

ThinkFirst  
Canada



# Brainwaves

a quarterly newsletter

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*Welcome everyone to our first Brainwaves newsletter sent out in this format. Staying connected with our ThinkFirst friends and our Chapters across the country along with their communities is important to us. We will be posting this on our web-site quarterly and then be using our annual report to summarize the year's events 'in review'. "Check us out" regularly to keep up to date with some of the things that are happening with ThinkFirst – both nationally and in the provincial chapters.*

## ThinkFirst Quebec Celebrates A Major Mile-Stone

On March 19, 2002 The ThinkFirst Foundation celebrated the participation and education of 100,000 students, at a school in Repentigny. The event was marked with a presentation on the prevention of brain and spinal cord injuries and then a ceremony honouring the students. ThinkFirst Quebec was established in 1993 under the leadership of Mr. Jean Pothier, a Montreal businessman and parent of a brain-injured son. In 1999, Jean Pothier and ThinkFirst Quebec were the recipient of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Trauma Achievement Award given by the McGill University Health Centre.

Natalie Auclair – Quebec's Executive Director of its provincial ThinkFirst chapters, coordinates - as well as delivers - a highly effective school presentation that involves both a member of the Foundation and a brain or spinal-cord injury survivor, speaking on the importance of thinking first – using the brain to protect the body. This interactive presentation is given in both elementary and high schools.



It is reported that of the roughly 37,000 Canadians who suffer traumatic brain or spinal cord injuries each year, 9400 of them are from Quebec. These are the result of unsafe risk-taking such as not wearing a seat-belt, skiing, snowboarding, biking without headgear and diving into shallow water. The press release states that this translates into a cost to Quebec's Health System of approximately \$285 million per year to say nothing of the enormous social and emotional costs to these injured persons and their families.

## ThinkFirst Offers a Complete Elementary Program

Our grades 1,2,3 curriculum has been revised and has a wonderful Family component to it that invites families to work together on home activities – bringing in the community and a shared awareness that safety practices is *everyone's* responsibility. As well, the Grades 4,5,6 curriculum has been completed and the video and posters to accompany that binder, have gone to press. JK/SK and Grades 7/8 are in the last stages of completion and we are anticipating circulation of that as well in the June of 2002!



## ThinkFirst Presents

National Office was pleased to participate in many conferences this past year. Response was enthusiastic as educators and professionals visiting the ThinkFirst table, requested binders of curriculum and more information about our Foundation. It was gratifying to hear such comments as, "These are fantastic! These are FREE?! How can I order them for my school?" We presented, hosted or displayed at the following conferences:

AANS – Toronto, April  
CCNS – Halifax, June  
"Teaching & Learning with the Brain In Mind" – Toronto, August  
"Curriculum Connecting Communities" - Whitby, September  
"Harvesting Health: Embracing Tradition and Change" – Kitchener, Nov.  
OSBIE, November/2001  
Home Economics, November/2001  
Toronto Western Hospital, January/2002  
Injury Prevention: British Columbia Stakeholders Meeting—Vancouver, March/2002  
World Conference - Montreal, May/2002

## Noteworthy Accomplishments: The Salk Award



Dr. Charles H. Tator was awarded the 2001 Dr. Jonas Salk Award of the Ontario March of Dimes. The Award was presented on October 24, 2001 at the Annual Dinner of the Paul Martin Senior Society by Dr. Salk's son, Dr. Darrell Salk.

Dr. Tator is the President of Think First Foundation, Canada and Professor of Neurosurgery at the University of Toronto and the Toronto Western Hospital at which he is the Robert Campeau Chair in Brain and Spinal Cord Research.

The Salk Award recognizes a lifetime of outstanding contributions to basic biomedical research. It is given annually to an individual in Canada who has made a new or significant contribution to science or medicine in the alleviation or prevention of a disabling condition.

In recognizing Charles Tator, the citation stated "*Dr. Charles H. Tator is a pioneer in the prevention of head injury and spinal cord injury in Canada. His research is dedicated to increasing the understanding of the mechanisms of spinal cord injury, most notably through his work on the concept of secondary injury. He continues to be at the front lines of science, his current focus being on stem cell research as a potential method of restitution of the spinal cord after injury.*"

*"He has taken his vast knowledge to the community as President of Think First Foundation of Canada, an organization that is dedicated to educating children and teens about the prevention of brain and spinal cord injuries. He is admired by his peers, patients and community alike, and was appointed a Member to the Order of Canada in 2000."*

## Chapter Chats

Canadian ThinkFirst Chapters are working hard to help people prevent brain and spinal cord injury:

**British Columbia** – Dr. Hunt is promoting the ThinkFirst name and message with his colleagues through a number of conferences, including Lion's Gate First Neuroscience Conference last September. After meeting with representatives from both BC Ministries of Health and Education, we are pleased that ThinkFirst is on the Ministry of Ed's web-site for teacher resource materials.

**Saskatchewan** – Saskatoon has a vibrant ThinkFirst program in its city that also reaches out to smaller outlying communities. After several years of tireless effort, Gail Green turned over the coordinator's position to Doug Isley who is continuing in Gail's tradition. Approximately 4000 children a year participate in school presentations. A strong advisory board as well as a partnership with the University Hospital and their 3<sup>rd</sup> year nursing students, provide great support for their initiatives. We are delighted to have Regina renew their energies and commitment to re-activating ThinkFirst in their schools and community. Great to see you again Dr. Ekong and Darlene Sterling!

**Manitoba** – Winnipeg's coordinator is

Jodie Dusik-Sharpe who along with ThinkFirst Director: Dr. Norman Hill, have seen spectacular growth in Winnipeg and outlying regions! In the past year, almost 20,000 students have received the ThinkFirst message. In the fall, they co-hosted a special fund-raising event with the CPA and Don MacLean and raised funds as well as local interest in injury prevention.

**Ontario** – Toronto and Kingston are piloting the teen program "Making Connections."

Toronto participated in a wide number of conferences to profile ThinkFirst and gain interest in the Research project. Over 20 Boards of Education and over 50,000 Grade 1,2,3 students are participating in the study over a 3 year period. ThinkFirst participates in a number of injury prevention and safety coalitions throughout the province as well.

Durham hosted an injury prevention symposium called "Making Connections" which received media attention from White Horse to Victoria to Newfoundland! Joan Patterson has been very active in these activities and worked tirelessly to promote ThinkFirst in the province of Ontario as well as nationally.

**Quebec** – March 19 was Montreal's celebration of delivering the ThinkFirst message to its 100,000 student! It has now

opened another ThinkFirst chapter in Quebec City as well as Laval. Congratulations to Natalie Auclair and Jean Pothier for the outstanding work they do in that province.

**New Brunswick** – ThinkFirst is very active in its alliances with other injury prevention and sports groups. We are pleased that through Patti Gallagher's hard work, the ThinkFirst curriculum is on the approved list of educational resources for teachers within the Healthy Learners Curriculum Resource Guide for the elementary schools. As well, community health nurses have been advised of the ThinkFirst program and are sharing that with their local schools.

**Newfoundland** – Congratulations to Dr. Falah Maroun – chair of the NFLD ThinkFirst Chapter for having recently been awarded the Order of Canada. In 1999, the ThinkFirst curriculum was put on a recommended curriculum list for the province's elementary schools.

**Nova Scotia** – Diane Pottie works for ThinkFirst in conjunction with the NS Neurotrauma Society and together they work with local police to hand out gift certificates, pamphlets and McDonald coupons all dealing with helmet use. They continue to give school presentations in the Halifax regions.

## Smart Hockey II Video Debut

On Saturday, January 5 at 2 p.m., TSN aired ThinkFirst Canada's new video called: *SMART HOCKEY II – More Safety, More Fun*. Jofa, a leading name in hockey equipment, provided ThinkFirst with the funding to produce this program. Additional financial support was donated by the Dr. Tom Pashby Sports Safety Fund.

The presentation features Mats Sundin, Trevor Linden, Mike Gartner, Mark Messier, Mark Recchi, Martin Brodeur, Ken Dryden, Glen Sather, Cassie Campbell, Andy Van Hellemond and other well-known hockey personalities. The show is hosted by John Davidson.

Medical information is provided by Dr. Charles Tator, president of ThinkFirst, and Chip Burke, Pittsburgh Penguins team doctor, and head of the NHL Team Physicians Society. Equipment expert Blaine Hoshizaki, and Leaf athletic therapist Chris Broadhurst bring added perspective. And former hockey player, Kurt Gengenbach, delivers some pertinent and thought provoking messages speaking from his wheel chair.

Show highlights include:

- 12 on-ice tips from Mats Sundin on how to prevent *getting* or *causing* serious injuries
- what hockey's protective equipment can and cannot do to prevent head injuries
- all about concussions, the symptoms, and the recovery process
- what coaches, referees and rules makers can do to prevent head and spine injuries
- medical information which should prompt players to show a lot more respect for their own brain and spinal cord, and for those of everybody else in the game



A wide distribution of free SMART HOCKEY videocassettes is currently being arranged with TD Waterhouse taking a leadership role. This video will also contain a booklet with added safety information. Complete details will be made available as they are finalized.

### "A Baker's Dozen" of Safety Tips

1. Buckle up your safety belt on every trip, no matter how short a trip.
2. Wear your bike helmet every time you ride on your bike, scooter, skateboard or rollerblades.
3. Stop, look left, right and left again, before crossing the street.
4. When near a bus that is on the street, stay 5 giant steps away from both the front and the back of it.
5. Always wear a life jacket (PFD) when boating or around water
6. Never dive into unknown or shallow water!
7. Be seen when it's dark! Wear light, bright colours and reflective markers
8. Stop, Look and Listen before crossing railroad tracks and never play on or near the tracks
9. Be alert while waiting for a train – always stay away from the platform edge
10. When riding an escalator, always stand facing forward and hold the handrail
11. Never ride in the back of a pick-up truck.
12. Never play with a string or rope around your neck.
13. Use your brain to protect your body!

## R e s e a r c h P r o j e c t



With the help of 50,000 children in Grades One to Three and over 20 school boards in Ontario, the ThinkFirst Foundation of Canada is conducting an extensive research project that will set the benchmark for injury prevention and safety education in Canada and around the world.

The project which started this school year, is the first of its kind and scope in North America and is aimed at measuring the short and long term effectiveness of classroom based injury prevention programs. Funded by the Ontario Neurotrauma Foundation, the project is headed by Dr. Michael Cusimano, Neurosurgeon, Principal Investigator, St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto.

"I believe this to be the best research ever conducted on the value of school and community based injury prevention programs – and by the best, I mean the best in the world. To our knowledge, a study of injury prevention of this magnitude among school-aged children has never been done before." Stated Dr. Charles Tator, neurosurgeon, researcher and President, ThinkFirst Foundation.

The statistics are staggering – injury is the number one killer of 1 to 14 year olds, and of all types of injury, those to the brain are the most likely to result in death or permanent disability. It is reported that approximately 37,000 Canadians sustain brain and spinal cord injuries each year. The tragic part is that 90 –95% of these injuries are preventable. Beyond the personal tragedy, each major brain and spinal cord injury costs our society millions of dollars in lifelong medical care and loss of productivity.

For further details visit: [www.injuryprevention.ca](http://www.injuryprevention.ca)