

# The Front Line

## Mira's Story

Say hello to Mira. She's a Kids Help Phone counsellor and her job just got a little more interesting. Mira used to spend her whole shift on the telephone talking to callers and helping them work out their problems. Now, for part of her shift, Mira moves online, responding to questions young people post in the Ask A Counsellor section of the Kids Help Phone website.

Kids ask questions about drugs, sex and relationships, they share their concerns about bullying or problems with their self-esteem. Because Kids Help Phone is an anonymous service, the online forum does not accept email addresses. Mira makes sure that the messages are non-identifying, to protect the individual/young person posting the message.

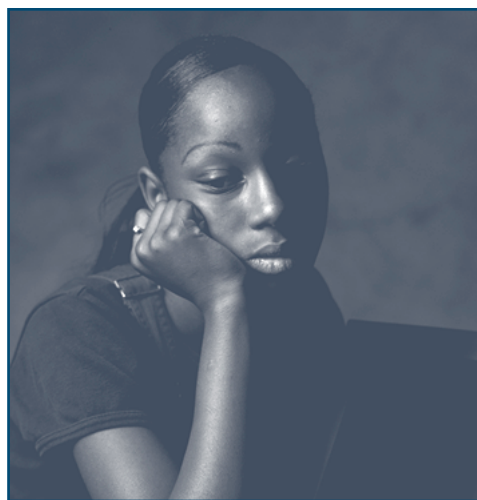
Mira admits that counseling online makes her feel a little further away from her clients than speaking to them on the telephone. On the other hand, she says that as far as young people are concerned jumping online and typing out their feelings, emotions and fears is the most normal thing in the world.

Like her colleagues on the phone, Mira hears from young people with a wide range of questions and concerns. There's "Scared" who is cheating on her boyfriend

and afraid he'll find out, "Confused" who doesn't understand why his parents are getting divorced and "Getting High" who is being pressured by friends to take drugs.

One 15-year-old made a post saying that she was worried about making friends at her new high school. The girl had heard lots of rumours about the kids at her new school and was scared that she would be bullied or worse, that she wouldn't make any "cool" new friends. Mira posted the response. She advised the girl that changing schools can be a scary experience and that it might take her some time to get comfortable with her new classmates. Mira suggested the girl get involved in teams or clubs that interested her and try to meet people with similar interests. She also reminded the girl that who and what is "cool" can change, so it's important to make friends you like spending time with, instead of worrying about making friends with the cool crowd.

Mira also responded to "Claustrophobic", a 17-year-old with questions about how old he had to be to move out and how to make his move easier on his parents. Because the legal age to move out of your parents home is different in each province and Mira didn't know where "Claustrophobic" was posting from, she directed him to his local Child Welfare agency for more information and remind-



ed him that if he needed to talk more about his decision, the Kids Help Phone phone line and website were open 24-hours a day.

Because the Ask A Counsellor service is not a real time conversation like on the phones (online counsellors try and respond to every posted question within 48 hours), Mira and the other online counsellors can take some time to think before answering the posted messages. Some are serious, but Mira says that she can tell that kids have fun posting their messages.

"When young people use our online service they know that someone is listening," says Mira. "The online service is just one more way for Kids Help Phone to be there for young people, in any way they need us."

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# ambassador

THE NATIONAL NEWSLETTER OF KIDS HELP PHONE

SPRING 2003

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## New Kids Help Phone website a natural extension of our services

In June 2002, Kids Help Phone took a giant leap forward in its goal of helping to protect troubled and abused Canadian kids – we took our counselling services online!

Thanks to a newly designed website ([kidshelp.sympatico.ca/jeunesse.sympatico.ca](http://kidshelp.sympatico.ca/jeunesse.sympatico.ca)), young Canadians now have one more way to access the free, bilingual, 24-hour, anonymous, professional counselling service that Kids Help Phone has offered over the phone for more than 13 years.

Kids Help Phone's purpose is to be there for kids as a non-judgmental support system, to assist with any issue or concern; so it was important that we adapt our services to the Internet, the medium of choice for many young people today. By offering e-counselling, our counsellors are able to help more Canadian children and youth.

The new site, designed and built pro bono by Toronto-based [ninedots](http://www.ninedots.com), is one more way that Kids Help Phone's professional counsellors are being there for the more than 1,000 young people who access our services every day.

The site offers a safe environment where young people can explore their options and express their thoughts, feelings and ideas. In addition, it offers an updated design, improved navigation and a carefully selected and regularly updated library of links.

Young people can now:

- **Ask a Counsellor** a question, or share a challenging situation or dilemma and receive professional guidance within 48 hours;
- **help themselves** by researching topics of interest in the significantly expanded library that offers practical information in language that is easy to understand;

- **express themselves** by sharing poetry or personal stories, tips and letters written but never sent; or
- **seek peer support** in professionally facilitated topical discussion groups which will be live later this year.

Online users can still depend on the fact that this service is confidential and anonymous – that's one of the reasons we're using message boards instead of email for Ask a Counsellor. Users can also still count on the fact that professional counsellors, not volunteers, will be answering their posts. Kids Help Phone's professional counsellors have received specialized training in online counselling and post responses to online questions within 48 hours.

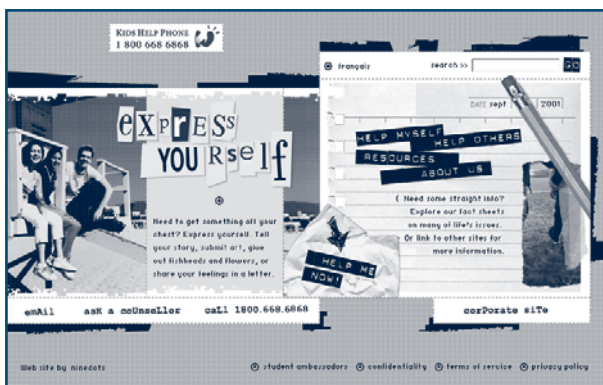
Ask a Counsellor has been up and running since June 2002 and the response from young people is incredible - already more than 3,000 messages have been posted!

The issues kids are posting about reflect the same broad range of issues that Kids

Help Phone counsellors handle on the telephone service such as family life, school, health and sexuality, conflict, relationships, sexual, physical and emotional abuse and suicide. This response reinforces the belief that, more and more, kids are seeking information and support via the Internet.

We invite you to explore the website – read through the information library, take a look at some of the letters and poems being posted by our users, and visit the Ask a Counsellor section. The questions and answers posted here will give you some insight into the kinds of things our counsellors hear every single day.

For the thousands of young people who depend on Kids Help Phone, this new website is one more way for them to connect with the support and information they have come to rely on from us. And for us, it is one more way that we are working to help troubled and abused Canadian children.



being there for kids

## Saluting Our Volunteers

Hats off to the recipients of the BMO Financial Group 2002 Community Ambassador Awards – your commitment and passion are invaluable to us!

**National Recipients:** For more than 10 years, Frank and Anita Carey have demonstrated an overwhelming dedication to Kids Help Phone. They are true community leaders whose caring philosophy is contagious. Just ask Wallace & Carey's employees, customers or suppliers, all of whom are touched in some way by Frank and Anita's commitment to us. Kids Help Phone is regularly featured in the Wallace & Carey newsletter, our materials don the walls of its offices and warehouses and every Wallace & Carey employee knows about us and our services. Wallace & Carey also holds regular events for Kids Help Phone throughout the year, including "lobsterfests", bake sales and the annual Larry Carey Classic golf tournaments. Anita also gives her personal time – over the years, she has played many important roles on the Calgary chapter council, including as chair of the Calgary Student Ambassador committee.

Frank and Anita are true champions for children and youth and have proven that personal community involvement can go hand in hand with business leadership and corporate community spirit.

**British Columbia:** In White Rock, Leslie Marr wears many important hats for us. As chair of the White Rock chapter, former chair of two Homes for the Holidays committees and a member of the Bell Walk for Kids committee, she plays a pivotal role in raising funds and awareness for us in White Rock. Leslie is a wonderful supporter who works extremely hard to ensure each event she's involved with is a great success.

**Alberta:** Edmonton's Allison Downey is a natural leader who motivates and excites other volunteers to do so much for us, including the first annual Bell Walk for Kids and "An Evening with Oscar" event.

Her expertise has built an incredibly solid base for this new chapter and her commitment to us ensures the chapter will continue to flourish.

**Manitoba/Saskatchewan:** For two years, Michelle Rezanoff has been working diligently to establish and build the Saskatoon chapter. She has acted as Chapter Chair, Co-Chair for the Bell Walk for Kids and is currently leading the first "Homes for the Holidays" event committee.

**Ontario:** In the Toronto office, Kathy Ord is a familiar face – she's been volunteering there since 1989. She's been involved in almost every Toronto event and program including the 'Being There for Kids' dinner, the Mother's Day Breakfast, Movie Day and the Student Ambassador program. In 2002, Kathy chaired Toronto's Bell Walk for Kids volunteer committee, brilliantly orchestrating more than 250 volunteers.

**Quebec:** In 2002, Montreal's Peg Brunelle took on a lot for Kids Help Phone and succeeded at it all! She chaired the Montreal chapter and the Bell Walk for Kids committee. This year, she established an important relationship with the Montreal Canadiens Hockey Club – one we hope will continue to grow for years to come. Peg's relentless commitment and passion for Kids Help Phone is fantastic.

**Atlantic:** Trent McGrath of the Halifax chapter has done it all for us over the years. He began by securing event sponsorships for us in Halifax and has been a mainstay at most of our events ever since, whether as a volunteer or an attendee. Trent also devotes many hours to our Student Ambassador Program, mentoring and assisting in conferences.

If you'd like to volunteer for Kids Help Phone, please contact your local Kids Help Phone office.

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## Walking Their Way to a Kids Help Phone Chapter

It was like the story of David and Goliath. At least that's how it seemed at first. How could a group of volunteers from a small city like Sarnia, Ontario successfully organize and execute a major fundraising walk? Like David, the volunteers welcomed the daunting task bravely and ultimately they raised close to \$6,000 and expanded their Bell Walk into a Kids Help Phone chapter.

"Our [chapter] start date was January 9, 2002 and the Bell Walk for Kids was on May 5. I knew we had a lot of work ahead of us but I felt it was do-able," says Kelly McCoy, Sarnia Chair.

And perhaps that was the key to the success of the Sarnia walk. From the onset, the committee had an unshakable belief that the walk was possible. For months they held weekly planning meetings to discuss logistics, promotions, recruitment and volunteers. It was during these meetings that they divided duties and brainstormed their ideas.

As the Walk approached, the committee ran into a few unexpected roadblocks – promotion and recruitment for example. But while

these areas turned out to be a challenge for the Sarnia Bell Walk team, McCoy is quick to point out that they worked through the challenges and ended up with a "tremendously successful walk".

Most importantly, they didn't let any of the challenges associated with a first year event slow them down. McCoy and her team are working hard on the 2003 Bell Walk for Kids. The Sarnia kick-off event took place at the beginning of March and McCoy says she and her team plan to have even more success this time around.

As for advice for other small chapters that are organizing a walk, McCoy says the key is to be hands-on and proactive.

"Never let anyone's discouragement last longer than a minute," she says. "And always try to keep the planning fun because if something doesn't work out one year, then you've already made a huge learning curve to a greater success for the next year."



## Kids Help Phone is now powered by hp Technology

Kids Help Phone has always been a technologically based organization. All of our counsellors sit at stations with access to a database of more than 30,000 community and social service listings across the country; our website has been in operation since 1996 and with Bowlathons and the Bell Walk for Kids, we've moved event registration online.

Now, thanks to a donation by Hewlett-Packard Canada, we've been able to upgrade

our systems - a step that will help us be there for kids better than ever before.

They donated more than 30 computers for use by counsellors and fundraising staff as well as 10 new servers. These new systems will significantly aid in our ability to be there for kids 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.



## ConocoPhillips Canada Brings its Expertise to Kids Help Phone

With the help of new Kids Help Phone partner ConocoPhillips Canada, Kids Help Phone is expanding its chapter network in Alberta!

The company, one of Canada's largest oil and gas corporations, committed to "being there for kids" late in 2002 and has been working to create awareness of Kids Help Phone and Parent Help Line in western Canada - most specifically in areas of Alberta and Northern British Columbia where the company has employees.

First up for ConocoPhillips Canada was assisting us with the establishment of Kids Help Phone chapters in Fort McMurray and Red Deer, AB.

The company will also be working with Kids Help Phone's Child and Family Services department in 2003 to provide aboriginal awareness and issues training to Kids Help Phone and Parent Help Line counsellors and staff.

## News From Around Kids Help Phone



Last August, Zellers donated \$2 to Kids Help Phone for any \$25 purchase of Request brand family fashions. And in September Zellers promoted Kids Help Phone and Parent Help Line in stores across the country during Zellers Safety Week. What great fundraising and awareness building at back to school time!



In September, the Boston Pizza Foundation ran its annual fund raising campaign in support of Kids Help Phone. Boston Pizza restaurants across Canada sold Nestlé's new Peanut Turtles chocolates, with net proceeds being donated to Kids Help Phone. The promotion raised \$77,500!



For the third year in a row, Couche-Tard held its annual QuarterBack promotion in stores throughout Quebec. Between October 30 and November 2, 2002, they raised approximately \$30,000 for Kids Help Phone - that's a 50% increase over what the promotion raised in 2001!



## Famous Players: Big Screen, Big Sound, Big Support

As a Kids Help Phone Official Sponsor, Famous Players provides tremendous support in three key areas: fundraising promotions, awareness and employee initiatives.

This full embrace of Kids Help Phone as one of its two charities of choice was exemplified in September 2002 when Famous Players ran its first national popcorn promotion, selling individual 100g bags of Act II microwave popcorn for \$1, with net proceeds going to Kids Help Phone.

In addition to raising an estimated \$60,000, the promotion generated awareness of Kids Help Phone with its target audience - kids. Every bag of popcorn was stickered with our phone number and website. The promotion was

also supported by in-theatre marketing, including full screen slides and point of sale materials.

"I think anyone who deals with Kids Help Phone understands the importance of the service," says Andrew Sherbin, Manager, Corporate Affairs for Famous Players. "Where it really clicks from a Famous Players' perspective is with our young employees at theatre level. For our Players, it's easy and fun to raise money for something they can relate to."

From sponsoring the Bell Walk for Kids Student Challenge to running employee-driven, fundraising initiatives across the country, Famous Players and its employees continually help Kids Help Phone reach young people in inventive and exciting ways.



## The Magazine helps Kids Help Phone reach kids

Kids Help Phone's grocery partners, A&P, Safeway and S o b e y s

Atlantic, have found an innovative new way to extend their support of Kids Help Phone's important services. In addition to in-store promotions and event sponsorships, A&P stores in Ontario, Safeway stores in Western Canada and Sobeys stores across the Atlantic region have begun selling "The Magazine - Not for Adults" in their stores.

A portion of the funds raised through the sale of The Magazine goes to Kids Help Phone.

This initiative represents a new partnership for Kids Help Phone, not only with The Magazine but also with the Ontario Associations of Chiefs of Police (OACP) and the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police (CACCP) who also benefit from the sale of The Magazine.

The Magazine - Not for Adults is the only Canadian monthly publication for youth aged 8 to fourteen. In addition to Kids Help Phone ads in each issue, there is a Q&A style column where Kids Help Phone's professional counsellors help answer some common questions from young people.

Plan to Participate: The second annual Bell Walk for Kids in support of Kids Help Phone takes place Sunday, May 4, 2003.

Visit [www.bellwalkforkids.com](http://www.bellwalkforkids.com) for more information.

# Letter from the President



## *Ensuring Kids Help Phone's Ability to Continue to "be there for kids"*

At one of our recent events, Dr. Sue McIntyre, a member of the Kids Help Phone Board and eminent researcher into child abuse, brought the reality of child abuse home most dramatically to the audience. She said that if the table of 10 people on her right were all men, the odds were that four of them had suffered from abuse as children. And if the table of 10 people on her left were all women seven of them would have suffered from abuse as children.

For me it was a stark reminder of the immense value of Kids Help Phone. Of the importance of our efforts to protect children against physical, emotional and sexual abuse through education, prevention and intervention.

Since it was founded in 1989, Kids Help Phone has been a safe place for abused children to turn. A trusted, anonymous place where they feel able to disclose the abuse they are suffering. For many, the only place they can turn. Disclosing their abuse - even understanding that what they sense is wrong is wrong - is a very important first step to preventing the abuse from continuing.

Our counsellors' objective, of course, is to be able to intervene and help the caller escape their situation. By helping the child identify an adult in their lives to whom they can go or by gaining the trust of the caller so they will disclose identifying information, allowing us to involve child welfare authorities.

But we do so much more in our efforts to fight child abuse in all its forms.

Through our public education programs we help young people understand the many forms of abuse and that it is wrong and that if it should ever happen to them they need to seek help either from Kids Help Phone or a trusted adult.

Our new website's "Ask a Counsellor" web counselling service and our expanded library of information on abuse add to the ways to educate, prevent and intervene in the terrible cycle of child abuse.

As does Parent Help Line. An increasing number of our callers are seeking "in the moment" support and concrete strategies to deal with their children's behaviour so to prevent abusive situations. Recently "Colin" called. He was tense and very frustrated with his 2-year-old's frequent temper tantrums and he knew he needed help before he said or did something he would regret. He didn't know anywhere else to turn for short term help and long term solutions.

And the Parent Help Line website library and IVR service offer several messages on coping with the pressures of parenting.

Since 1989, much has been learned about child abuse and its consequences. But it persists to be a gigantic problem. Hopefully, Dr. McIntyre will be able to site more encouraging statistics in her next speech, but until she is able to report the end of child abuse, Kids Help Phone will remain a vital - and for some kids, the only - source of help and support.

With your continued financial and volunteer support, we will not only be able to continue our programs of education, prevention and intervention, but grow them.

Thank you for "being there for kids." You are making a difference in children's lives.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Saul". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Bill Saul

## Michael's Story

"Michael" called Parent Help Line on his 68th birthday, but the last thing he wanted to do was celebrate. Michael and his wife had been caring for their 17-year-old grandson since the death of his parents six months before, but the teen didn't seem to be adjusting well to life with his grandparents.

Michael felt helpless and confused. His grandson was angry all the time, he was skipping school and last week Michael had caught the teen with a bottle of alcohol in his room. Worst of all, the teen refused to talk to his grandparents about what he was feeling, so Michael and his wife had no idea how to help.

The Parent Help Line counsellor who spoke with Michael talked to him about grieving. They discussed ways that Michael could talk to his grandson about death, anger and pain. Teenagers are dealing with so many different things already – school and the pressure to do well, friends, relationships, drugs – that something like the death of a parent and the subsequent move to a new city and school can be too much. The counsellor acknowledged that Michael and his wife were working hard to make their grandson's transition into their household as easy as possible for the teen. She suggested that if their grandson wasn't ready to open up to his relatives, perhaps a school counsellor or counselling professional could be helpful. They also identified resources in the community,

like Alcoholics Anonymous, that Michael could turn to for information and advice. She also gave Michael the number for Kids Help Phone and suggested that his grandson may find the confidential and anonymous service helpful.



Before hanging up, the Parent Help Line counsellor talked to Michael about his own feelings. Had he and his wife taken the time to grieve the loss of their child? How were they feeling about having a teenager in the house again? The counsellor suggested local resources for Michael and his wife to help them cope with the changes in their lives and reminded Michael that he could call Parent Help Line any time of the day or night.



## Invest in Kids Brings its Expertise to Parent Help Line

Parent Help Line is a valued resource, offering confidential support, information and referrals to parents of children aged 0 to 19 years. Invest in Kids is a proud collaborator in this initiative and has brought its expertise in child development and parenting to the creation of the service's message library and the initial training of counsellors.

Invest in Kids uses research to stay abreast of parenting and child development issues. Ultimately, the organization translates the science of child development into practical parenting information to further parents' knowledge, with a priority on ensuring this information is easily accessible. Its professional education initiatives include developing and delivering curriculum around child development to front line professionals so that they can remain at the forefront of their fields. For Invest in Kids, these professionals act as a conduit of information to parents of young children.

"No other organization is as committed as we are to furthering the social, emotional and intellectual development of children," says Dr. Carol Crill Russell, Vice President of Research at Invest in Kids. "We are just as committed to reaching parents where they are. Parent Help Line fits our mandate perfectly. Everyone has a phone and an impressive number of Canadian households with children under the age of 18 are using the Internet."

Dr. Russell worked with 25 researchers and program specialists from across Ontario to create the initial 250 messages in the library. While these experts developed the content, a team of writers edited the messages to ensure they were easy for parents to understand.

Further to this, Dr. Chaya Kulkarni, Invest in Kids' Vice President of

Professional Education, developed a three-week training program for the 25 new counsellors hired to launch the service. The training focused on helping this group of diverse professionals better understand parenting issues, specifically as they relate to children aged 0 to 5. Several types of reference guides were also produced for counsellors.

Today, Invest in Kids identifies message topics, in part, from the front line observations of the Parent Help Line counsellors and always in consultation with its network of psychologists, psychiatrists, school guidance counsellors, speech language pathologists, nutritionists, early childhood educators and infant specialists. After an extensive approval process, the messages are posted to the website and recorded by professional announcers for the phone line. The comprehensive message library now houses 300 messages and works in tandem with the professional counselling staff to offer parents information on their typical concerns. The relevance of this information is evidenced in statistics that reveal the phone line now averages almost 2,000 calls per month. Online, some 28,000 messages are accessed monthly on the English and French websites.

Invest in Kids is a national, charitable organization aimed at promoting the healthy social, emotional and intellectual development of children aged zero to five. Its research, public awareness and education and professional education initiatives focus on strengthening the parenting skills, knowledge and confidence of Canadians to ensure the best possible start for all of our children. To learn more about Invest in Kids Foundation, visit [www.investinkids.ca](http://www.investinkids.ca).

Parent Help Line can be reached at 1-888-603-9100 and at [parentsinfo.sympatico.ca](http://parentsinfo.sympatico.ca).