



# THE NEW LIVES NEWSLETTER

Creating new  
opportunities.  
Summer 2016



## MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

I am so proud of the young moms attending our Section 23 Secondary School. Three of them recently received their Ontario Secondary School Diplomas—a 300% increase over last year—and two will attend postsecondary education in September. This outcome reflects a tremendous accomplishment for the young moms, their families, and Massey Centre.

The trajectory to these results began when we collaborated with our Toronto District Secondary School partners to revise the structure of the school program. Young moms attending the school at the Centre can now earn a high school credit every six weeks versus at the end of the semester. This program change resulted in higher student attendance and greater achievements. I cannot underscore enough how hard the young moms worked this year to achieve these personal goals, with the support of their teachers and Massey Centre staff.

We have highlighted our Section 23 Secondary School and other program success stories on our Facebook and Twitter pages since the fall of 2015. Please “friend” us on Facebook ([www.masseycentrefacebook.com](http://www.masseycentrefacebook.com)) and “follow” us on Twitter (@masseycentre).

If you follow us on Twitter or Facebook, you will know about our successful first Cook for New Lives Gala held on May 4, 2016. In partnership with the George Brown College Centre for Hospitality & Culinary Arts, this fundraising event attracted over 300 guests. Please read more about this event in this Newsletter.

We also saw some remarkable results from the recent three-year grants from the RBC Foundation and Nixon Charitable Foundation. Program activities from the second year includes the planning and implementation of a life skills tool called the Inventory for Independent Living for Young Mothers and their Babies (*Wittenberg and Prencipe, 2012*) and the adaptation and delivery of Baby Love—Supporting Infant security—a therapeutic evidence-based, attachment focused preventive intervention parenting program. We have been able to track and illustrate the growth in life skills development for each young mom from the time she enters Massey Centre until her discharge.

Thanks to these grants, we also measured the attachment knowledge of the young mothers before and after participating in the Baby Love program activities. The encouraging program results illustrate a significant increase in the young moms’ knowledge of infant attachment. In an environment of greater accountability for client outcomes, we are very proud of the results.

**Ekua Asabea Blair**  
Chief Executive Officer



# COOK FOR NEW LIVES GALA

The 1st Annual Cook for New Lives Gala held on Wednesday, May 4, 2016 drew over 300 supporters and raised almost \$50,000.

Guests at the Gala were treated to a unique cooking competition, featuring aspiring chefs Haewon Choi, Krista Whitman, Samantha Lamanna, and Sydney Mazurek from George Brown College Centre for Hospitality & Culinary Arts, partnered with top female chef mentors Anne Yarymowich (George Brown Faculty), Lora Kirk (Ruby Watchco), Suzanne Barr (Saturday Dinette), and Alex Feswick (The Drake). The sumptuous dishes were judged by Orderfire Hospitality Group owner Claudio Aprile, Director of George Brown's Chef Program John Higgins, and YouTube sensation Sara Lynn Cauchon.

The winning menu selected by the celebrity judges and guests was the Korean Braised Beef Short Ribs with Sweet Potato Perogies, Pear and Mint Espuma. Condiments: Crispy Shallots and Kimchi prepared by student chef Haewon Choi and mentor Anne Yarymowich.

At the event young mom Kenya shared some very painful childhood experiences. As a young woman, she has endured and overcome many challenges, and she knows there will be more. But she is determined to overcome them one at a time, and succeed.

**Stay tuned for details about the 2017 event.**





THANK YOU SUPPORTING PARTNERS



THANK YOU DONORS

Mary Scott Addison | Brandon Allen | Anonymous | Heather Blunn | Susan Challis, Owner, Leaside Hand & Stone | Charmaine Sweets |  
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 Passion Fruits | Geoffrey Pennal, CIBC | Physio & Massage Institute | Katerina Podolak | Pam Pridham, Owner, Dish Cooking Studio | Chef Gaetano Pugliese/Sommelier Kim Berdusco |  
 Shoppers Drug Mart | Sobeyes | Sterling Chocolate | Jeannie von Buttlar & Family | Whistler's Grille | Woodbine Entertainment

***We could not have done it without you, thank you!***





# COMMENCEMENT DAY

Babies, parents, partners, friends, donors; Board members, staff, volunteers; Toronto-Danforth MP, TDSB teachers and representatives; and guests from St. Matthew's United Church Women, Don Mills United Church, The United Church of Canada Foundation, and The Toronto United Church Council—all gathered to celebrate the achievements of Massey Centre's Secondary School students on June 21, 2016.

Ontario Secondary School Diplomas were awarded to Catherine Dixon, Naura Camara, and Erica Johnson. Justice-Lynn Plunkett and Erica Johnson were recognized for their acceptance into postsecondary programs at George Brown College beginning in September—Justice in the Child and Youth Care Program, and Erica in the Dental Assistant Program.

As Valedictorian, Justice-Lynn Plunkett inspired the audience, sharing the adversity she has overcome as a child and young woman (see her story on page 6).



Several certificates were presented to recognize the students' academic efforts and achievements. Scholarships were awarded to:

- **Celeste Trevana and Erica Johnson** (Wilma P. Spence Scholarships)
- **Justice-Lynn Plunkett** (Dunlop-Harris Memorial Award)
- **Kiana John** (Blair Family Scholarship)

***Congratulations to the Class of 2016 for their individual achievements.***



# THE JOURNEY IS THE REWARD

## - JUSTICE'S STORY

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June 21, 2016 will always be a memorable day for Justice. It marks the completion of her secondary school diploma and the gateway to postsecondary studies starting in September.

Justice travelled a rough road to get to June 21. By age 12, she had assumed many of her mother's responsibilities, taking care of her two younger siblings—cooking, cleaning, day care drop offs and pickups. Her mother was struggling with mental health and addiction issues and had no support from the fathers of her children.

As her mother's conditions worsened so did her abuse of Justice, who went to live with her grandmother. Justice had been a good student, but her grades plummeted. She had anxiety attacks and a psychiatrist diagnosed her with depression.

Over the next four years her life was challenging at best. Justice returned home when her mom became sober, but within a few months the mother resumed her drug use and abuse of her children. Children's Aid removed Justice and her siblings from the home. In care, Justice became a heavy drug user herself.

Placed in a group home for girls with behavioural issues, she was prescribed five different medications. She was later transferred to a group home in Thunder Bay where she met her son's father, Adam, who was also battling drug addiction. At age 15 they ran away to Toronto and lived with his mother, who set rules and remains a positive influence in Justice's life.

Justice became pregnant at age 16. Feeling ashamed, she returned to her grandmother in Ottawa. It took her some time to decide if she wanted to keep her baby, but having stopped taking the meds and making progress with therapy, she felt confident she could handle being a teen mom. So she wrote her "old self" a goodbye letter, vowing to be a good mother to her son, Aiden. She still sees the letter as therapeutic and reads it when she feels stressed.

While pregnant, Justice, who had dropped out in Grade 9, returned to high school. She became a model student, met all the requirements and had her file cleared. But she allowed Adam, Aiden's father back into her life.

Adam's mother bought them a townhouse in Ottawa, where they lived with the baby until Adam was incarcerated. Justice calls his imprisonment "the best thing that could have happened to me." Upon his release from prison, Adam managed his sobriety for a time but soon returned to using drugs. Wanting not to live around drugs anymore, Justice went first to a shelter and later to a young parents' home where she experienced emotional abuse.

She obtained a restraining order against Adam. His mom, still strongly supportive of Justice, moved her back to Toronto, helping her set up with her son in one of her apartments with subsidized rent. Since the birth of Aiden, now 3, Justice has participated in attachment counselling and other sessions to help her overcome the many challenges she faced—especially learning parenting skills and managing addiction.

Justice, an avid reader, registered in Massey Centre's Secondary School in November 2015 and was one of the three graduates in the Class of 2016, and the Valedictorian. She has been accepted into George Brown College's Child and Youth Care Program, which she expects to complete in three years, after which she plans to earn her Bachelors' Degree at Ryerson University. She credits the Community Workers with encouraging her to pursue postsecondary studies.

Now 20 years old, Justice offers this advice to her peers: "Protect your child at all costs, as your actions affect your child. Good decisions impact your child. Believe in education. Give yourself a hug. Be mindful. Don't believe in welfare. Don't be afraid your child is listening, be afraid he/she is watching and may imitate everything you do."

Justice affirms that "Massey Centre makes a difference in our lives every day. Many girls come here with no support. There are lots of similarities in why we get pregnant. There are role models here that we can emulate, as most of us did not have that in our lives. Massey Centre intervenes and gives us the opportunity to be professionals and good moms."

# GET INVOLVED

Help Massey Centre continue providing support, treatment and other services for the vulnerable pregnant and parenting young moms, aged 13-25 and their babies living at the Centre or in the community.

You can:

- Make a donation today
- Become a **Best Start Monthly Giving** donor
- Host an event and designate the proceeds to Massey Centre
- Honour someone's special occasion or memory with a gift to Massey Centre
- Make a gift in your Will to Massey Centre
- Become a member, attend, and vote at the 2017 Annual General Meeting
- Tell others about the work of Massey Centre

# SAVE THE DATE

## 2015–2016 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

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WHEN:  
Tuesday, September 20, 2016  
6:00 p.m.

WHERE:  
Massey Centre ELC/OEYC Building  
1102 Broadview Avenue  
Toronto, ON M4K 2S5

If you have questions, please call Lisa at 416-425-6348 ext. 221



## THANK YOU

Loretta College School students

Aitana Fernandez, Suzy Silva, Segen Hailemariam,  
Sonia Beningieri, and Boatema Calderon for winning  
a **Youth In Philanthropy** grant for Massey Centre!

# Donation Form

YES! I want to help new young moms and their babies because they need me!

Here is my gift of:  \$50     \$100     \$250     \$500     I will give \$\_\_\_\_\_

YES! I will join the **Best Start** Monthly Giving Program\* with my gift on the **last** day of each month of:  \$10     \$20     \$25     \$50     I will give \$\_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_

Province: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone No. \_\_\_\_\_

## Payment Options

I would like to give by:  Cheque

My cheque payable to **Massey Centre** is enclosed.

Please charge my      

Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiry Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Name exactly as shown on card: \_\_\_\_\_

Cardholder Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Name for Acknowledgement Purposes (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

\* I can revoke or change my authorization at any time in writing or by calling 416-425-6348 x 224, subject to providing 30 days' notice.

\* I have certain recourse rights if any debit does not comply with this agreement. For example, I have the right to be reimbursed for any debit that is not authorized or is not consistent with this Pre-authorization Debit (PAD) Agreement.

\* To obtain a cancellation form, or for more information on my right to cancel a PAD Agreement or my recourse rights, I may contact my financial institution or visit [www.cdnpay.ca](http://www.cdnpay.ca).

Massey Centre protects your private information and complies with all legislative requirements. We will send you information from time to time. If you wish to limit, or not receive any correspondence in the future, please contact us at 416.425.6347 x 224.

## Thank you for your support!



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