



June 2017: For immediate release

A Celebration of Babies in Niagara Through the Internationally Acclaimed Roots of Empathy Program

On Tuesday June 13, 2017 the Early Childhood Community Development Centre (ECCDC), Niagara's Roots of Empathy Coordinating agency, was excited to host the program's annual Baby Celebration at the District School Board of Niagara's head office, 191 Carlton Street, St. Catharines.

Approximately 70 attended the celebration honouring the stars of Roots of Empathy, including instructors from the District School Board of Niagara and the Niagara Catholic District School Board and all of the dedicated families who have participated in the program over the year. The highlight of the morning was celebrating the program's youngest teachers; 29 Roots of Empathy babies.

The event included the annual babies photo and cake cutting, along with new additions for this year: saplings provided for Roots of Empathy tree dedications and a book for all families to take home: *Baby Faces* by Margaret Miller, which were generously donated by Speech Services Niagara.

Heartfelt speeches praising the positive benefits of Roots of Empathy were brought by: Kelly Diorio, Principal of Connaught Public School DSBN; and Joanne Mestek, Youth Counsellor DSBN. Roots of Empathy Provincial Coordinator, Sheree Wells, was in attendance to share greetings from the Roots of Empathy International Office and a video from the newest member of the Roots family, Sophie Grégoire Trudeau, was shared.

John Dickson, Superintendent of the District School Board of Niagara and John Crocco, Director of Education for Niagara Catholic District School Board shared their passion and ongoing commitment toward supporting Roots of Empathy within Niagara's public and catholic schools.

The Roots of Empathy Baby Celebration helps emphasize the impact of the program by bringing attention to the respectful and caring relationships fostered due to the decreased levels of bullying and aggression as well as the increased levels of social and emotional competency in children. Long term, Roots of Empathy also strives to promote responsible citizenship and responsive parenting through the program.

The ECCDC is an independent charitable organization dedicated to providing Niagara's early learning and care program providers with affordable access to the specialized learning resources, training and supports they need to deliver high quality care. Among the ECCDC's services are the operation of a lending library of classroom resources and learning equipment, a workroom for educators to research and develop new learning activities for the children in their care, and professional development programming for both centre and home based child care providers. The ECCDC's services are available to all Niagara ECEs and teachers, as well as others involved in the care and education of children.

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