



May 2019: For Immediate Release

Roots of Empathy Baby Celebration

This year has been an incredible one for the internationally recognized program, Roots of Empathy. A new video to be shared at the Niagara Baby Celebration highlights the important role that both the Instructor and 'Teacher', the baby, play in supporting the children through the program gaining skills to build and enhance empathy. The Roots of Empathy classroom is creating citizens of the world – children who are developing empathic ethics and a sense of responsibility that takes the position that we all share the same lifeboat. These are the children who will build a more caring, peaceful, and civil society, child by child.

This year's annual Roots of Empathy Baby Celebration will be honouring the world's youngest teachers: the Roots of Empathy babies. For the past 10 months, approximately 1,500 children across the Region in the Niagara Catholic District School Board, the District School Board of Niagara, Conseil Scolaire Catholique Mon Avenir, and Niagara EarlyON Centres have had the opportunity to show and be shown empathy through the lens of the Roots of Empathy program. The event will take place on Friday May 31, 2019 at District School Board of Niagara office at 191 Carlton Street, St. Catharines. The doors will open at 9:45 a.m. with the celebration ending at 11:00 a.m. There will be approximately 120 guests in attendance.

Roots of Empathy is an evidence-based program that takes place in classrooms that range from Kindergarten to Grade 8. The program promotes empathy and kindness through classroom and parent visits involving a family, baby, Instructor and Teacher with a classroom filled with kind and curious children. Through research conducted across three continents since the year 2000, Roots of Empathy's impact has proven to increase pro-social behaviour and decrease bullying which has also reduced the number of children fighting by approximately 50 percent.

With Roots of Empathy in eleven countries across three continents and in four different languages, founder and President Mary Gordon has traveled the world touching the hearts of so many and sharing wisdom with those that share a similar mission and vision of building "caring and peaceful societies".

The Roots of Empathy Baby Celebration helps emphasize the impact of the program by bringing attention to the incredible collaboration of children and families, Instructors and Teachers, Principals and Superintendents as well as Student Achievement Leaders and Mental Health Leads. All these individuals work together to ensure the delivery of seamless and impactful programs within Niagara's schools and early learning programs.

The celebration will include guest speakers such as: Susie Palumbo, Student Achievement Leader for District School Board of Niagara; Lee Ann Forsyth-Sells, Superintendent of Education and Equity & Inclusion and Elementary Schools for Niagara Catholic District School Board; and three representatives from Connaught Public School, including Kelly Diiorio, Principal; Kim Palmerino, Classroom Teacher; and Joanne Mestek, Youth Counsellor. A special presentation by the Grade 1 students from Connaught Public School will surely be a highlight of the event.

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. The ECCDC exists so that early learning professionals are supported in offering exceptional opportunities to grow, learn and develop. In the 25 years since its creation by local volunteers, the ECCDC has become a leading early learning training, resource and referral organization.

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