

July 2015 Newsletter

MENTORING WOMEN IN NEED



iSisters Technology Mentoring

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A Word from the Chair

We are entering exciting times at iSisters Technology Mentoring. At the end of March we were proud to have been awarded a grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the third such contribution in our organization's history. The one-year grant allows us to enter into a brand new partnership in order to deliver our unique brand of technology mentoring for disadvantaged women. Since its inception, iSisters has partnered with a dozen different organizations serving women in need in different parts of our community; these partners offer a suite of complementary services to our clientele as well as a convenient meeting place where we set up an iSisters-funded computer lab.

The Ontario Trillium Foundation grant allows us to expand our reach in a couple of ways; firstly we will be partnering with an organization a little outside of the city of Ottawa at the Lanark County Interval House, a women's shelter located in Carleton Place. Secondly, the funds are earmarked for a program that allows us to expand and better leverage our on-line learning platform we call iTechnology. Based on an open-source learning management system, iTechnology allows us to provide on-going access to technology training in addition to our classroom-based learning. Learners from all centres will benefit from the additions we will make to the curriculum available on-line in this program. We're excited about the possibilities that this opens up for iSisters going forward in the future, and hope you are too!

Claire Toplis
iSisters Board Chair

Board of Directors

Claire Toplis, Chair
Patricia den Boer, Past Chair
Cathy Lewis, Director, Founder
Colleen Kelley, Director, Treasurer
Beth Nightingale, Director, Communications
Judy Puritt, Director, Volunteer Management
Kathryn Bean, Director, Secretary
Melynda Layton, Director
Sarah D'Angelo, Director, Human Resources

Staff

Linda Milton Perreault, Executive Director

Mentors

Tim Birch-Jones
MobileLabTeacher and eLearning iTechnology

Fran Harding
Community Liaison, Asset Mapping

Mission

Our mission is to provide access to technology, to develop and deliver technology mentoring programs and to enhance career opportunities through technological awareness.

Vision

iSisters Technology Mentoring, a leader in technology learning and development, helps empower women in need to live better lives, create brighter futures and build stronger communities.

Our Values

We are passionate and committed to:
being Learner-Focused, being Community Oriented,
Excellence, being Respectful, being Accountable

Dedicated to Learning

Recently the board members of iSisters were privileged to participate in a strategy planning session. What an incredible day! iSisters is comprised primarily of a very dedicated and focused group of volunteers, plus a few part-time paid individuals delivering our programs. Quite simply, without volunteers, iSisters could not exist and provide outstanding programs.

The session took place on a Saturday and involved our volunteer Board of Directors. The meeting started with coffee and muffins to help us wake up and get our neurons firing. Sylvia Laale and Mary Hughson, our volunteer facilitators for the day, guided us through a series of activities which encouraged working collaboratively and cooperatively. We began by considering where we each thought iSisters would be five years down the road.

Sylvia and Mary invited us to open our imaginations to a world of possibilities, by inviting us to dream. They then moved us through further exercises making us examine the reality of our organization, and the current climate facing non-profits. Significant challenges and obstacles exist, but we also have substantial support and strengths we can draw upon.

The day wrapped up soon after lunch. Having prioritized themes into four key priorities, we were able to list specific activities under each heading based on the morning activities. Sylvia and Mary walked us through a highly valuable and targeted approach, helping us give voice to our strategic plan.

And the volunteering doesn't stop with that one day. Now the real work begins. We've self-assigned ourselves to the different priorities, with some of the groups already meeting and planning.

At the end of the day, our generous facilitators captured and electronically shared the notes from our flip chart pages. Each group will provide descriptions to fill out the actions, and then determine its own measures of success. We will engage further volunteers as needed, report back to the full Board, and implement the plans.

In the end, iSisters and the community we serve will benefit from this exercise. We all learned more about our organization and ourselves. It was an EXCELLENT way to spend a Saturday!

Judy Puritt

Director of Volunteer Management



PROFILES

Paula Hopkins
Invest Ottawa



Paula Hopkins is a Business Advisor with Invest Ottawa, assisting people who are interested in starting their own business. Paula is also a much-loved iSisters volunteer and contributor to the iSisters Career Connections Program. She graciously donates her time to iSisters by providing workshops designed specifically for our learners called 'Intro to

Entrepreneurship', educating our learners on the possibilities of starting a business.

Prior to working with Invest Ottawa, Paula earned a degree in Kinesiology from Ottawa University. In 1995, she partnered with her brother to start a training/consulting business. During this time, her focus was primarily on training people in the field of health and wellness. Eventually, their company merged with a larger training firm, where she continued to train people in various subject areas.

After over a decade with that firm, Paula decided to change directions, and opened a retail store in Brockville, Ontario. After 3 years, seeking yet another change of pace, Paula chose to put her many entrepreneurship experiences to use in a Small Business center where she helped guide people through the ups and downs of business.

This new path eventually lead her to her current role as a Business Advisor within the Entrepreneurship team at Invest Ottawa.

Whether she is training people about health and wellness, or consulting with small business owners, Paula always takes great pleasure from helping people make good decisions in their life.

"I love working with iSisters for a couple of reasons. I love the women I get to meet and their stories. I learn something new every time I am with a new group. I also love working with iSisters because you are offering such a valuable service and you make it easy for volunteers to work with you."

-- Paula Hopkins

Inspiring the next generation of women through passion, leadership, and philanthropy



"Thank you very much for the opportunity to participate in the Career Connections Program, to learn, to share experiences and to get fantastic support both in class and after class!"

--Ekaterina Shestakova ,
OCISO Career Connections
Graduate

Planting a Seed

Since the long, fiercely cold Ottawa winter we experienced this past year has finished, it seems appropriate to think about renewal, in this case, about technology renewal. As most realize, computer hardware has a finite life, with corporations often scheduling a hardware refresh every three or four years to ensure adequate tools for their staff.

Even the most humble charity like iSisters needs occasionally to plan an upgrade for the computer labs that we provide, free of charge, to our partner centres. For our programs to be most effective, it is important that our learners get a chance to be exposed to reasonably current equipment and operating systems, such as what they may expect to encounter in the work world after completing one of our sessions. I thought I would plant a seed amongst our readers and supporters about a hardware renewal sponsorship concept I have been dreaming about for a few months. It goes something like this:

- A kind corporation or generous individual “adopts” one of our partner centres as a hardware sponsor for a five year period
- Each year, the sponsor sets aside \$500 or \$1000 towards hardware renewal for that partner
- At the end of the five year period the yearly pledges are consolidated and “new” hardware is acquired for the partner centre (gently used, fairly current refurbished equipment is also completely acceptable)
- The old hardware is donated to those who can make use of it
- The sponsor may choose to continue in the role, or step aside for some other generous donor.

If you are interested in becoming a hardware sponsor, or can suggest a company or individual who you think we should approach, please contact Executive Director Linda Milton Perreault.

Building Connections



iSisters was pleased to participate in the Building Connections - Coordinating for Client Success event hosted by Labour Market Ottawa in February. The event was held at the Ottawa Conference & Event Centre. Claire Toplis, iSisters Chair, Cathy Lewis, Director, Founder, and Linda Milton Perreault, Executive Director attended the event. A successful day of networking, personal development, and learning about how we can all work together to connect job seekers to jobs.

Career Connections



iSisters graduates at the Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization (OCISO) with Technology Instructor, Bernarda Jurela and Career Connections Coordinator, Sybil Thuns.

Career Connections is a customized program that was specifically developed to connect our learners and graduates with employment opportunities; to expand and mature iSisters' program offering to meet the needs of our learners; and to leverage our existing resources to support the transition to work for our learners.

This past year, we delivered Fall and Spring sessions of the program to three different partner centres, impacting 42 women. iSisters celebrated the graduation of 19 women and 23 women with Certificates of Participation. We are also proud to announce that six of these women have found work since graduating from the program.

Bethany Hope Centre

iSisters officially launched its Technology Mentoring for Young Moms program at the Bethany Hope Centre (BHC) last summer. Since then, we have delivered four sessions to young mothers at the centre. In collaboration with BHC's Hope Ventures program, a program designed to encourage young parents to explore and advance within the world of business and entrepreneurship, the young mothers work with the leadership of iSisters to embark on computer skill building opportunities to enable them to return to and succeed in high school, prepare for employment or entrepreneurship. The program builds community capacity to support young parents and their children. With the support of our generous donors, we have impacted the lives of 40 young mothers and their families this past year!



iSisters graduates, Class of 2015 at the Bethany Hope Centre with Technology Instructor, Eric Calvert

Thank you to our 2014 - 2015 Donors!

Individuals

Kathryn Bean | Roslyn Bern | Sarah D'Angelo | Kathleen Gemmill | Fran & John Harding
Colleen Kelley | Mike Tierney | Claire Toplis | Denyse Toplis

Corporate

Accenture | Alcatel-Lucent Foundation | Alterna Savings | Concierge Home Services
Crabtree Foundation | Leacross Foundation | Ontario Trillium Foundation | Rideau Kiwanis
Club | Rideau Valley Roller Girls | The Ottawa Browncoats | Wesley Clover Foundation

Farewell



As is the case every once in the while in the life of a non-profit board, iSisters is saying goodbye to a few board members.

Treasurer Colleen Kelley attended her final meeting in May, while Director-at-large Melynda Layton leaves us at our June gathering.

Colleen served for 2 years, giving up many weekends on our behalf to ensure our books were up-to-date and accurate.



Melynda, a lawyer, served for 5 years and kept us on the straight and narrow legally, most recently by ensuring our by-laws met the requirements of the new Canada Not For Profit Act as we continued the corporation under this new legislation.

Both women provided sage guidance in the running of iSisters and we will miss their wisdom going forward. A heartfelt "thank you" to both of them!

Class of 2014 - 2015!



IWSO Spring 2015



ISWO Spring 2015



Bethany Hope Spring 2015



Bethany Hope Summer 2015



Bethany Hope Fall 2014



NROCR Fall 2014

Congratulations, Fran!

Our very own Fran Harding received the 2015 Leading Women/Leading Girls Community Builders Award.

This award honours the outstanding contributions and achievements of women and girls in our community.

We are so very proud of you, Fran.

From all of us at iSisters,
Congratulations!



Fran Harding (centre) with MPP Yasir Naqvi and iSisters Director, Founder, Cathy Lewis

New Partnerships



June 24th marked the official public launch of a one year partnership program between Lanark County Interval House (LCIH) and iSisters, made possible as a result of a \$43,500 grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF). Over the next year, LCIH will work with the leadership of iSisters to embark on computer skill building opportunities for women who have fled abusive situations and are working toward a future free of violence. Local MPP Randy Hillier officially congratulated iSisters on Wednesday when he met with (left to right) Erin Lee, Executive Director, LCIH, Linda Milton Perreault, Executive Director, iSisters, and Claire Toplis, iSisters Chair.

iSisters is iSocial

Digital Infographic:

Coming later this summer, iSisters will be releasing its new digital infographic!

Social Media:

iSisters has expanded its social media presence and can be found on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn!

As a non-profit organization, iSisters benefits greatly from the wide reach and low cost of various social media outlets. Not only do these platforms increase our public profile, but also allow us to connect with our learners, recent graduates and alumni, as well as our partners, supporters and volunteers on a regular basis.

Visit our [Facebook Page](#) and “like us” to stay up to date with all of our communications. Follow us on Twitter under the handle [@iSistersorg](#). Join our group on [LinkedIn](#).



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