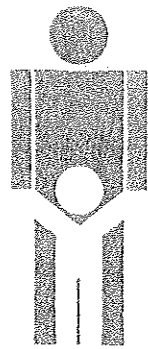


# From Small Beginnings . . .

## The History of Walkerton and District Community Support Services



1992

# INTRODUCTION

It is a great honour for me to be invited to contribute an introduction to the historical record which is being published as part of the celebration of the 35th anniversary of Walkerton and District Community Support Services, earlier known as the Walkerton and District Association for the Mentally Retarded, and, earlier still, as the Walkerton and District Association for Retarded Children.

As the establishment and expansion of programs are detailed in the pages to follow, many memories will be stirred. Appreciation must be expressed to parents and other volunteers, to local service clubs, to the Town of Walkerton and to surrounding municipalities for never-failing support. Advice and financial assistance from the Ontario Ministry of Education and the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services throughout the years must be acknowledged as essential to the progress that was made.

There is much to celebrate on this special occasion in the life of the Association. One is reminded of an old saying, namely, — “the more things change, the more they remain the same”. The dynamic expansion of the Association from its modest beginning to its current range of services illustrates very clearly the presence of “change”; the continued efforts of volunteers along with caring capable staff demonstrate, perhaps less obviously, what remains “the same”. The Association has not lost sight of its original aim to enhance life for children and adults who can benefit from the support services and opportunities offered in our community.

*Congratulations and Happy Anniversary!*

Sincerely,  
**Marion Tait**

The door to a world where developmentally handicapped individuals are treated like everyone else in the community began to open slowly in Walkerton in 1956. Thirty-five years later, new opportunities continue to unfold.

The door began opening thanks to a group of individuals concerned with the future of developmentally handicapped members of society.

Plans for the formation of the Walkerton and District Association for Retarded Children began at a preparatory meeting on October 11, 1956. Harold Lobb, Executive Director of the Ontario Association for Retarded Children, chaired the meeting attended by concerned parents in the library of the Walkerton Public School.

Marion Tait, of Walkerton, has been involved with the Association since its inception and remembers the organizational meeting.

"The townspeople knew the children we were concerned with and over 100 people attended the meeting. This is an advantage of a small town."

"It was felt generally that the elementary schools, at that time, did not have the programs which developmentally handicapped people needed. It was really a big undertaking to provide a suitable program", she said.

Participants at the first meeting included citizens, parents of retarded children, and representatives of the Ontario Department of Education, the Bruce County Health Unit, and the Bruce County Children's Aid Society. The steering committee was made up of Jack M. Tait, chairman and parent, Inspector of Elementary Schools, J. M. Game, secretary, Dr. Reg Allen, Medical Officer of Health from the Bruce County Health Unit, George Ross, a parent, and a representative from the Children's Aid Society, Mrs. Miriam (Lindsay) MacKenzie.

An executive was elected at the meeting. Mr. Ross became the Organization's first president, while Mr. Wilfred E. Crerar was vice-president, Mr. Walter Hougham was corresponding secretary, Miss Rita O'Hagan was the recording secretary and Mr. Fred Mitchell was the treasurer.

It was decided that the annual membership fee would be \$1.50 for single membership and \$2.50 for a family membership.

The Walkerton executive's first project was to provide a school for developmentally handicapped children. On November 26, 1956, school began with a class held in the basement of the Walkerton Public Library, serving five pupils under the direction of Mrs. Muriel Harrington. The first pupils were Maureen Cassidy, Bruce Moore, Jim Ross, Mervyn Sewers and Patricia Tait.

## **Charter Member**

The Association became affiliated with the Ontario Association for Retarded Children and was granted charter number 43 on November 10, 1956. There were 104 charter members at that time and the Walkerton Association was part of Region #4 which was comprised of Owen Sound, Guelph, Meaford, Dufferin and Barrie. There were a total of eight regions in the province and each region was represented by three directors. Mr. Ross, the president of Walkerton's Association, was appointed as one of the directors from Region #4.

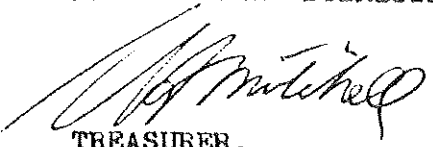
# W.&D.A.M.R. CHARTER MEMBERSHIP LIST

## October 11, 1956

Miss Helen Walker  
Mrs. Mirian Lindsay  
Miss Gina Stinson  
Miss Joy Kochut  
Mrs. Jerome Cassidy  
Miss Helen Johnston  
Miss Jessie Johnstone  
Miss Ruby Marriott  
Miss Annie Sillers  
Miss Roberta Sillers  
Mr. & Mrs. Irwin Lobsinger  
Mrs. Muriel Harrington  
Rev. & Mrs. N. Okell  
Mr. & Mrs. Ralph Walker  
Miss Laura Shrum  
Mrs. Jack Webb  
Mr. & Mrs. Clarence Thompson  
Mr. & Mrs. Earl Sternall  
Dr. & Mrs. J.T.H. Robinson  
Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Alton  
Dr. & Mrs. H.A. Mosser  
Alfred D. Jones  
Mr. & Mrs. C.F. Washington  
Mrs. George Moore  
Mr. & Mrs. Norman Shaw  
Mr. & Mrs. Henry C. Hossfeld  
Mr. & Mrs. Wilfred Crerar  
Mr. & Mrs. Fred Joliffe  
Mr. & Mrs. William P. Schmidt  
Mr. & Mrs. Douglas Wells  
Arthur Heughan  
Father Thos. Mulhall  
Mr. & Mrs. Ross Kersey  
Rev. & Mrs. Robert Rock  
Miss Mary Ferguson  
Mr. & Mrs. Anthony Cuneo  
Mr. & Mrs. James Sewers  
Mr. & Mrs. Frank Cordick  
Mr. & Mrs. Ronald Brittain  
Mr. & Mrs. Leonard Schmidt  
Mr. & Mrs. Harry Alton  
Mr. & Mrs. D.J. Hunter  
Miss Catherine Drennan  
Mr. & Mrs. J.M. Game  
Mrs. Mary MacFayden  
Mr. & Mrs. Russell Wiles  
Mr. & Mrs. J. Tait  
Mr. & Mrs. George Ross  
Miss Rita O'Hagan  
Reginald Lipski  
Mr. & Mrs. W. Fred Mitchell  
Rev. & Mrs. R.D. Mess  
Rev. Father Newstead  
Mrs. Elizabeth Kochut  
Earl Giesler  
Mrs. J.P. Johnstone  
Mrs. Hazel Monroe  
Mrs. Florence Rowand  
Miss Norma Rowland  
Mrs. Ruth McBurney  
Dr. & Mrs. D.R. Allen  
Mr. C.O. Monroe  
Mrs. Edith Harkley  
Miss Margaret MacGregor  
Mr. & Mrs. Crawford Skelton  
Mr. & Mrs. J. Huckle  
W.J. Ker  
Mr. & Mrs. Walter S. Hougham  
Rev. & Mrs. Roy Conner  
George Moore  
Annie Moore

The Association, realizing there was more to life than school for these pupils and their families, tried an experiment in camp-life on the first Sunday in June of 1957. Parents with children, the teacher and other friends enjoyed a picnic supper at Camp Martin, Inverhuron. The successful event saw the children and teacher remain at the camp, until the following Friday, participating in their regular classroom routine each morning and enjoying the beach each afternoon. The teacher was assisted by two senior Boy Scouts and one mother, with this latter duty rotated among the mothers.

It would be a year before the school received its name. The name "Brucehaven School" was adopted in September 1957 after consideration of many names submitted by members of the Association.

<u>ALKERTON &amp; DISTRICT ASSOCIATION FOR RETARDED CHILDREN</u>		
<u>FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR YEAR ENDING OCT. 31, 1957.</u>		
	<u>INCOME</u>	<u>DISBURSEMENTS</u>
DUES	\$ 137.50	
DONATIONS	596.26	
COUNTY OF BRUCE GRANT	400.00	
PROVINCE OF ONTARIO GRANT	793.25	
BANK INTEREST	4.65	
MISC.	2.65	
ASSOCIATION DUES		\$ 52.00
ASSOCIATION SUPPLIES		5.00
APPLICATION FOR CHARTER		2.00
PUBLIC UTILITIES		10.00
ADVERTISING		1.05
SALARIES		925.00
TELEPHONE		63.66
EQUIPMENT-FURNITURE ETC.		59.00
REGION # 4 DUES		5.00
SUPPLIES		14.65
SUMMER COURSE TEACHER		100.00
MISC.		23.14
	<u>\$1934.31</u>	<u>\$1260.50</u>
BALANCE OCT. 31/57.		673.81
	<u>\$1934.31</u>	<u>\$1934.31</u>
RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,		
		
TREASURER.		

On November 7, 1957, the Association's first annual meeting was held with the incoming president being Mr. Wilfred Crerar. Mrs. Marion Tait became vice-president, Mary (Ferguson) Fleming became the recording secretary, Mr. Walter Hougham was re-elected as corresponding secretary, and Mr. Fred Mitchell was re-elected as treasurer. Mr. Jack Tait was invited to serve on the Education Committee of the Ontario Association for Retarded Children.

There were regulations laid down by the Ministry of Education as the Walkerton Association began to provide a classroom setting for the pupils. The Association followed the direction of the Ministry of Education by forming Education and Finance Committees, as well as maintaining a Ministry of Education representative on the Executive.

The Walkerton Association benefited by these personnel appointments through which broader community involvement was achieved.

The grant received from the Department of Education was \$25 per month per pupil for half-day attendance that first year, with children under 12 attending half-days. In February of 1959, when some students reached the age of 12, all-day classes began. In September of 1959 an additional teacher, Mrs. Connie Maxwell, was hired to teach morning classes.

Mrs. Tait said everyone in the community pulled together and tried to do something for this class during those early years. Some mothers would bake cookies, Walker's Dairy delivered milk free of charge, transportation was organized amongst the parents, and still others assumed various expenses to help the program run smoothly within a limited budget.

"There was a fierce determination on the part of the parents of a handicapped child to have something as good for their children as others had. It's difficult to see one child in the family attend a school in which parents don't have to lift a finger for their education, while another child is in a situation where constant effort is required for the provision of basic learning", said Mrs. Tait.

By keeping in touch with the Ontario Association for Retarded Children, a good relationship between the Walkerton and provincial Association was developed. The Walkerton Association lived up to its requirements by hosting several public meetings a year. The subject of mental retardation was a broad one, and there was little known about it at that time.

"There were good discussions at a higher level and we looked to the Ontario Association for Retarded Children for support and instruction. We looked beyond our own horizons", Mrs. Tait commented.

The Walkerton Association hosted its first regional meeting in March 1958. The Association made sure it took part in affairs on regional and provincial levels.

In 1960 Walkerton became part of Region #5 and held a public regional meeting at Brucehaven School.

The Walkerton Association, in 1961, assisted in forming the Chesley and District Association. This was yet another way the Walkerton Association took part on a regional level, and in later years help was given as the Kincardine Association got started in its beginning stages.

All individuals and organizations in the community were thanked for support shown to the school during that first year at an open house and annual meeting in November. As the Association began growing, it had to appoint chairmen for seven committees including education, finance, institutions, sheltered workshops, research, recreation and public relations. In another year, two new committees, transportation and home care, were formed.

Reaching out to other people needing assistance was a priority for the Association. The Bruce County Health Unit completed a survey, requested by the Association, as a means of contacting parents of retarded children living beyond the reach of any existing Association.

This, 1961, was also the year the Association began discussing the approaching need for some type of program for young adults. A year later a capital fund was set aside as the beginning accumulation of money for a major project in the future.

The Association's first few years were ones of growth and learning. Risks were taken, and only those involved know the work which went into taking the Association's first steps.

### **Reaching Beyond the School's Operation**

President Jack Tait's report in 1962 spoke of the way in which the Association was reaching out and taking part in more regional, provincial and national levels of work with retarded children.

It is also important to note that the Association's financial situation had improved for a number of reasons. These included increased enrolment at Brucehaven School, which in turn meant increased grants from county and provincial governments, and increased financial support from the public.



Gerry Cassidy leads a sing-a-long.

Students at Brucehaven School gather for a Birthday Celebration.

The Adult Program Committee recommended the Association give more consideration and thought to the young adults after they had completed school. The committee felt the day school program must be followed with further adult learning programs that would prepare a greater number to take their place in the community and be self-sufficient.

The committee suggested the Association study the need for a workshop in the community. This would be done by surveying local businesses and industries to see if there were any future employment opportunities.

In his 1963 annual report, Mr. Tait said there was great interest shown in providing services for adults and within a year or two the Association should be taking positive steps to implement a plan for such services. He explained the financial picture was a healthy one, but if the Association were to enter into the field of adult services, it would have to revise its budget as few grants were available for this purpose. Local fundraising campaigns would also have to be stepped up.

The future of retarded children was the Association's concern, as implied by the Adult Services Program name, but its purpose in reality was much broader. The committee said the Association could no longer delay the preparation of an adult workshop as a number of the children at Brucehaven School would be 18 years of age within a year or two.

This program, if viewed from a regional level, would mean considerable cost to the Walkerton Association as there would be costs for transporting and boarding young adults in the community where the workshop was located.

Volunteers on Walkerton's Adult Service Program committee suggested the Association set aside the regional workshop idea in favour of each local Association developing its own workshop. The committee suggested asking the people of Walkerton and district for support for further education and training of these adults in their home communities.

"Throughout the years this community has supported us very well. The government cannot legislate a climate of acceptance; it depends on individuals of the community to provide that", explained Mrs. Tait.

The administration of Brucehaven School passed from the hands of the Association into those of a newly-formed Retarded Children's Education Authority comprised of an excellent cross-section of professional and business people. This came into effect on January 1, 1965.

The Association hoped to build a new school, and to implement an Adult Services Program in September that year. The cost of the new school would be met in equal shares from the Association and from the Department of Education, while the cost for the adult program would be solely funded by the Association.

Property for the new school, at the north end of town, was attained through the generosity of Miss Helene Farewell, of Walkerton, and a donation of three lots from the Town of Walkerton, while a small portion of the property was purchase outright by the Association. The Association's share of the total cost of the new school was slightly oversubscribed by the generous individuals and groups of people in this district.

The Association opened its Sheltered Workshop, known as the Adult Opportunity Centre, in October 1965 and served three trainees under the direction of teacher Ms. Pauline (Crane) Von Hatten. The centre was open on a daily basis, Monday to Friday, at the rented premises of the Orange Hall. This was the first adult program of its kind in the area.



Bucehaven School erected in 1965-1966 by the Walkerton & District Association for the Mentally Retarded, with generous support of many individuals and many groups of interested citizens within the area, to serve the municipalities of

Bentinck  
Brant  
Bruce

Carrick  
Culross  
Greenock

Hanover  
Kinloss  
Mildmay

Normanby  
Paisley  
Walkerton

Building Committee:

Chairman: Mr. W. C. Crerar

Miss Phyllis Campbell

Mr. W.S. MacInnes

Mr. J. M. Tait

Mr. J.L. Leslie

Mr. W.F. Schumacher

Mr. C. W. Thompson

Architects: Horton & Ball

Contractor: W.J. Mullen

This plaque acknowledging the support received by many when Brucehaven School was built hangs today, in that Centre.