

May 2012

*learning disabilities*

*different paths....same destination*

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## Welcome

The Learning Disabilities Association of Wellington County was pleased to host an evening with Eric Gillis; father, Olympian, teacher and individual living with a learning disability. Read how Eric's reading challenges evolved into a philosophy that he has applied to his daily life.

The new Ontario Ministry of Education Memorandum clarifies that students with ADHD should be recognized as exceptional students through the IPRC. This means that students with ADHD can access an IEP and special education supports. Heidi Bernhardt, national director for The Centre for ADHD Awareness Canada (CADDAC) cautions however that memorandums are a form of guidance rather than a mandate, meaning that the Ministry cannot hold school boards accountable.

Read about the Ministry of Education's memorandum in the article published by The Star on page 2 of our newsletter and more about CADDAC's action plan to spread the word at [www.caddac.ca](http://www.caddac.ca). The Centre for ADHD Awareness also provides comprehensive resources about ADHD.

As exams approach for some students in June you may be interested in the article "Exam time especially taxing on students with ADHD". Read about how one young student's struggles during exam time at university led her to be diagnosed with ADHD.

Is your child struggling at school? They may need special accommodations or modifications in order to be successful. This can be accomplished through an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). If you are unfamiliar with the process, be sure to access free on-line information about IEPs through LDAO by visiting their website.

Parents may be looking ahead to summer for camp opportunities. Be sure to check out our list of summer camps that are designed to accommodate children with specific disabilities

Sharon Dills, Chair

## THANK YOU!!

Thank you to the Guelph Storm for allowing our 50/50 draw on Feb 3/12. We raised \$1305 and the lucky winner was Shawn Gorman of Ayr, ON.

Thank you to our volunteers Craig, Sophie, Megan, Brad, Alex, Mark and Katie. Also thank you to the Storm Trackers for their donation from the sale of programs.

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## Sudents with ADHD have legal right to supports in school

Source: Andrea Gordon Family Issues Reporter, The Star

Thousands of Ontario students with ADHD who are struggling in the classroom now have the right to receive help at school, according to a statement from the Ministry of Education.

A memorandum to school boards quietly posted on the ministry's website last month says children with conditions such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder are entitled to special education supports and services if the condition interferes with their learning.

"This is definitely a step in the right direction," said Heidi Bernhardt, national director of the Centre for ADHD Awareness (CADDAC) Canada, which has been fighting for years for the rights of children with the attention disorder to get the same kinds of support available to those with learning disabilities and other conditions that hinder learning.

The advocacy group "congratulates the Ministry for this first step in correcting a long-standing inequity of access to special education services for students with ADHD and other neurobiological disorders," it says on its website.

ADHD, which causes inattention, restlessness and impulsive behaviour, is a neurobiological condition believed to affect at least 5 per cent of Ontario's 2.1 million school-aged children.

But unlike other conditions such as autism or learning disabilities, it has not been explicitly generously funded by

included as one that requires access to special education.

As a result, there has been "appalling inconsistency" in how students across the province are recognized and supported, said Bernhardt in a statement released Tuesday.



Bernhardt says she fields calls every day from parents who can't get access to school interventions recommended by doctors or psychologists because of this omission.

"It has led to so much confusion and heartbreak," says Rosemary Tannock, a leading expert on the disorder and the Canada Research Chair and professor in special education and adaptive technology at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) of the University of Toronto.

No one from the Ministry of Education was available for comment on Monday.

The memorandum from Barry Finlay, the ministry's director of special education, says "all students with demonstrable learning based needs" are entitled to special education help and classroom support.

This development is an important clarification because it means no child should be excluded from receiving support if they have a condition that affects their learning, said Tannock, who is also senior scientist in neuroscience and mental health at the Hospital for Sick Children.

The ministry also stipulates this applies but isn't limited to children with a range of other conditions, including Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and Tourette Syndrome.

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Tannock says the next key step is to ensure that every parent, teacher and school board is made aware of the directive so that struggling children can get the help they need.

She hopes the move will lead to better training for teachers about ADHD and how to teach students with attention problems.

In 2010, CADDAC released a national report card citing Ontario as one of three provinces that failed to meet the needs of students with attention disorders by not making them eligible for support.

Instead those students were only guaranteed support if they were also diagnosed with a second condition, like a learning disability, that qualified for support.

Six years ago, a London-area mother filed a complaint with the Ontario Human Rights Commission after her son spent years languishing in a school system that refused to recognize his disability.

He was diagnosed in Grade 1 when the family lived in Alberta, which provides extensive school supports to children with ADHD. But once they moved to Southwestern Ontario, he floundered in a regular classroom and couldn't cope.

Oakville psychiatrist Dr. Kenny Handelman, who specializes in treating children and youth with the disorder, welcomed the news.

"This is great for kids with ADHD," said Handelman. He estimates that 30 to 40 per cent of his patients have significant problems getting appropriate help in school, so the fact that parents now have the right to get help for their children will be critical in addressing that problem.

Many kids with ADHD are very intelligent and can shine with the right supports and classroom strategies, he added.



## MEET ERIC GILLIS

Olympian, Teacher and Dad with Dyslexia, from Guelph!

"I didn't enjoy growing up with dyslexia; it was the cause of much anxiety, frustration, and embarrassment, Eric states. Spending 14 years (two years of the second grade) in a school system designed for natural readers and writers can turn an LD student off learning.

Eric remembers the most difficult time was talking about his age. He was a year older than the rest of his classmates because of repeating grade two. Other memories were a fear of reading out loud in front of the class, usually when a supply teacher was in. Eric was diagnosed with Dyslexia in grade 2, the second time around.

Eric calls himself a "willed non-learner". During grades 3-5 he had one-to-one reading support. He wasn't keen on being removed from class for this extra help, and was often silly and not wanting to co-operate. The lady who helped him with reading was nice, but Eric didn't really want to be there.

"I read, and believe in 'life-long learning'" says Eric. Believing people are 'life-long learners' has encouraged him to go back and learn more about things he thought he was done with. One example he continually goes back to is, "what is dyslexia"? "I always seem to pick up something

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new every time, and for me knowledge of my LD is the power to succeed with my LD”.

“There's something to be said for practicing what you want to get better at” Eric says. The key for him is reading what he's interested in; such as non-fiction writing in newspapers, magazines, and especially related to his personal interest in running and teaching.

A tip Eric shares with kids is to practice speaking about your LD, learn about it, and find ways to be cool with it. For parents, it's not about what your child learns but finding out how your child learns and supporting them. They will appreciate the help!

On Wed, April 25 the Learning Disabilities Association of Wellington County hosted a public education event where the audience was able to hear Eric talk about his dyslexia, succeeding at school, and how he came to be training for this summer's Olympics. Eric believes that “If there's a will, there's a way”! The event was of appeal to all ages, including the youth that attended.

## Exam time especially taxing on students with ADHD

Source: Ted Whipp, Postmedia News, November 17, 2011

Distraught, overwhelmed, filled with dread. That's how a second-year University of Windsor law student with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder described her experience with the disorder as she flailed about in her post-secondary studies.

Unable to focus, procrastinating for weeks over projects and homework for tests, she would



leave a mountain of work to the last minute. Finally, feeling so stressed and overwhelmed, she sought medical help and was diagnosed with ADHD in her third year of undergraduate studies. Her situation has improved greatly since and she encourages others to seek help, she said. "It's so daunting," she said of feeling so overwhelmed.

"You can't even start thinking how you can overcome it," the 23-year-old student from the Toronto area said. She wanted to speak anonymously because of concern her disorder may affect her future law career prospects. She described her plight in class, saying she was falling behind, unable to cope and even begin school work and feeling her situation would never end. Her experience proved especially timely with the approach of exams in December at the University of Windsor and universities elsewhere, say those involved with helping and treating people with ADHD.

The intense study period can prove especially difficult for students who may be away from home for the first time and removed from their support system. But there's much help available online and from the University of Windsor. Dr. Corina Velehorschi, a Windsor psychiatrist and consultant with the University of Windsor's student health services, said the university offers "wonderful" resources. She added ADHD also has one of the highest success rates for treatment in medicine.

Heidi Bernhardt, national director and founder of the Centre for ADHD Awareness, Canada



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based near Toronto, said the organization offers "tons of resources." They include 30 hours of video presentations with experts. Bernhardt points to the centre's website — [caddac.ca](http://caddac.ca) — that offers facts, information, resources and strategies. While many may associate ADHD with the young fidgety kid who can't sit still, she said it can continue into the teens and through adulthood. As a mother with three grown sons with ADHD who attended university, Bernhardt appreciates the situation for students with exams on the horizon. Because ADHD can involve what Bernhardt calls the "executive functioning skills" such as organization, time management and problem solving, ADHD can affect students' ability to complete assignments and meet deadlines.

Away from home, parents aren't available to follow up on school work and make sure students get to class. Bernhardt said recent efforts to raise awareness about ADHD with university students may explain why they're struggling. "They may be overwhelmed. They don't know what's happening to them. And they're told to just try harder," she said. But students may spin their wheels, fail and drop out, Bernhardt said. She hears from students and parents and their situations can be heartbreaking. "Parents are in tears, parents are in denial. We are constantly trying to raise awareness." Bernhardt said it can be difficult for students to be their own best advocates. But they need to talk to student health and counselling services at university.

Diagnosis and treatment are much better in recent years, Bernhardt said. For a long time, researchers missed girls because they didn't see the hyperactivity so commonly associated with ADHD. "But you see a lot of anxiety and depression in girls later on," Bernhardt said. Velehorschi sees bright students who are failing, have low self-esteem, feel overwhelmed, stupid and unable to keep up. "Their brain cannot make the bridge between knowledge and the execution of that knowledge," Velehorschi said. "They lack the neurotransmitters in their brain between knowledge and execution."

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Exam time can be especially difficult. They have a hard time sitting still and may read a test question over and over, Velehorschi said. In turn, they may overcompensate, studying intensely two or three times longer. They lack focus and don't have an appreciation of time, so they procrastinate and get distracted. A project due in two weeks falls by the wayside as the student still thinks it can be completed in the last couple of weeks.

The University of Windsor law student said she lacked the basic study skills so many of her peers take for granted.

"They don't know what they have to do," Velehorschi said. And besides medicinal drugs, treatment also involves teaching them skills. At exam time, they may need a quiet environment, extra time and breaks.

Said the second-year law student, "I can't imagine not being diagnosed and being here in university."

[twhipp@windsorstar.com](mailto:twhipp@windsorstar.com)

## Ontario's Human Rights Code - Disabilities

Source: <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/issues/disability>

The Ontario Human Rights Code (the Code) provides for equal rights and opportunities, and freedom from discrimination. The Code recognizes the dignity and worth of every person in Ontario. It applies to the areas of employment, housing, facilities and services, contracts, and membership in unions, trade or professional associations.

At work, employees with disabilities are entitled to the same opportunities and benefits as people without disabilities. In some cases, they may need special arrangements or accommodations" so they can do their job duties.

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Customers, clients and tenants with disabilities also have the right to equal treatment and equal access to facilities and services. Examples of facilities and services are restaurants, shops, hotels and movie theatres, as well as apartment buildings, transit and other public places.

Public and private education providers must also make sure their facilities and services are accessible, and that students with disabilities are accommodated.

What is disability?

“Disability” covers a broad range and degree of conditions, some visible and some not visible. A disability may have been present from birth, caused by an accident, or developed over time. There are physical, mental and learning disabilities, mental disorders, hearing or vision disabilities, epilepsy, drug and alcohol dependencies, environmental sensitivities, and other conditions.

The Code protects people from discrimination because of past, present and perceived disabilities. For example, the Code protects a person who faces discrimination because she is a recovered alcoholic. So is a person whose condition does not limit their workplace abilities, but who is believed to be at greater risk of being able to do less in the future.

**"You cannot teach people anything. You can only help them discover it within themselves." Galileo**

## Updates from LDAO

### Check out this Video!

**This video is about strengths and weaknesses students may have and what happens to them in school.**

**Could your child be a polar bear, a fish, a squirrel, a duck, a kangaroo or maybe a bee?**

<http://www.raisingmallsouls.com/animalschool/animalschool.swf>

## LDAO is on the Move!

Effective January 30, 2012 the offices of Learning Disabilities of Ontario have moved. The new location is at: 365 Evans Avenue, Suite 202, Toronto, ON M8Z 1K2. Phone, fax and email address remains the same.

## In Memory

LDAO was sad to learn that Lindsay Moir passed away suddenly in his 66th year on Tuesday, January 10, 2012. Ontario has lost a dedicated advocate for students with special education needs

Lindsay retired from the Ministry of Education in 1997 and had been assisting agencies, associations and parents in obtaining appropriate special education services for "exceptional pupils", including those with learning disabilities, ever since.

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## IEP 101 Online Workshop for Parents and Students

Location: Online

Cost: Free

Organization: [www.LDAO.ca](http://www.LDAO.ca)

Contact Email: [moderator@ldao.ca](mailto:moderator@ldao.ca)

Website: [www.ldaolearning.ca](http://www.ldaolearning.ca)

Welcome to IEP 101, the Individual Education Plan (IEP) Online Workshop for Parents and Students. We have created this workshop to help you as a parent or student to understand your part in the IEP process, with the belief that the most effective IEP is where the parent, the student, and the school staff collaborate to write an individual plan to help the student succeed in school.

You can sign in as a guest for this free workshop by selecting <http://www.ldaolearning.ca>

## Summer Camp Information

Source: <http://www.mysummercamps.com/cgi-bin/camps/search.cgi?catid=193&d=1&query=&CampState=Ontario>

\*This is not an exclusive list.

**Camp Kodiak - McKellar, Ontario - Camp Type: Residential - Toll-Free: 877-569-7595**

Integrated, non-competitive camp for children & teens with & without ADHD, LD, NLD, & AS. Social skills & academic programs, 50+ sports & activities, professional staff, 2-to-1 ratio, lakeside cabins.

**Camp Kennebec - Arden, Ontario - Camp Type: Residential - Toll-Free: 877-569-7595**

Camp Kennebec is an inclusive residential camp for children with various learning disabilities, ADD/ADHD, Tourette Syndrome, ASD, and other social and behavioral exceptionalities.

**Camp Kirk - Kirkfield, Ontario - Camp Type: Residential - Toll-Free: 1-866-982-3310**

Camp Kirk is a unique experience for children with exceptionalities: LEARNING DISABILITIES, AD(H)D, ASD, and those with INCONTINENCE or ENURESIS (bed wetting) difficulties set in the beautiful Canadian

**Belwood Lodge & Camp - Belwood, Ontario**

Belwood Lodge and Camp is a residential camp for mentally challenged children and adults. Sessions vary from 1-week to 5-weeks. We aim to provide a holiday experience that will broaden interests.

**High Pointe Equestrian Centre - Cobourg, Ontario,**

Equestrian Camp- Learn to ride or improve on your riding skills. Equine Assisted Learning working with youth at risk and team building. Includes academic learning about horses and yourself.

**Camp Winston - Kilworthy, Ontario**

Camp Winston is a non-denominational residential camp for children with Autism, Tourette Syndrome, OCD, Learning Disabilities, and/or AD(H)D and operate four, two-week summer sessions.

**Project Canoe - Toronto, Ontario**

Project Canoe is a non-profit charitable organization that uses the outdoors, including wilderness canoe trips, to create a transformative environment in which our youth develop life skills, social contacts.

**Camp Towhee- Haliburton, Ontario**

Camp Towhee is a residential therapeutic program for children and adolescents with learning disabilities and related psycho-social problems.

**Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario**

**Membership Form**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ Province: \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel: (H) \_\_\_\_\_ (W) \_\_\_\_\_

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

Annual Dues: Family/individual \$50; Student \$20; Professional \$75

I am interested in making a donation: \_\_\_\_\_

and/or volunteering: \_\_\_\_\_

**Membership Advantages:**

- Awareness and advocacy efforts on behalf of those with learning disabilities or ADHD at the local, provincial and national level,
- subscription to local and provincial newsletters,
- information on learning disabilities and ADHD
- use of local resources and support services.

Please mail this form and cheque to: Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario  
365 Evans Avenue, Suite 202, Toronto, ON M8Z 1K2  
Tel: (416) 929-4311 Toll free in Ontario only: 1-877-238-5322  
Fax: (416) 929-3905

Nobody's good in everything. Advantages and disadvantages come in many forms.

By Charles Schwab