

Niagara's tiniest "teachers" recognized at annual Baby Celebration

It was a graduation celebration 25 years in the making.

A quarter century ago, Niagara's two English school boards became the first outside of Toronto to adopt the Roots of Empathy Program as a way of promoting empathy and understanding to children in school. On May 30, nearly 20 of the tiny "teachers" and their parents took part in the 25th Annual Roots of Empathy Baby Celebration at the Niagara Catholic District School Board's Catholic Education Centre. The celebration capped a year of in-class visits to 27 schools in Niagara Catholic and the District School Board of Niagara.

This year, approximately 650 Niagara elementary students learned valuable lessons about expressing feelings, respect and inclusion, as well as infant development, safety and the powerful bond between a parent and a child through Roots of Empathy in their classrooms. Through the program, students are guided to observe the baby's development and milestones, to interact with the baby, and learn about the baby's temperament.

To celebrate the 25th anniversary of Roots of Empathy in Niagara, Mary Gordon, founder and President of Roots of Empathy, attended the celebration. She spoke passionately about the benefits Roots of Empathy has had on two generations of students in Niagara and thanked both boards for their participation in the program.

Quick facts:

- *Roots of Empathy* is an award-winning registered charity and non-profit organization founded in 1996.
- *Roots of Empathy* started in Niagara in 2000. It is coordinated locally by the Early Childhood Community Development Centre (ECCDC), in cooperation with the Niagara Catholic District School Board and the District School Board of Niagara.
- Nearly 1,600 *Roots of Empathy* programs have run in Niagara during that time, promoting empathy and understanding to approximately 380,000 elementary students.
- The parents and babies visit the class nine times throughout the school year. Visits are coordinated by school staff.
- *Roots of Empathy* is now offered in all 10 Canadian provinces and 11 countries around the world.

High-resolution photos are available upon request. For more information, please visit www.rootsofempathy.org or www.eccdc.org.

ECCDC Contact:

[Lorrey Arial-Bonilla](#), Executive Director, P: 905.646.7311 ext. 321