

Brain Waves

THINKFIRST CANADA: A CHARITABLE ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO PREVENTING BRAIN AND SPINAL CORD INJURIES

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER: AUTUMN 2008

At the heart of ThinkFirst Canada are our 20 Chapters, active in every province across Canada, delivering our life-saving message in your community. Each managed by dedicated volunteers with a passion for injury prevention, our Chapters are in schools, on playing fields, and at community events teaching kids and those who care for them about the simple and effective ways to avoid devastating brain and spinal cord injuries. By implementing ThinkFirst programs like Brain Day in local elementary school classrooms, holding Helmet Fitting Clinics at bike rodeos, or distributing ThinkFirst information at health fairs, our Chapters are dedicated to keeping Canada's kids safe. We salute our volunteers – many of whom are medical professionals, educators, and volunteers from our signature sponsor Aviva Canada – for their extraordinary work at the grassroots level. Injury is the leading cause of death and disability among Canada's children and youth; our Chapters work to raise awareness about this invisible epidemic with the hope that one day we will eliminate traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries. At ThinkFirst Canada we believe that strengthening our Chapters is one of our best achievements to realizing this goal.

In 2007 our Signature sponsor Aviva Canada joined us to support the work of our Chapters and we are proud to report that this partnership has been a great success. Aviva's commitment to ThinkFirst has allowed our Chapters to grow both in number and

might. During this time we've opened three new sites – two in the province of Quebec



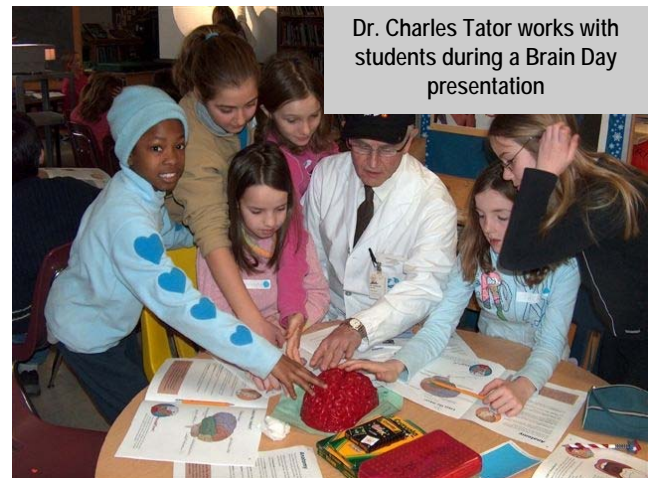
A helmet fitting in a local classroom in Ottawa

and one in Moncton, NB- with plans to start Chapters in New Westminster and Victoria BC. We are also working hard to get a Chapter off the ground in Edmonton, AB, and are grateful for the work of staff in the Aviva Edmonton office who've begun fundraising for this soon-to-be Chapter. ThinkFirst was also able to hire a dedicated staff person to mentor our Chapters and support their unique goals. Jodi Dusik-Sharpe, a neuroscience nurse and long-time ThinkFirster as Manitoba Chapter coordinator, has been busy criss-crossing the country meeting one-on-one with our volunteers on the ground to help Chapters expand their reach through their communities. And indeed how our message has traveled – our Nova Scotia Chapter recently distributed more than 900 helmets to kids in need,

ThinkFirst/Pensez d'Abord in Laval, QC circulated more than 35,000 helmet fitting brochures to families during last spring's bike helmet awareness campaign, while our Calgary Chapter gave ThinkFirst school presentations to 10,200 students in 2007 alone!

With help from Aviva Canada, we have been able to equip our Chapters with the tools they need to effectively reach out to their communities. Last year we distributed kits filled with valuable program and presentation resources to all Chapters. This year we hosted our inaugural Chapter Think Tank in Victoria, BC. During this workshop, 23 participants from our BC, Calgary, Manitoba, Regina, Kingston, Hamilton, Ottawa, and Newfoundland Chapters shared best-practices, effective presentation tips, and learned more about ThinkFirst's national programs, including Brain Day.

Thank you to our Chapters, together with Aviva Canada, for helping to keep Canada's kids safe, protecting what matters most.



Dr. Charles Tator works with students during a Brain Day presentation



We are grateful to our sponsors, like Aviva Canada, who make it possible for us to bring our important injury prevention message to kids across Canada



Message from the Executive Director—The Work of our Chapters

Every day ThinkFirst Chapters work to challenge the belief that injuries are 'acts of fate' – and to help Canadians recognize injuries as significant, predictable and preventable.

Prior to joining ThinkFirst this spring, I had worked in the field of injury prevention for several years and was aware of ThinkFirst's significant contributions to child and youth injury prevention. Since joining as ED, I have had the great pleasure of coming face-to-face with many more of our passionate ThinkFirsters who are making an important difference in their communities from coast to coast.

I was delighted to meet and learn from all those who attended our inaugural Chapter Think Tank in June, a workshop that brought 23 representatives from across Canada together in beautiful Victoria, BC to learn from one another. My thanks go to Beth Bull, Pam Winsor, Jodi Dusik-Sharpe, Dr. Michael Vassilyadi, and Sandy Wells for their informative presentations covering everything from Brain Day to volunteerism. That weekend we also announced the recipients of 2007's *Excellence* and *Public Education and Awareness Awards*. This year's three Chapter award winners were celebrated for their enormous accomplishments in their communities, a true testament to the work being carried out on the ground. Congratulations again to Natalie Auclair, Jennifer Link, and Dr. Michael Vassilyadi.

I would also like to extend my congratulations to Jodi Dusik-Sharpe, ThinkFirst Director of Chapter Enhancement and local Winnipeg Chapter Coordinator who was recently awarded the Canadian Nurses Association *Centennial Award* for her work both as a neuroscience nurse and as a champion of injury prevention. We are all proud and privileged to work with such inspired individuals.

This work is made possible with the support of our Chapters' Signature Sponsor, Aviva Canada, working with us to bring safety to Canada's kids. Together with the vision of the Chapter Enhancement Committee, chaired by Board member Pam Winsor, Aviva's sponsorship has enabled Chapters to strengthen and extend their reach across our country. With a contribution not just of funds but of dedicated personnel, over the last two years hundreds of Aviva volunteers have been helping us to deliver the injury prevention message at community events.

I hope you enjoy taking some time to read about the exciting ThinkFirst injury prevention initiatives taking place across the country. Please join me in celebrating our Chapters and our signature sponsor – together we are making great strides towards our vision of a future free of traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries. Because prevention is the only cure!

To obtain a 'text only' version of the Brainwaves newsletter, please email us at brainwaves@thinkfirst.ca

ThinkFirst—Aviva Volunteer Partnerships

Since January 2007, ThinkFirst has benefited from the generous financial support of Aviva Canada, our Chapter's signature sponsor. While Aviva's funds have helped us distribute grants directly to our Chapters for work at the grassroots level, complementary support from Aviva's employees has been an inspiring and unexpected gift. Nearly 300 Aviva employees have rolled up their sleeves to pitch in to ThinkFirst's cause, rallying to raise funds for their local Chapter as well working at community events.

The tremendous volunteer spirit of Aviva employees has had a significant impact on ThinkFirst from coast-to-coast. The Halifax Aviva office helped to build a parade float with an injury prevention theme for last winter's Parade of Lights and have also authored and sold cookbooks as part of a fundraising initiative. In Quebec, Aviva has sponsored a musical gala event with proceeds benefiting Pensez d'Abord, while the Kingston Chapter raised more than \$6000 in their second annual Polar Bear Golf Tournament organized by their local Aviva office. Aviva employees can be found at every Winnipeg Blue Bomber home game, helping their chapter behind the concession counter raising funds and awareness; in Toronto Aviva Volunteers represented ThinkFirst at the Green Living Show, staffing the ThinkFirst information booth; while in BC, Aviva volunteers have participated in training workshops in preparation for presenting ThinkFirst's safety message to school students.

In BC, Calgary, Winnipeg, Toronto, Kingston, Hamilton, Quebec, Nova Scotia, PEI, and New Brunswick we've had the help of Aviva volunteers who've strengthened our Chapters with a palpable enthusiasm matched only by their dedication. Thank you Aviva!



Aviva Winnipeg Volunteers at this year's Children's Hospital Teddy Bear Picnic

ThinkFirst Award Winners

A highlight of each year's Annual General Meeting is the announcement of the ThinkFirst Award Winners. This year three ThinkFirsters, nominated by their colleagues, were selected for their important contributions to injury prevention in their communities. We presented two *Awards of Excellence*, with gratitude, to Jennifer Link and Dr. Michael Vassilyadi, and our *Public Education and Awareness Award* to Natalie Auclair.

Jennifer Link is a teacher and ThinkFirst Saskatoon's coordinator and VIP. Jennifer is celebrated for her central role in the success of ThinkFirst Saskatoon over the past decade, beginning as a guest speaker in 1998 at school presentations for students in kindergarten through grade 12, and expanding her role in 2006 as Chapter coordinator. Jennifer's passion for injury prevention with her experience as an educator and personal story of triumph has helped pave the way for injury prevention in Saskatoon and inspired many along the way. Unable to attend this year's AGM, Jodi Dusik-Sharpe, ThinkFirst's Director of Chapter Enhancement, surprised Jennifer with the award during a site visit to Saskatoon.

Dr. Michael Vassilyadi is a paediatric neurosurgeon and Director of ThinkFirst Ottawa. Dr. Vassilyadi has seen firsthand the effects traumatic brain injuries have on children and their families and this knowledge has moved him to reach our children and youth with prevention information so that these injuries don't land them on the operating table. Dr. Vassilyadi was recognized this

year for elevating the profile of ThinkFirst in Ottawa through his work with educators. Dr. Vassilyadi has been busy engaging educators at all levels, delivering presentations not only on the necessity of brain and spinal cord injury prevention, but how to practically integrate this information into daily lesson plans. An inspired speaker, he has been invited to address school boards, their principals, vice-principals, teachers, and coaches on how they can help get the ThinkFirst message out to keep our kids safe.

An educator and Provincial ThinkFirst/Pensez d'Abord Coordinator, Natalie Auclair received the *Public Education and Awareness Award* for her tireless efforts over the last ten years to realize Pensez d'Abord's mission of reaching every student in the province with our prevention message. Indeed thanks to Natalie's contributions, over 200,000 students have received Pensez d'Abord's impactful school presentations since 1998. Natalie's success at making injury prevention a priority throughout Québec is the result of the strong partnerships she's fostered with other community agencies including local Police services, Paramedics, and specialists at trauma and rehabilitation hospitals which has helped to make Pensez d'Abord top of mind in schools and at community events in seven regions in Québec. An inspiration to all in the ThinkFirst family, Natalie has also been mentoring other ThinkFirst Chapters, recently holding a training workshop at the request of the BC Chapter in Vancouver's



Jodi Dusik-Sharpe presenting Jennifer Link with her Award of Excellence

local Aviva offices. There Natalie shared her presentation tips and techniques with interested volunteers that included Aviva staff



Dr. Michael Vassilyadi (centre) receiving his Award of Excellence from Executive Director Rebecca Nesdale-Tucker and Founder, Dr. Charles Tator

and other community members.



Natalie Auclair (centre) receiving her Public Education and Awareness Award from Executive Director Rebecca Nesdale-Tucker and Founder, Dr. Charles Tator

BrainWaves Contributors

Jodi Dusik-Sharpe	Director of Chapter Enhancement
Midori Miyamoto	Manager, Communications & Administration
Rebecca Nesdale-Tucker	Executive Director
Sandy Wells	National Injury Prevention Program Manager

Highlights - People:

- Our very own Jodi Dusik-Sharpe, Director of Chapter Enhancement and Manitoba Chapter Coordinator, has been awarded the prestigious Centennial Award from the Canadian



Nurses Association. Jodi's 20 year career as a neuroscience nurse, as well as her remarkable work in injury prevention with ThinkFirst was recognized. To learn more about this honour and those honoured, please visit http://www.cna-aicc.ca/centennial/documents/Dusik_Sharpe_e.pdf.

- For the first time, the ThinkFirst message reached the Canadian far north. VIP Sean Pothier visited two schools in Iqaluit, Nunavut, with his wife, RCMP Officer Olga Pothier during Olga's time there with the RCMP. News of ThinkFirst's work and these presentations made it into the local news.

- The Hamilton Chapter recently welcomed Michelle Gregory-Brooks as Chapter Coordinator. Already going full-force, Michelle has great plans to grow the Hamilton Chapter and is a great asset bringing expertise as a public health worker, registered nurse, and parent.

- Cynthia Yuan joins Shannon Piedt as Co-Coordinator at ThinkFirst BC. This Chapter has seen extraordinary growth over the last year, with plans underway to expand activity to New Westminster and Victoria, BC.

- Public Health Nurse Pat Cliche in North Bay has been bringing the ThinkFirst message and programs to northern Ontario. Pat organized 20 nursing school students to deliver Brain Day to more than 400 students in 20 classrooms. North Bay has also been distributing ThinkFirst materials at community events.

Highlights Events:

- 2007 Canadian Injury Prevention and

Safety Promotion Conference– Seven ThinkFirst Chapters participated at this important 3 day national conference, co-hosted by ThinkFirst Canada, in Toronto, ON.

- Brain Day – Our Chapters helped make Brain Day a huge success in 2008, with six Chapters affiliated with Brain Day this year, including Nova Scotia, Ottawa, London, Kingston, Manitoba, and Calgary.

- Our Chapter in London, ON reached more than 1400 students in 55 classrooms this year, up from 7 classrooms in 2007!

- Special thanks must go to our Toronto Chapter and Missy Mandel, who piloted Brain Day throughout Toronto classrooms for three years.

- In May, the ThinkFirst/Pensez d'Abord 3-L Satellite in Québec co-hosted a phenomenal event with five community partners at a local high school. This event, presented to more than 400 Secondary V students, took its audience through every aspect of a motor vehicle collision from paramedic assistance at the scene, to emergency medical treatment, rehabilitation, and life living with an acquired brain injury. This dynamic presentation received critical acclaim and is now in high demand throughout the province.

- ThinkFirst Nova Scotia, together with Aviva Canada, built a parade float with a winter helmet theme for 2007's Parade of Lights. This televised event reached more than 100,000 viewers.

Highlights - Chapter Milestones:

- The Prince Edward Island Chapter re-

A volunteer fits a helmet during Kingston's bike rodeo



cently formed an Advisory Board. Affiliated with the Island Network for Injury Prevention, the Chapter continues to focus on kindergarten bike

helmet use through their Hard Heads Program. They recently presented this program to approximately 400 kindergarteners.

- The New Brunswick Chapter expanded their reach, doubling the number of schools they presented in last year. They've also been active at multiple community events, including Helmet Fitting Clinics and Safe Kids Week..

Yes, I want to help prevent brain and spinal cord injuries in Canadian children and youth. I would like to support ThinkFirst Canada in the amount of _____.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Postal Code: _____

Telephone Number: _____

E-mail: _____

Method of payment:

Cheque enclosed

VISA

VISA Card number: _____

Cardholder's Name: _____

Expiry Date _____

Signature: _____

Winter Helmet themed float in Halifax's parade of Lights



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Please help ThinkFirst prevent injuries by making a donation. All donations over \$10 are eligible for a charitable tax receipt. Please make all cheques payable to ThinkFirst Foundation of Canada.