.

"Continuous use of drugs such as marijuana is the root of another problem and must be viewed in the right way as evidence and abuse of authority or rebellion," he said.

Conflict with parents is one of the major reasons girls are referred to the Big Sister Association's counselling service.



GORDON WOLFE HEADS BIG SISTERS
He's first male worker to serve with agency

ling service. The association assists girls between age 12 and 21 who are referred by school counsellors, children's aid workers, and frequently by their older sisters.

Wolfe said conflict between adolescents and children is a normal part of growing up, but frequent battles at home are a danger signal.

"If there's a hint every time the child walks into the house, he begins to feel that life is just one long feud."

"This is just as destructive as incest to a child's personality because the child feels he is being con-

tinually worn down when no love is shown."

Wolfe plans to start a pilot project for counselling boys as well as girls when he takes office this fall.

Although the 60-year-old organization has served only females until this year, he believes there is an urgent need to counsel

brothers and boys who are in crisis who need help from Big Sisters.

Big Sister counselling service is primarily a youth service agency and if a girl comes into counselling we try to find out about her parents and family," he said.

"We don't separate a girl from her mother and father but instead try to bring groups together so the girls can have a more normal relationship with her family."

Emotional tie

"There is a terrible emotional tie between child and parents, and these emotions can run the gamut from love to hate."

"The overall aim of the agency is to make it vibrant, tuned-in, qualitative counselling for all young people. It should be as educational as motherhood."

Big Sister Association, founded in 1912, operates on a \$200,000 annual budget, funded 80 per cent by the provincial government and 20 per cent by the United Appeal Fund.

Wolfe is the first male professional worker to work with the group which employs 20 full-time staff, about 1000 volunteers, psychiatrists and psychologists in counselling services.



The Residential Treatment Centre for girls 11 – 16 years old opens, financed by the Ontario Ministry of Health, but run by Huntley Youth Services. Located on St. Clair Avenue, it will later move to Maynard Avenue and, finally, to a house on Runnymede Road.

The Special Friend Volunteer Program starts, matching trained volunteers with clients, to provide informal adult support and friendship to youth.

For the first time professionals and members from the community were elected to the Board including six men.



Rosamond McKellar



What is Big Sister counselling service?



Past Presidents of the Board



Helen Robinson



Florence Honderich

Shop Volunteers



Doris Tippet & Pauline McGibbon



Grace Wood & Elma Popovic with a customer



Decades of Caring



Maynard Property



Inner City



Fashion from the Shop at an Annual Meeting



Annual Luncheon

1975 A co-operative apartment opened for boys in conjunction with Central Toronto Youth Services.

Avenue Circle forms with some former members of Margaret Scott Circle.

A legacy from the estate of Grace Fell makes it possible for the Association to produce a film of Huntley Youth Services in action.

Springarama is held at St. Lawrence market, and is held twice in the 1970s.

1976 Humber Circle forms.

1977 Jubilee Circle forms.

259 women in 12 Circles are members of the The Big Sister Association.

The Diversion Project initiated to keep boys and girls out of court or training schools.

Therapeutic living accommodation offered including: a group home for girls 15 and over, a treatment centre for girls with serious behaviour problems, a co-op apartment to house girls in need of experience living with others, and a co-op house for boys.

1979 Circles launch Youthline at 34 Huntley Street.

Youthline takes its first calls. Developed as a Big Sister Association anniversary project, Youthline will become an identifiable and well-known telephone support system in Toronto for distressed young adults.



Big Sisters mark 65th anniversary.

1980 1989

1980 Inner City Youth Program, an outreach program for downtown street youth, begins operation. It is the first of its kind in Canada. Inner City will come to be recognized for its quality work in the areas of street youth, prostitution and AIDS education.

1981 The Big Sister Association buys the Thrift Shop Building.



New connection David Peltz, center, is one of five street workers who work the Yonge St. strip this summer. They're Dave, thanks to a \$75,000 government grant, to help some of the homeless, drug-addicted and other troubled youth who live on the strip stay out of the streets.

Summer runaways flock to 'strip'

By Jill Highy Toronto Star

Rosalind is broke, hungry and 16. Fed up with the bruises and arguments dished out at home, she fled to the Yonge St. strip a few days ago. But from the look of her, you'd think she'd been there for months. She's running scared. She needs a friend.

She's prey for both pander and pimp.

But now Rosalind — and scores like her — has a chance to put her life back in order.

Metro and the province are letting \$75,000 on those friends.

Runaways' haven

The money is a social services grant that will put five street workers on the strip. Their aim is to prevent the strip from ruining the lives of kids like Rosalind.

They're starting this week and they haven't much time. The strip is a haven for runaways. The annual pilgrimage to the gaudy section of Yonge from floor to Queen Sts. began last week when school recessed.

Some authorities believe there are more kids walking the edge, on the strip, this year than ever before.

"I can't tell you things are going to get better," says Sergeant Terry Knox of the Metro police youth bureau. "Things seem to be pretty consistent right now — the kids are starting to arrive and it's getting busy."

The bureau estimates the juvenile population in Metro — those under 16 — is 340,000. More than 7,500 of them ran away last year: 3,114 males and 4,251 females.

Street worker, Chris Balzer, 30, used to be one of them. "I've been on the streets myself, left home when I was only 15," he said.

SPECIAL REPORT

He hopes his experiences can help today's runaways. "I'm really a walking telephone booth providing information on food, clothing, shelter and employment to those in need."

Balzer works with Huntley Youth Services, an affiliate of the Big Sister organization, asked by Metro to handle the new project. "They are firmly established, have a centre with facilities and won't have to hire management personnel," says grants officer John Jagt.

How will the street workers reach Rosalind and those like her?

"It takes a long time of building trust and credibility... sometimes you're lucky with the ones who haven't been on the strip too long, while others are hardened to a street way of life," says Madeleine Hyman, associate director with the defunct Downtown Youth Centre, a \$100,000 operation which placed 400 workers on Yonge St. last year.

Money cut off

The centre went under when government money was cut off.

Although there are no estimates from police or youth workers how many kids flock to the strip during the summer, Michael Blagman, program consultant for the new venture, expects workers to make 600 contacts before September — 3,000 within a year. Three workers will continue after the summer.

"We want to get involved with kids before they get involved with prostitution, heavy drugs or cults and provide them with some way

See RUNAWAYS/page A2

Runaways of summer jam Yonge

Continued from page 1

out," says project supervisor David Peltz, a Huntley worker for two years.

Alternatives may include emergency housing such as Stop 86, hostels, employment agencies like the Youth Employment Service or short-term and day labour jobs.

Kids in need will be directed to free legal advice, medical attention such as that provided by the Hassie-Free Clinic and Addiction Research Foundation, job-training programs and skills improvement centres.

Agencies such as the Children's Aid, police and welfare will play an important follow-up role.

Huntley's resources include eight full-time social workers who deal with a caseload of 400 kids, 85 volunteers who man the phones and office at 34 Huntley St. and two residences on Maynard and Madison Aves. each of which house 20 teenagers from 16 to 18.

"People in agencies are better equipped to keep track of kids and survey their progress," says Peltz. "We will try to take them there in person and get them appointments."

Peltz says a major problem is competing with the excitement level of the strip and the fascination it holds for kids.

'Move fast'

"We have to move fast once we make a contact," he said. "Kids living on the strip can't wait for an appointment two weeks down the line — most of them are drifters who lose sight of time and survive on a day-to-day basis. We have to reach them on their terms, break the daily pattern and get them to see their lives further down the road — if possible."

The biggest challenge for anyone trying to help is touching base with kids who are sceptical of agencies, cops and anyone over 20.

Eugene at 17 is captivated by the strip. He lives in Regent Park when he's not sauntering on gaudy, glittering Yonge.

He's proud of his police record, ready to fight if anyone looks at him the wrong way.

School was boring when he went. He swears he has a job at times. "It's great that he's frequently too stoned to show up."

"Man, I'm down here every night from 10 till 5 a.m.," he says. "It's great. I can't ever remember not coming."

Eugene and his friend, John, of Donlands Ave., peer into the hypnotic haze

A16/TORONTO STAR, FRIDAY, JUNE 4, 1980 ***

Ontario aid asked for 50,000 Metro teens

By Peter Goodspeed Toronto Star

Metro will try to convince the province to help set up a downtown youth centre for the nearly 50,000 teenagers who make Yonge St. their home during the summer.

Reported increases in street crime, drug use, prostitution and homeless runaways prompted Metro's social services committee yesterday to restate its desire to have five social workers in work full-time with teenagers along Yonge.

Metro Council has earmarked \$50,000 to be spent this year to create the Yonge counselling service but so far the provincial government has been reluctant to commit an equal amount to the project.

\$50,000 helped

A similar program on Yonge last year helped 5,000 teenagers who had problems with the law, drugs, or their families.

Last program folded in September when it failed to get a \$25,000 grant from the provincial ministry of community and social services.

Toronto Alderman June Rowlands said yesterday, "The summer is almost upon us and we haven't got anything in place to help handle the problems we can expect downtown... We could use a half dozen

workers on the street at all times."

Rev. John Burke, of the Downtown Churches Association, told the committee social workers are desperately needed by the nearly 50,000 teenagers who congregate on Yonge during their summer holidays.

"We need social workers on the streets and not in offices," he said.

Yonge's lure

"It's not that the existing agencies aren't doing their jobs," he said. "It's just that in the summer the kids come downtown to Yonge for the excitement and the glamor and the glitter. Every team in Ontario leads to Yonge St. Every bus brings youngsters from all over Canada here and with that many youngsters on the street you encounter a lot of problems."

Burke said the Downtown Youth Centre, which operated last year with an average of 1,000 teenagers a month who needed help finding a place to live, or counselling for emotional, drug or personal problems.

Metro Chairman Paul Godfrey said he will raise the matter of financing a year-round youth centre for teenagers on Yonge when he meets with provincial cabinet ministers at Queen's Park next week.

\$78,000 program aimed at Yonge's street kids

Between 40,000 and 50,000 "street kids" are expected to hit Yonge St. this summer and more than 100,000 are expected to be on the strip, naive about street life, and vulnerable to trouble.

To combat this, a \$78,000 youth centre program, funded jointly by the province and Metro, is being set up on a permanent basis to offer counselling and help.

The Downtown Youth Centre, a similar program which operated on Yonge St. last summer, failed in September for lack of funds.

Metro officials are looking for a social worker to head the program, and social services are looking for a place to house an agency ready for summer operation next two weeks.

Two kids

The two workers, David Peltz and John, are expected to be on the strip, naive about street life, and vulnerable to trouble.

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1982 The opening of Roy Thomson Hall is an occasion for a fundraiser for the Big Sister Association.

The Summer Program is expanded to provide camping experience for the "hard to serve client."

1983 Scarborough Youth Services begins operation, further expanding needed services to outside the downtown core. It provides counselling, outreach programs and a co-op residence for Scarborough youth.

The Day Treatment program begins as a collaborative venture with the Toronto Board of Education and is designed to provide an alternative way for troubled teenagers to continue their studies while out of the regular school system. Priority is given to the clients of Huntley Youth Services and Central Toronto Youth Services.

1986 Committee structures are altered and Circle members become part of the Community Service Committee. The new structure leads to the establishment of the Association of Circle Presidents.

Puttin' on the Ritz is a successful fundraiser.



PUTTIN' ON THE RITZ

Dear Friend of the Big Sister Association,

We would like you to help the young people of our city by PUTTIN' ON THE RITZ!

The Big Sister Association of Metropolitan Toronto provides professional counselling and residential services to troubled young people and their families through Huntley Youth Services.

Although we receive funds to operate our services from the Ministry of Community and Social Services, the United Way, and Metropolitan Toronto, we must raise additional funds to provide the necessary assistance to those young people who turn to us for help in coping with daily living.

Since 1914, we have committed ourselves to developing new programs to assist adolescents. The trained volunteers of our Youth Line offer a listening ear and guidance to over 600 callers each month, while the Inner City Youth Program assists young people to obtain and maintain the basic necessities of living. Many of our clients benefit from the friendship provided by our Special Friend volunteers.

Help us to help young people by joining us for our gala fund-raising dinner, PUTTIN' ON THE RITZ, which promises to be an enjoyable evening of dining and entertainment.

Sincerely

Elisabeth Burgess

President
The Big Sister Association
of Metropolitan Toronto

Scarborough Youth Services
751-3800

Youth services to open office
SCARBOROUGH — The long-
standing office of the city will
have another addition to its ser-
vice. Scarborough Youth Services, a
professional, nonprofit counsell-
ing service, is opening an office
at Kennedy and Eglinton.
Two full-time and two part-
time staff members will be avail-
able to help clients, 12 to 21 years
old.
The service expects clients to
be referred for advice, as yet.

**Local counselling office opens
to serve city's troubled youths**
By STEVE WARD
Staff Writer
Scarborough Youth Services officials
opened its 2000th Avenue office last
week providing the city's teenagers and
young adults with a place to go for profes-
sional counselling.
"We try to provide a counselling
service that is accessible, effective and
responsive to the different needs of
youth," said Barbara Baker, social counsellor
at the office.
The office will be open from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.
Monday through Friday. It is open to all
youth in the city of Scarborough.
When troubled adolescents seek advice
or help, they will be referred to the appropriate
service.

Scarborough Youth Services is a non-profit
agency. It was set up in 1974 as a result of
a study by the city of Toronto. The study
found that there was a need for a counsell-
ing service for troubled youths. The service
was set up to provide a counselling service
for troubled youths. The service is open to
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1984 Celebrates 70th Anniversary.



"BEHIND THE SCENES"

Celebrate the 70th Anniversary of the Big Sister Association by attending a gigantic fund raising event called "Behind the Scenes". You will have an opportunity to spend an exciting afternoon at the new Roy Thomson Hall, on Saturday, September 25th, from 3-6 p.m. Special tours will let you see every corner of Arthur Erikson's superbly designed building and you will be treated to music by a variety of amateur musicians. Delicious food will be provided.

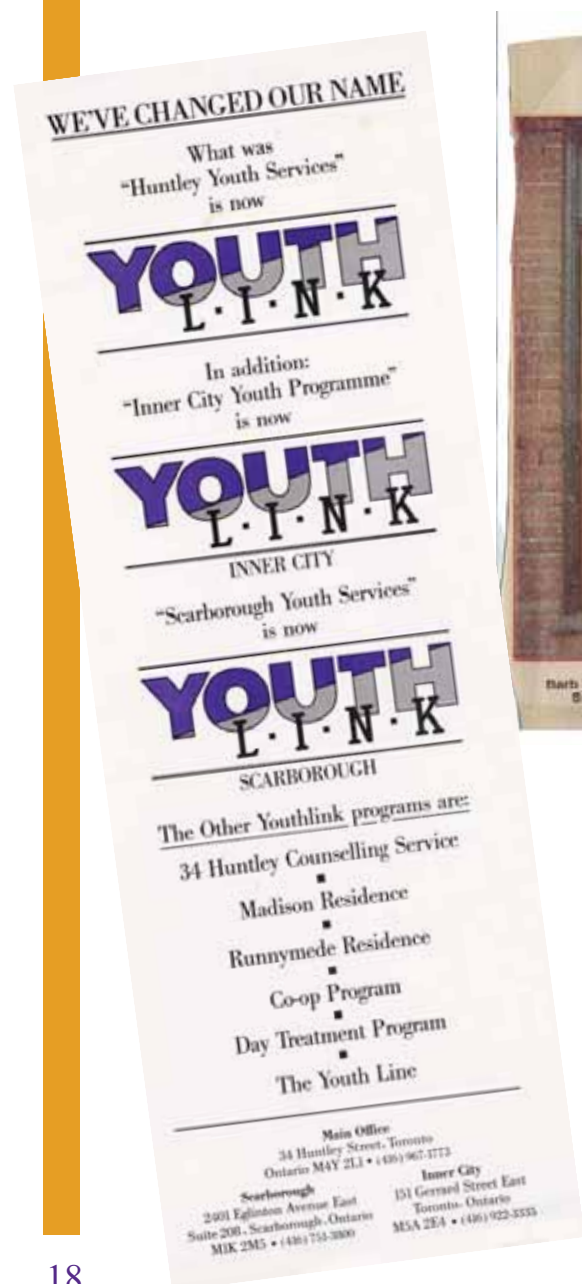


Gala event: Volunteers Libby Burgess, left, Dorreen Poole, centre, and Barbara Thompson already have their outfits picked out for Puttin' On The Ritz, a fundraising dinner being staged by the Big Sister Association April 11.

1989 The Big Sister Association celebrates its 75th anniversary with a theatre night at St. Lawrence Centre.

There are over 350 volunteers involved in the work of the Big Sister Association.

Huntley Youth Services changes its name to YouthLink.



80th Anniversary Celebration



1990 — 1999

1990 Phantom of the Opera fundraiser is held.

1991 Huntley Street premises set on fire, some archives are lost and extensive renovations are required.

Madison residence barely escapes a fire bombing by hate groups.

1993 A permanent home for Inner City was purchased at 149 Gerrard Street East with government funding and fundraising efforts by the Association.

1994 The Board is restructured and reduced in size.

The Shop direction comes under the mandate of the Board.

During this decade, the Board and the Big Sister Association work closely to solve the funding and administrative problems while continuing to provide high quality service to youth.

The Big Sister Association celebrates 80 years.

2000 — 2009

2004

At the urging of the United Way, YouthLink agrees to relocate to Scarborough to respond to the acute lack of services for the rapidly growing population of vulnerable youth in this area of Toronto. After a successful capital campaign headed by Circle members, and the sale of 34 Huntley St., Warden Avenue was purchased and renovated for the main YouthLink offices and its core services. YouthLink is accredited by Children's Mental Health Association.



Jennifer Baterchuk & Carolann Barr - Innercity

Inner City and Youth Skills Zone move to 7 Vanauley St.

2009

Blueslink fundraiser established "Cool Cause" 'Hot Music.'

TORONTO COMMUNITY NEWS THE MIRROR SCARBOROUGH

SUNDAY, AUGUST 3, 2003

■ Youthlink agency set to move into Warden Avenue location next month

Youth support service to open in Scarborough

By SUSAN O'NEILL
Mirror Staff

Creating a stronger link between young people and local services is the aim of a new youth centre opening next month in Scarborough.

Youthlink, one of the oldest United Way supported agencies in the city, is expanding its programs here in an effort to reach out to young people in the community.

"We looked forever to find a location," said executive director Elisabeth Greaves. The organization is moving its administrative headquarters from Huntley Street in Toronto to a warehouse at 747 Warden Ave. this September.

Greaves said while Scarborough's demographics are similar to that of the downtown area, the community simply doesn't have the same access to resources, which is why Youthlink wanted to relocate here. "The need for the type of services provided by Youthlink is critical in this fast growing area," the organization stated in a report highlighting the project.

Greaves said the move means

Youthlink "will be accessible to the youth that we serve."

She also said the organization, which has been providing services to young people in Toronto for almost 50 years, is hoping to enhance its counselling services, job training and school-based prevention programs in Scarborough.

Greaves said many of the centre's services are geared to helping kids "sort through an increasingly complex world."

Anti-drug, anti-violence and anti-gang messages are central to the outreach programs and in-school initiatives offered.

"Our real emphasis is on prevention and early intervention," Greaves said, noting the new site will also house staff from the Family Services Association of Toronto, 30 of whom are moving into the facility this weekend. "The number of clients in Scarborough is increasing and that's pretty consistent with what our research is showing," said James Ip, spokesman for the United Way of Greater Toronto. He noted people tend to think issues like homelessness only affect the downtown core, which isn't the case.

Ip reported that Youthlink receives about \$500,000 a year from the organization. However, the United Way does not fund capital projects. The renovation project is expected to cost about \$1 million. A capital campaign is now under way. Contributions can be made by calling 416-967-1775 ext. 155.

2005

There is a significant expansion of youth outreach in Scarborough.

YouthLink becomes trustee for North West Scarborough Youth Centre.

2006

YouthLink Thrift Shop sold after 42 years at 1743 Avenue Road.



2007

Thrift Shop closes. Proceeds are partly directed to paying off the mortgage at 747 Warden Ave. and the remainder (\$100,000) is set aside to be a legacy fund of The Big Sister Association. The Legacy Fund is established to provide scholarships/bursaries for clients of YouthLink.

North West Scarborough Youth Centre becomes a YouthLink program.

2008

First bursaries given out from the Legacy Fund.

2009

YouthLink launches Positive Parenting Program.

YouthLink partners with Pathways to Education to host program in Scarborough Village.

2010 2014

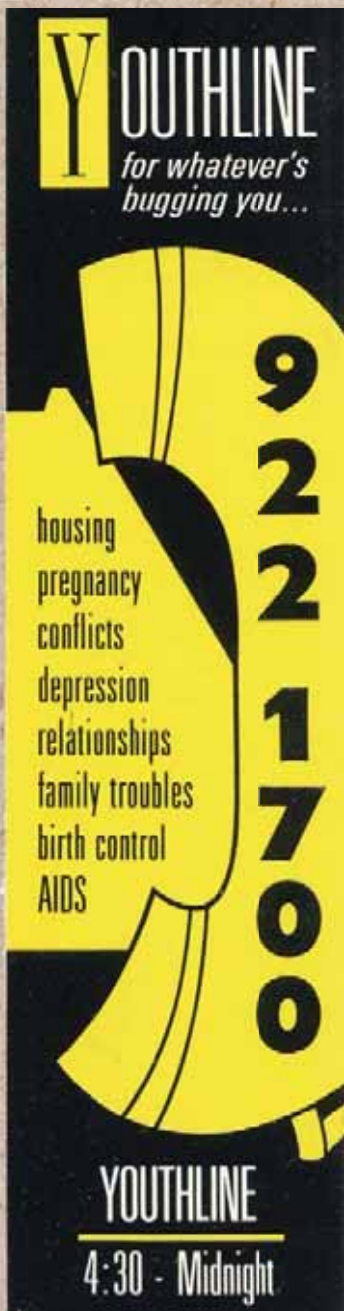
2012

After much consideration, the Inner City program and Youth Skills Zone close. The building is bought by the YMCA which continues many of the programs and services for street-involved youth.

2014

The Big Sisters celebrate 100 years at the Toronto Cricket & Skating Club, June 4, 2014. John Honderich guest speaker.





Lt. Governors Reception for The Big Sister Association

