

Connecting MBC, Chapters, Volunteers and Members...

Report from National...

Kim Weatherall, CHAIR OF MBC
chair@multiplebirthscanada.org

Those who support the volunteers who support our families...

It takes a lot more support to help our families in Canada than you might think. You may believe that the support stops with the volunteer in your chapter that came to see you in the hospital when you gave birth to your multiples, or the volunteer that led the prenatal class you just attended, or the team of volunteers who meet each month to plan the initiatives for your chapter. These men and women work daily on behalf of our families. However, there are many other "volunteers" who are often neglected when recognition is being given for volunteers who make a difference in the lives of multiple-birth families. These unsung heroes are the spouses, children, partners, friends and family members that are at home looking after our children and providing us the support we need so that we can do what we love to do as volunteers for multiple-birth organizations: help others who follow in our path as parents of multiples. Without these people in the background supporting us in our volunteer efforts—whether it is looking after our children, helping us to prepare for an event, attending a chapter function or simply supporting and encouraging us to continue in our volunteer role—many activities and families would be without the support that they desperately need.

One group stands out more than all the rest when I think of support provided from behind the scenes. As I sit and write this article, it is Father's Day, and many across Canada are celebrating the amazing joy of being fathers—many for the very first time as proud fathers of multiple-birth children. At the 2006 conference this year, we had the pleasure of witnessing a presentation created by a father of quadruplets (Keith Pennington), with pictures of the fathers and children of the conference committee and members of the Chatham chapter of MBC. It was a very special presentation for us, because rarely do we celebrate the fathers of our children through pictorial displays that are just about the children and their dads. Later that same weekend, we were also given the pleasure to spend time with some of these fathers and their children (plus grandparents) when they came to help celebrate the 2nd annual National Multiple Births Awareness Day. These families represented more than simply families of multiple-birth children; they represented the support system that we had left at home. So, while we don't see a man's name listed as often as a woman's in the lists of volunteers for MBC or its chapters, there are many male volunteers helping, in a "behind the scenes" role.

For almost all of the 19 years since the birth of my daughters, I have volunteered for multiple-birth organizations, and have been able to do so because of the support of my family and the freedom they give me to do what I love best—volunteering. It has not always been perfect, and I know that my over-dedication and time spent volunteering have not always been easy to accept or appreciated, but in the end, my family has supported my efforts and have benefited in ways that they may never know. I like to think that while I have been supporting others and learning more about how to support our multiple-birth children, we as a family have learned how to support one another in our own personal needs, and learned more about the importance and impact of what volunteering can mean for others and for our communities.

If you are a volunteer with MBC and one of its many chapters... take time to hug those unsung heroes who help you be the great volunteer that you are. If you are a member... make sure to appreciate the efforts of these volunteers and those who support them as they work to support your family.

Thank you to my unsung heroes... Steve, Kristin and Stephanie Weatherall



Cheryl Wadasinghe, DIRECTOR AT LARGE
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The 2006 National Conference and Annual General Meeting was an opportunity for the Board to update members on advocacy activities on the Employment Insurance program. The letters written by MBC to both Lucienne Robillard, former Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, and to Diane Finley, new Minister for Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC) were presented. These letters outlined the mandate and work of Multiple Births Canada, and then outlined our main recommendations for change to the EI program. The letters of reply MBC received were also presented, as well as the survey MBC conducted in late 2005 and its results. These documents are also available for consultation on the MBC website, at: www.multiplebirthscanada.org/english/Elupdates.php

While MBC was able to take advantage of a meeting with the former government's officials (November 2005) to impress upon them the need to rectify the unequal application of the EI program to parents of multiples, response on our issues with the new Conservative government is not great.

One way to address this lack of response is to try some different tactics. I requested and received approval to continue to pursue advocacy work through senior bureaucrats, namely a letter to HRSDC Deputy Minister Alan Nymark, and through elected officials who understand the issues on a personal level, such as Minister of Finance Jim Flaherty (who is the father of triplets).

These letters represent the next steps in MBC's fight to have the needs of multiple-birth individuals and parents addressed at the federal level. These letters and their responses will also be posted on the website as they become available. If you are interested in this work, or if you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Cheryl

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Kim Weatherall, MBC CHAIR/ DIRECTOR OF VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT
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We are fresh back from Chatham, Ontario, where we had a great time at the 2006 AGM and Conference. I would like to thank the Chatham-Kent Chapter and its volunteers for providing a wonderful setting and program for the delegates to participate in. Your efforts were appreciated by everyone in attendance!

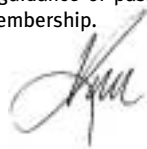
And while the Conference Committee was working hard to prepare for the Conference, the MBC Board and national volunteers were working long hours to ensure that everything was ready for the Annual General Meeting (AGM), the National Multiple Births Awareness Day celebrations and the other workshops that we are responsible for presenting. An important part of the AGM includes voting-in the Board of Directors each year, and I am pleased to announce that the Board of Directors all agreed to let their names stand for the upcoming year, and were voted-in as such.

Since the last Report From National (RFN), the MBC Board of Directors and national volunteers have been very busy with a number of exciting projects and initiatives. You will find descriptions of many of these initiatives in other columns throughout this issue. Two specific initiatives that have kept me busy are the creation of the Draft Strategic Plan and the quest for funding from the three largest fertility drug companies in Canada.

In the fall of 2005, the Board met to discuss this year's completion of the 2003-2006 Transitional Plan, the MBC accomplishments during this period, and the direction it should take for the next three-year period (2006-2009). A SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis and a PEST (political, environmental, social and technical) review were performed to assess our current situation and begin developing our strategic priorities. Since that weekend, more discussion has taken place, along with consultation with other national volunteers. That work resulted in the presentation of a DRAFT Strategic Plan at the 2006 AGM. Our next step, before making this plan a final product, is to offer the opportunity to members, volunteers and Chapter Executives to provide input, comments and suggestions to the Board. You can find the DRAFT Strategic Plan in the Member's Only section of the MBC website. If you would like to participate in this process, please provide your comments and suggestions to myself at chair@multiplebirthscanada.org by August 1st, 2006.

The MBC Board has always known that in order for MBC to grow and expand as a national organization, we must have staff working full-time hours and being fairly compensated for their efforts. While MBC is proud of its many successes—accomplished primarily by volunteers—we understand the opportunities that would be available to MBC with full-time staff working in areas where volunteers are limited. As such, the Board of Directors sent funding requests to the three largest fertility drug companies in Canada to ask for ongoing funding to assist with current and future staff salaries. Due to timing and budget restrictions, two companies were not able to help MBC at this time, while a third company, Serono, donated \$2,500.00. We will be contacting all of these companies again over the next few months to encourage a donation to MBC in their next budget year.

It is an exciting time for MBC, and the next year promises to be one filled with incredible opportunities as we move forward under the direction of a new strategic plan, with the guidance of passionate volunteers and through the support of our membership. Have a safe and sun-filled summer!

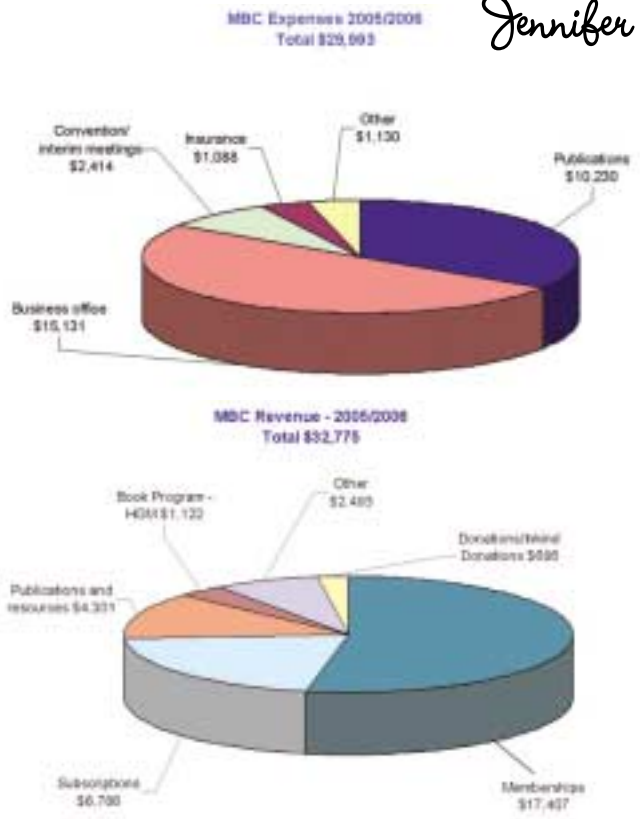


Jennifer Dawson, INTERIM DIRECTOR OF FINANCE
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Our results for the year were bolstered due to membership fees earned during the period being greater than those budgeted by almost \$1,200 (over 2005 by about \$600). Subscription revenue was in line with budget, and about \$400 over the prior year. We had a disappointing year with publication sales compared to our more aggressive budget for the year, but are optimistic for the future growth of this area. Other revenue results are better than budget, including a profit from the 'Back to Basics' Retreat in May 2005 (\$950), and a small profit (\$57) for NMBAD activities, both thanks to generous support through fundraising efforts.

The favourable revenue variances are supported by some cost savings in almost all areas, including the costs of publications, a small savings in the cost of the Business Office compared to budget, and the costs for meetings.

In all, MBC was able to generate a profit of \$2,782 to be added to our small surplus, and allow us to deal with unexpected financial requirements.

Multiple Births Canada would like to thank **Serono Canada** for their recent donation. Also, a special thank you to the following volunteers:

- **Candi Cuppage** - for her ongoing assistance in the Business Office
- **Donna Launslager** and **Diane Myers** - for attending the 14th Annual Mt. Sinai Symposium on behalf of MBC
- **Lynda Haddon** - for distributing MBC resources at the Ottawa Valley Lactation Consultants 2006 Conference
- **Jeannie Germain** - for being the official photographer at the 2006 Conference

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Vicki Riley, BUSINESS SERVICES MANAGER
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It was terrific to see many of you at the national conference in Chatham. It is always nice to put a face to a name and meet the amazing chapter volunteers that work so hard for their local families. There is no better way to learn and share information with other chapters than to attend a national conference. I am already looking forward to next year's conference in Kitchener-Waterloo region.

MBC's publication resources have always been a very important part of what MBC is all about—educating the public and professionals as to the unique needs of multiple-birth individuals and families. Six new fact sheets were recently added to our growing list of more than 65—and numerous fact sheets have recently been translated. As a member, you can download each and every one of these fact sheets for free from the Member's Only section of the MBC website. If you have forgotten your password, please call or email the Business Office.

MBC Directors have approved a few price increases on some of these publications. Remember, as a member, you receive an additional 20% discount on these prices. As of September 1st, 2006, the prices will change as below:

- Fact Sheets: price increase from 75 cents to \$1.00 each
- Library Pack of Booklets: price increase from \$60.00 to \$75.00
- New & Expectant Parent Support Kit: price increase from \$25.00 to \$40.00 (value of \$60)
- Quantity Discount: adjusted to 10% discount on orders of \$500 or more
- FREE: PR Posters (both English and French/English posters) are now available for free, and as before, PR pamphlets are also free (please request reasonable amounts)

Here is a quick review of some of the Business Office statistics from the last few months.

- February referrals to local chapters and non-member groups: 2 referrals to non-member groups (2 - Montreal) and 3 referrals to member chapters (1 - Kitchener/Waterloo, 1 - Guelph, 1 - Sudbury).
- March: 10 referrals to non-member groups (1 - Mississauga, 3 - Montreal, 1 - Winnipeg, 3 - Toronto, 1 - Burlington/Hamilton, 1 - Halifax) and 7 referrals to member chapters (1 - Fredericton, 1 - Kamloops, 1 - Windsor, 1 - Richmond/Delta, 2 - Brampton, 1 - Durham).
- April: 10 referrals to non-member groups (3 - Toronto, 1 - Burlington/Hamilton, 1 - Halifax, 1 - Ottawa, 1 - Nfld, 1 - Calgary, 2 - Montreal) and 10 referrals to member chapters (2 - Sudbury, 1 - Brant, 1 - Kitchener/Waterloo, 2 - Durham, 2 - Collingwood, 1 - Barrie, 1 - Brampton).
- May: 4 referrals to non-member groups (2 - Niagara, 2 - Montreal) and 2 referrals to member chapters (1 - Chatham, 1 - Fredericton).

On our toll-free line, the Business Office received 49 incoming calls in January, 53 in February, 69 in March, 47 in April and 37 in May.

Website updates: Be sure to look at the post-conference pictures posted on the 2006 Conference page and see all the delegates having a great time in Chatham. The 2007 Conference page has been posted—check back often as details are finalized. Remember, if you are looking for the most up-to-date information from MBC, look under Resources, then Information Circulars for the most recent email information. Why not sign up to have these emails sent directly to your inbox? Just send a note to the Business Office and ask for your email address to be added to the list.

Enjoy your summer...
take lots of pictures and send them to us!

Vicki

Vicki Riley, MULTIPLE MOMENTS EDITOR
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Summer is here... school is out.... and here we are, back from another fantastic national conference. The committee in Chatham did a wonderful job organizing this year's workshops and special events—thank you so much! I returned from this year's weekend away to a relatively normal situation at home—no flooding in the basement this time—but one of my boys did have a poison ivy infection creeping up his leg. Antibiotics and a few days off school, and everything was back to normal. Actually, poison ivy from March until November is pretty normal around here—at least for my boys. They seem to be a magnet to this annoying weed that loves Wasaga Beach.

After being away for five days, I also came home to lots of school notices. One of them indicated that the Friday while I was away was 'Twin Day' at school. This was a first for our school, and I am not sure how I feel about it as, of course, the whole theme will focus on 'sameness' and 'identical' twins. I understand how it can be fun for the whole school to get involved in something like dressing up for Pajama Day or Funny Hat Day, but here we are—the royal we, the multiple-birth community—working so hard to educate the public that all multiple-birth children are individuals and there are no 'identical' human beings. So I asked one of my 11-year-old boys if he had participated in Twin Day. He turned around and looked at me and said "Yes." I was surprised, very surprised and I fell into the trap. Here I was, just as guilty as the rest of world, thinking that they—my MZ boys—went to school dressed the same. "You did?" I asked. "What did you wear?" He looked at me straight in the eye and said, "I wore what I always wear." I was confused. My boys don't have anything the same anymore—one wears only jeans and the other never wears jeans. He explained, "Mom, I went to school. I am a twin. Get it?" Wow, I was not expecting that. It is so simple for them... kids. I wish life were only that simple.

One week later I was at the school early, dropping off one of our boys for a three-day camping trip with his class. They are in separate grade 5 classes, and only Pat's class was going—a hard 'life lesson' for Nick. As Pat and I walked across the parking lot with all his gear towards his teacher, his teacher said "Bring your gear inside, Nick." Nick? Nick? Nick isn't going on this trip! Nick isn't even in your class!!! I did not speak these words out loud, but boy, was I fuming inside. Behind me I heard Pat mutter, "I'm Pat". If he had a penny for every time he has had to say this, he'd be rich! I was really hoping these few days away, alone, would take him away from all that. After all, some of the volunteer parent chaperons wouldn't even know that he was a twin. Afterward he told me that everyone kept asking him why Nick wasn't there. In the end, he did have a great time!

As our children develop and grow, be sure to stay connected. Have a safe and wonderful summer, everyone!

Vicki



Pat and Nick Riley - eleven years old.

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Gail Moore, VICE-CHAIR/DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

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Of the many MBC initiatives I've been working on since the last Report from National, the two that consumed most of my time are National Multiple Births Awareness Day (NMBAD) and leading the Chapter Outreach Committee.

Regarding the communication work of NMBAD, it should be noted that each year we are building a base of support with our many stakeholders—including the media, government, and other non-profits. This means that the foundations we are laying now may not benefit our members immediately, but bit by bit, every contact and every project piece has an impact. Here are a few examples of how this is working for MBC:

- **Media:** In February, I was contacted by WestCoast Families (www.westcoastfamilies.com), a general parenting magazine that serves many multiple-birth families in western Canada. Journalist Alexis Roohani was working on a piece entitled A Multitude of Kin: Twins, Triplets and MORE. It was an excellent piece in that Alexis capably addressed the unique issues and challenges faced by our families. When I asked Alexis why she was using an Ontario source in her West Coast piece, she directly attributed her request to the NMBAD media release I sent to them in May of 2005.
- **Government:** On May 29th this year, Federal MP Anthony Rota from North Bay made a statement to his colleagues in the House of Commons on behalf of NMBAD. This support is a direct result of his involvement in the lead event at the Dionne Quints Museum last year. His statement is featured in this issue of MM (see NMBAD).
- **Other non-profits:** In preparing for this year's event, we were able to use a Best Start Resource Centre publication that was produced in collaboration with MBC: Low Birth Weight & Preterm Multiple Births – A Canadian Profile. As an educational tool reaching a wide range of professionals, this new publication certainly allows us to have an impact on the outcome of future multiple-birth pregnancies.

My communicator role with the Chapter Outreach Committee is quite different in nature. As the facilitator, I am managing an online conversation with seven other volunteers from across Canada. This discussion is two-way and asymmetrical in nature, which is a fancy way of saying we are talking and we are listening to each other. The first couple of months were devoted to analyzing why some groups are affiliated with MBC while others are not.

The recommendations this committee develops to encourage multiple-birth support groups of all sizes and in all geographic locations to become MBC members will be presented to the Board later this year. The challenges are: we need to propose a membership structure that 'fits all' while considering the size difference between groups; and, the effect the size of Canada has on MBC being able to service all families and chapters in Canada.

This committee has participation from member chapters as well as non-member groups, from Nova Scotia to British Columbia, from small groups to large, including two Board members who also belong to Chapters in their respective communities. This is a challenge of its own because we are busy people, yet we understand how our work can affect the future of MBC and the work undertaken for Canada's multiple-birth community.

In closing, I'd like to take a moment to thank two dedicated national volunteers who have helped to make my work as Director of Communications less stressful. Thank you Donna Launslager for all your work last year on Low Birth Weight & Preterm Multiple Births –

A Canadian Profile, and for taking the time to be with us at the lead event for NMBAD in Chatham this year. Thank you also to Diane Myers for making MBC a priority even when your days are already too full with other commitments. Your interviews with Global TV this spring allowed us to communicate our message to a much wider audience, and it validated why we work so hard on behalf of Canada's only national organization for the multiple-birth community. Finally, thank you to all members across Canada who used the NMBAD communication pieces we provided to you! Without your support at the local level, our effort at national would be lost. You can and you do make a difference!

Nicole Fisher, DIRECTOR OF MEMBERSHIP

membership@multiplebirthscanada.org

One of the highlights of the weekend in Chatham was the Chapter Exchange. I was thrilled that we exceeded our allotted time, talking about the challenges and great experiences chapters are encountering this year! There was vast sharing of ideas! Using the notes taken from that session as well as the completed surveys I received before the conference, I am putting together a document that shares each chapter's wisdom.

Another thing I did at the Chapter Exchange was distribute a fundraising package. Inside were flyers from numerous companies who do national fundraising. There was also a spreadsheet in the package that listed types of fundraising, along with contact information for many companies. If you have any to add, please let me know. If your chapter did not have a delegate at the conference, a package will be mailed to you over the summer, and details will be listed in the Chapter Executive section of the MBC website.

This fundraising package is a great way to get started this September with fundraising programs to raise enough money for your chapter to send at least one delegate to the next MBC conference, coming up in late May 2007. What a fabulous way to feel connected to other chapters as well as MBC!

As my local chapter is hosting the 2007 Conference, I have volunteered to be the National Conference Liaison, and as such, I looked at the weekend in Chatham through a new set of eyes! I was listening, watching, thinking, and noting all of the fine details and logistics of the weekend that the Chatham group did such a fabulous job of carrying out! Thank you, Chatham, for giving us such a great example!

Thank you to everyone at the 2006 conference for making it a fun and educational weekend! I hope to see you (and those who did not make it this year) in 2007!

MBC would like to thank its Sustaining Members for their added support:

Cathy Barr	Guelph, ON
Jennifer Brasch	Waterdown, ON
Donna Launslager	Waterloo, ON
Diane Myers	Moffat, ON
Diane Nelson	Grande Prairie, AB
Bonnie Schultz	Gormley, ON
Kimberley Weatherall	Orleans, ON