



For Immediate Release: June 2019

Roots of Empathy Baby Celebration 2019

St. Catharines: On May 31st 2019, the Early Childhood Community Development Centre (ECCDC) hosted more than 110 families, Roots of Empathy instructors, school teachers, and special guests in the Atrium of the District School Board of Niagara for the Annual Roots of Empathy Baby Celebration. Of those in attendance were 38 babies who served as Niagara's youngest teachers in the Roots of Empathy Program.

Susie Palumbo, Student Achievement Leader for the District School Board of Niagara, brought warm greetings on behalf of the board as the host of this year's celebration. We were also delighted to have the support of John Crocco, Director of Education at Niagara Catholic District School Board, as well as greetings brought by Lee Ann Forsyth-Sells, Superintendent of Education. Each of these individuals played a pivotal role in supporting Niagara's community of children and Roots of Empathy's mission and vision of building caring, peaceful and civil societies.

A special presentation entitled "Wishes For Baby" was prepared by students of Connaught Public School to show their appreciation for the Roots of Empathy Program. Connaught Public School Principal, Kelly Diiorio, and classroom teacher Kim Palmerino, as well as Roots of Empathy instructor Joanne Mestek, shared their experience of the incredible impact the Roots of Empathy Program has had within their school.

As the Roots of Empathy Coordinating Agency for Niagara, the Early Childhood Community Development Centre staff team was delighted to organize this unique and meaningful event. Darlene Edgar, Director of Children's Services with Niagara Region was on hand with the ECCDC team to celebrate the positive impacts the program has had this past year. With nearly 80 classrooms and approximately 1500 children who participated this past year, the Roots of Empathy Program speaks for itself in terms of responsible citizenship and responsive parenting, as well as fostering the development of empathy in learning environments throughout Niagara.

Like any evidence-based program, the proof is in the research, but most importantly, the voices of those who have been touched and impacted by the Roots of Empathy Program. To quote Mary Gordon, "Children are the citizens, parents and leaders of tomorrow, and if we want them to grow up to be healthy, be mentally well, and to be empathic, we need to start today because they will change the world."

For further information, please contact **Lorrey Arial Bonilla** at **905.646.7311 ext.321** or larial@eccdc.org.

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.