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## A Celebration of Niagara's Youngest Teachers Through the Internationally Recognized Roots of Empathy Program

On Friday June 15, 2018 the Early Childhood Community Development Centre (ECCDC), Niagara's Roots of Empathy Coordinating agency, hosted the annual Baby Celebration alongside partners from the Niagara Catholic District School Board at their office, 427 Rice Road, Welland

The celebration was well-attended with 102 present celebrating Niagara's youngest Teachers, including 30 babies, the Roots of Empathy instructors and dedicated families who participated in the program. Roots of Empathy is hosted by Niagara Catholic District School Board, District School Board of Niagara, French Catholic District School Board MonAvenir, Niagara EarlyOn Programs and Niagara Children's Centre.

Guest speaker Sheree Wells, Ontario Provincial Manager, spoke on behalf of the Roots of Empathy Ontario office touching on the program's impact including its reach of approximately 31,000 children in Niagara in the last 18 years. Sheree also shared a heartfelt video recording of President and Founder Mary Gordon expressing her deepest gratitude for all the hard work and dedication the community of Niagara has shown for the Roots of Empathy Program.

John Crocco, Director of Education showed his appreciation for the program and impact in the schools of Niagara Catholic District School Board and delivered a portion of his speech crouched on the big green blankets close to all the Roots babies. Susie Palumbo spoke on behalf of the District School Board of Niagara and shared her passion for the program and enthusiasm for its future growth.

Other guest speakers included Principal Carlo Arghittu, Teacher Michael Fishleigh, and Instructor Karen Belcastro from Alexander Kuska Catholic Elementary School. The Team shared their incredible experiences and hopes for the children and babies of the Roots of Empathy program.

Dr. Andrea Feller, Associate Medical Officer of Health with the Medical Division, Niagara Region Public Health and her colleague David Lorenzo, Associate Director, Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention, Niagara Region Public Health were also present to celebrate this very special day.

The Baby Celebration marks a pivotal moment in the impact of the program over the past year and previous years with a mission to **"build caring, peaceful and civil societies through the development of empathy in children and adults."** Roots of Empathy strives to promote pro-social behavior, encourage responsive parenting and prepare children for responsible citizenship by fostering the development of empathy in children and adults.

For further information, please contact Lorrey Arial Bonilla at 905.646.7311 ext.321 or [larial@eccdc.org](mailto:larial@eccdc.org).

**Early Childhood Community Development Centre is pleased to be the Coordinating Agency for Roots of Empathy in Niagara.** *The ECCDC is a charitable organization inspiring excellence in early learning and child care through thought leadership, cutting edge training, innovative resources and coaching services highlighting best practices and emerging trends. In the more than 20 years since its creation by local volunteers, the ECCDC has become a leading early learning training, resource and referral organization.*