



# new news

circles  
community services

Fall 2009



## New Circles' Growth

By Jane Craig, Interim Executive Director

**I am excited about the significant growth that has taken place at New Circles in the last eight months.**



So far in 2009, there has been an increase in the number of volunteers from 50 to 65, the number of clients seen at New Circles has risen from 6000 to 8000 and we have given away 72,000 articles compared to 55,500 last year at this time. While we said good-bye to Jo-Anne Welsh in June, we welcomed Alma Popovic to the staff as part time Clothing Manager and Lynn Horton as New Circles' very first Volunteer Co-ordinator. In October, Mokhbonu Boboeva has joined the staff as a Clothing Bank Worker thanks to a grant from the City of Toronto's Investing in Neighbourhoods program.

It has often been said that the more things change, the more they stay the same. New Circles remains committed to its vision of collaborating with agencies, schools and other organizations to serve individuals and families primarily in the Flemingdon Park/Victoria Village and Thorncliffe Park Communities. We are collaborating on grant proposals, Inter-Agency and Seniors' committees and Flemingdon Fun Fair. As part of our vision, our Holiday Angel Program matches clients from New Circles, Flemingdon Health Centre and Flemingdon Neighbourhood Services with donors to New Circles.

I continue to be amazed at the courage of our clients, the commitment of our volunteers, the energy of our staff, the support of our Board and the generosity of all our donors. Just last week I met a family with 4 children, 2 in wheelchairs. No one spoke English but they were able to tell us through translation how relieved they were to be in Canada where they were safe from persecution. They were amazed to be able to receive clothing from us at no cost with no strings attached.

Much work is being done to increase sustainable funding so that we can continue to help people with their basic needs. We have applied to government agencies, foundations, corporations, individuals and faith based organizations in addition to identifying additional sources of clothing. We would love your help to find new sources that you think might be interested in hearing about New Circles. Please contact me for a promotional package.

Thank you for your continuing support for New Circles.



Photos clockwise from top right: Getting dressed for the Prom, a family from Mexico and Jane at the Kiwanis Club of Kingsway Humber clothing drive.

# How the "holiday angel" Program Works

By Cindy Blakely, Coordinator, Holiday Angel Program

This program was started in 1996 while I was a school social worker for the Toronto District School Board. I saw that some of the learning obstacles facing some children relate to their basic needs not being met. Many parents, especially the working poor, have conflicting time constraints and are challenged to make ends meet. It is difficult to meet their children's basic needs and find the time to help their kids with school work and social challenges. Living in poverty is a daily grind. I recognized that some pure joy, even a small injection of it, could serve as a real morale booster for some of the families with whom I was working. This joy I envisioned coming in the form of presents and ordinary household items during the Holiday season. I began a matching process with friends and people who were interested in helping families having a hard time. It was a success from the beginning, with both donors and recipients getting a lot out of the experience. Put simply, it feels good to give, and it feels good to know that there are strangers with big hearts who help others in their time of need.



Many recipients have said that this experience has turned their life around, or renewed their faith in human kind. Donors frequently say that this program is the best thing about Christmas, and many have said that they think they get more out of it than the recipients!

As New Circles evolved, it was imperative that the Holiday Angel Program continue to be an integral program. Families that are clients of New Circles are selected and interviewed; these families are living in poverty and many are brand new to Canada and have

arrived with virtually nothing but the clothes on their backs. As part of our vision to collaborate with other agencies in the Flemingdon/Thorncliffe neighbourhoods, we also accept referrals from other agencies. Families provide a wish list, and then the family profile is sent to the Holiday Angel donor so that they have a guideline for what the family needs.

Angel families go out and buy items for their family with the help of the wish list. However, if the donor does not have time or prefers just to give a donation, we always have willing shoppers who would gladly go out and spend someone else's money to help one of the families. People usually enjoy picking things for 'their' family, and often make it a family event with their own families.

Many donors have said that they are struck by the need for such basic necessities as winter outerwear, sheets and blankets, or pots and pans -- things that we often take for granted. All participants are told that not everything on their wish list will necessarily be purchased; it serves as a guide for their Angel families when they do their shopping. Recipients only qualify for this program once.

We do the interviewing mid-October; profiles are usually sent out at the end of October to mid-November, so that Holiday Angels have about a month to shop. There is regular e-mail contact with the donors during the program time frame. Holiday Angels drop off their baskets to New Circles; the drop off dates in 2009 will be Dec 10th and 13th. Charitable receipts are issued to donors for any food vouchers or gift certificates they include as long as the proof

of purchase is attached at the time of drop off. Our volunteers deliver the baskets to the families. Letters of appreciation are written to the donors - examples are on our website and give an idea of the importance to a family.

In 2007 we delivered baskets to 155 families. In 2008 because of the tougher economic times, we helped 125 families. This year our goal is to return to 155 families. If you would like to be a Holiday Angel this year, please call me. We need you!

# Volunteering at New Circles

By Lynn Horton, Volunteer Coordinator

## Our volunteer program is under renovation!

Volunteers have always been at the heart of the services New Circles offers its clients. They have the fun (and sometimes frustration) of opening donation bags, weeding out unusable clothes, sorting, hanging, steaming, etc. They arrange our boutiques in inviting ways. They help clients shop, and act as check-out staff when the shopping is done. Volunteers drive to pick up donations, staff the mobile malls, translate for clients, help staff with administration tasks, work on Holiday Angels, and train and support each other. Without our volunteer corps of about sixty people, New Circles could not exist!

Now, increasing demand for New Circles' services means that we have to grow our volunteer numbers and become more flexible human resources. Starting last spring, we began looking at ways to attract new people and to equip all volunteers, old and new, with more of the skills necessary at New Circles. We feel obliged to break down the distinction between volunteers from the community (some of whom receive a small addition to their social assistance benefits when they volunteer) and the volunteer group that hails from all over Toronto.

**Our aim :** to attract, train and maintain an integrated, skilled and flexible volunteer family, adequate to meet the growing demands of New Circles' programs.

We now boast a Volunteer Steering Committee, with a member from each workday team of volunteers. Together last spring, staff and the VSC consulted with volunteers generally, and came up with a transition plan for this autumn. Here's what we've done and started to do:

- put together a welcoming kit and manual, partially translated into Dari with plans to translate into our other main languages;
- written down our tasks in a very detailed TASK checklist, used both as a how-to resource and as a checklist for tracking trainees' acquisition of skills. For our new Canadian volunteers in particular this is a benefit, since now New Circles can demonstrate to the volunteers' potential employers what that volunteer has mastered.



From left to right: Lynn, Mokhbonu, Sakina and Sheqofah at the June celebration supper.

- met on 24 September as a volunteer group to discuss how we can improve our ways of working as teams each day. Consensus formed around the model of mentorship or the buddy system for bringing new volunteers are brought up to speed.
- at the meeting, collected names of volunteers who are willing to work at new and different tasks at New Circles. We now have people signed up to help in non-traditional ways, such as finding new sources for clothing, raising funds, writing newsletters in the languages of our client communities to keep clients current with New Circles' activities and programs, and assisting with the Holiday Angel and other programs;
- created a new presence on Facebook (search: Facebook Groups for New Circles) and on Twitter. Ads on Craigslist and Kijiji have brought more than 25 inquiries about volunteer opportunities. And Volunteer Toronto has featured us in early October as their "Opportunity of the Week" both on their website and in their standard ad in Now Magazine.
- begun discussions of establishing Thursday evening as High School evening, when students performing their community service hours can volunteer their time for New Circles.

Not surprisingly, our biggest challenge at the moment is to channel all the interest and new expectations we've stirred up. New volunteers are coming on stream each week. Our established volunteer family is throwing itself into making the new people know they are welcome and necessary. This transition has been a very positive experience so far – thanks all around!

# It was a Fall jam-packed with activities

## Thank You All!



Above left and right: Happy Seniors at the Mobile Mall



### Whether it was Third Party Events, Rummage Sales, Speakers' Circuit, Corporations & Organizations or Individuals, New Circles is

most fortunate to have volunteers like you, who are committed to promoting the programs we offer and recommending New Circles to their friends.



Carolyn's Cocktails for Coats

A sincere thanks is extended to Wendy Dines for suggesting financial donations to New Circles instead of gifts for her birthday and to Carolyn Langill for having a Cocktails for Coats party to celebrate her birthday by donating winter coats and other clothing. The picture says it all and we owe both these ladies a huge

thank you. If you are interested in hosting a third party event, please contact Jane Craig.

### We are also grateful to the following Churches for suggesting the remainder of their sales come to us:

Aurora United, Eglinton-St. George's United, Gateway Community, Grace Church on-the-Hill, Leaside United, St. Leonard's Anglican, St. Cuthbert's Anglican and Timothy Eaton Memorial United.

Jane Craig has received an enthusiastic welcome from each of the Kiwanis Clubs of Casa Loma, Don Mills and Kingsway-Humber as she promotes New Circles. Mariela Puerta, our Intake/Community Worker joined

her at Casa Loma and at a meeting of the Scarborough Service Provider Network telling her amazing story of how New Circles has benefited her and her family.

### Corporate & Organizational Support:

Bargains Group, Bridge Street United Church Foundation, Chic Thrills, Children's Pillage in the Village, Davis & Henderson, Fashion Closet (Bracebridge), Heart to Hand. Interior Care Inc., Melmira Bra Boutique, Needlework Guild of Canada, Toronto Chapter, Novotel, Olly Shoes, Play 'n' Wear, Precious Seconds, Rego Bespoke Clothiers Ltd., St. Anne's Spa, The Printing House Ltd., Running Room (Wellington St. West, High Park), Shopper's Drug Mart (1500 Avenue Road), Toronto Guild of Stitchery, Timothy Eaton Memorial Church, TriMark Sportswear Group, Trusted Transitions, Tryst Lingerie and Windfall Clothing Support Services, VF Jeanswear Inc.

### Schools:

Arlington MS, Adam Beck P.S., Bishop Strachan School, Branksome Hall, Crescent School, Crestwood College, Fairlawn Pre School, Frankland Community School, Givins-Shaw PS, Harbord CI, Havergal College, Hillcrest Community School, Hillcrest Jr. P.S., Jackman P.S., Lanor Jr. Middle School, Leo Baeck Day School, Mabin School, Norman Ingram, Ogden Jr. P.S., Oriole Park P.S., Oriole Nursery School, Sir Adam Beck JS, St. Clement's School, St. George's College, Sunnybrook Nursery School, Toronto French School (Mississauga), Upper Canada College, William Burgess P.S., York University •



Boarders from Upper Canada College learn from volunteer Joan McIlroy

# Looking for an outreach project or a place to recycle your clothes?

## Look no further than New Circles Community Services.

We give new and gently used clothing to families and seniors living in poverty at no cost in the priority neighbourhoods of Flemingdon Park, Thorncliffe Park and Victoria Village.

We also serve the GTA. While winter clothes and boots are a priority at this time of year, we rely on monetary donations, clothing, shoes and bedding all year round as well as additional items such as:

**Gift certificates for grocery and department stores**  
**Drugstore vouchers**  
**TTC tickets and tokens**  
**Phone cards**  
**New backpacks and canvas bags**  
**Art supplies, pens and pencils**  
**Baby blankets, diapers, soothers and bottles**  
**Personal hygiene items**

Please consider joining us to promote equity and dignity by providing services and clothing to enhance the day to day lives of the people we serve.

"Thank you for your generosity".

*Sue Arthur*



Sue Arthur was a devoted volunteer at New Circles where she came faithfully to help people from other countries find new clothes and support them in adjusting to a new home. She loved to listen to stories about life in their various home countries and now in Canada. Tuesday was Sue's day at New Circles. Tuesday afternoon was always a favourite time for staff, other volunteers and clients alike as she charmed us with her wit and enthusiasm. Sue was an exceptionally hard worker, putting her heart and soul into whatever task she was doing.

Sue was also a key part of our Holiday Angel Program. She was a true Holiday Angel; taking a family every year, carefully selecting what her family needed, always preferring to stay anonymous so that they did not know it was coming from her! Last year, she worked for hours trying to improve the administrative side of the program which she did with aplomb. Sue's commitment and enthusiasm represents the heart of New Circles and she will be greatly missed by all of us. Her contribution will never be forgotten and she will always remain part of our Circle. We are most grateful to have received many donations in Sue's memory.

## *New Circles' Testimonials*

New Circles is a community partner that is extremely involved in Outreach, as they focus on community empowerment and not just on providing basic clothing needs. It is my belief that New Circles is a pillar in the social infrastructure required to service these diverse and thriving communities. It is only with the continued help of agencies like New Circles that we will be able to maintain our hope for success of people in these communities.

*Robert Oliphant, M. P. Don Valley West*

New Circles helps promote dignity, understanding and respect by being a bulwark, especially in Flemingdon Park, helping residents ease a financial burden in these difficult economic times. I want to take this opportunity to thank you for that important work you do.

*Kathleen Wynne, MPP, Don Valley West*

New Circles is one of the most respected social service organizations operating in Toronto's Flemingdon area – one of the city's identified thirteen priority neighborhoods.

*John Parker, Toronto City Councillor, Ward 26 – Don Valley West*

What an outstanding service you and your volunteer staff provide to our community. Your assistance to new Canadians and others to get on their feet with essential clothing for our changing climate is critical.

*Graham Linton, President, Interior Care Ltd.*

# The year end is fast approaching - make your gift to New Circles to-day.

Annual gifts to New Circles help newcomers to Canada adjust their wardrobes to the changing seasons in Canada. Many come from climates around the world that do not experience the cold weather of our fall and winter seasons.

If you have already made your gift to New Circles, thank you for your support. If you have yet to send your gift, please remember that showing your support for New Circles will ensure that you take advantage of the tax benefits for this current year.

Gifts can be made online at [www.newcircles.ca](http://www.newcircles.ca) through [www.canadahelps.org](http://www.canadahelps.org) or on your credit card by calling New Circles directly. For additional information, contact Jane Craig at 416-422-2591 or [jane@newcircles.ca](mailto:jane@newcircles.ca).

In order to receive a tax receipt for 2009, your donation must be post-marked or made online no later than December 31, 2009.

*Thank you for your support!*

## Our Wish List

Below is a list of items that are particularly under-stocked and in demand.

- Winter coats and boots, hats, mitts, scarves - all sizes
- Coats (men, ladies, teens)
- All children's clothes
- Teen clothing for male and female (pants, jeans and tops)
- Men's clothing in size small (pants, size 29-31)
- Professional wear (men's and women's)
- Men's shirts, pants and jeans in all sizes.
- Plus size women's clothing
- New underwear for all ages
- Socks for ladies and kids ages 2-10 years
- Towels and bedding for all mattress sizes

## Zermina's Story

Zermina and Amin came to Canada from Afghanistan in 2004 with their five children. Three of the children are still living at home. Amin has a degree from the University of Delhi and is currently employed by Muffler Express as a courier. Fluent in English, Pushto, Persian, Hindi and Urdu, Amin hopes to find a position as an accountant. Zermina has begun to volunteer at New Circles; we are delighted to have her with us. Both Zermina and Amin are indebted to Canada for giving them a chance in their new country and greatly appreciate the opportunity to volunteer with us. This provides an opportunity for Zermina to give back to the community that has welcomed them. They both appreciate the good quality clothes found here and since Amin stands 6'2", he really appreciates the larger sizes! LATE BREAKING NEWS: Zermina joins Mokhbonu as a clothing bank worker as of December 1st.

*Count me in!*



I want to support the work of New Circles Community Services.

\$25    \$50    \$75    \$100    \$250    other amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_ Unit \_\_\_\_\_  
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