



# The BEAR Bulletin

❖❖❖ "helping children with dyslexia to read"



## And the Oscar goes to...

In the spring of 2025 a promotional video of the Learning Centre for Hamilton was filmed. It features some of our children, parents, tutors, volunteers, and Board members along with our centre co-directors. There are cameo appearances by SRCF President Richard Jones and Executive Director of the Learning Centres Program Bill Cave.

With the Centre as the focus the video explores dyslexia from several perspectives and emphasizes the effects of the Orton-Gillingham program. The video has been shown at a couple of presentations and has received rave reviews. It is now posted on our website, on the About Our Learning Centre tab, for the public to see. So grab a bowl of popcorn, and maybe a tissue or two and enjoy!

## Message from the President

What, winter is over? Spring is slow in coming but it is warming. Hooray!

Our thoughts at the Learning Centre are now twofold: planning for our Celebration of Success and child evaluations. The Celebration will include graduations and tutor certifications, and will take place on Sunday June 14, 2026 in the Ballroom of the Scottish Rite. Doors will open at 1:30pm. and the festivities will begin at 2:00pm. Our co-directors, Barbara and Michael Baxter, are entering the most labour intense point of the year, the child evaluations. Please support them by honouring the time spot you are given to meet with them to review your child's progress. With 28 children to evaluate this is a very big and time-consuming task: they need your understanding and co-operation.

It goes without saying that the Learning Centre would not be open without its volunteer tutors and for their dedication we are forever grateful. No less important and essential are the reception room volunteers who contribute so much to the welcoming spirit of the Learning Centre and continue to make it a positive place to be. I would be remiss if I did not mention those invisible volunteers who keep our newsletter, website and Facebook page up and running and also those who work to maintain and upgrade our computer capabilities and keep an eye on the maintenance of the building. Without volunteers we would not and could not exist.

Donations to the Learning Centre are most welcome and appreciated as without them we could not continue to provide free tutoring to those children who need it.

*Dale Chapman—President*

## Dyslexia and French Immersion

Dyslexia Canada has responded to the many questions parents have raised about having their dyslexic child in a FI program. **French Immersion FAQs** is now a section on their website, devoted to answering those questions.

Important to note: dyslexia is not, in itself, a barrier to learning French. In fact many dyslexic students thrive in FI and FI can offer advantages for dyslexic learners. Benefits include a strong emphasis on oral language development, cognitive flexibility and vocabulary growth, and exposure to two writing systems, supporting a deeper understanding of language structure and patterns. Some children respond well to the more predictable sound-letter relationships found in French. Parents who are seeking assistance in decision making about FI, transitions, supports and assessment can register online for the Dyslexia Compass program offered by Dyslexia Canada.

To see the FAQs visit: [dyslexiacanada.org/support/french-immersion/](https://dyslexiacanada.org/support/french-immersion/)

## Support from the Masonic Community



On October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2025 the inaugural "Irish Whiskey Sip & Savour Night" charity event was held at the Scottish Rite Club of Hamilton, sponsored by The Hugh Murray Lodge No. 602.

Over 60 supporters enjoyed fine single malt Irish Whiskey, hors d'oeuvres and cigars at this upscale social event.

A cheque of \$2,629.66 was presented to Dale Chapman, President of the SRCF Learning Centre for Hamilton. The Event Committee toasted the great work of the Learning Centre for Hamilton while making the presentation.

Pictured from left to right are: Gary Magwood, Dale Chapman, Chairman Steven Thiede and Chris Cleaver, along with Georgie Bear.

**Sláinte!**

## From Niagara

The Scottish Rite Charitable Foundation Satellite Learning Centre for Niagara is now on track for a Fall 2026 opening.

We have recently secured the services of a Tutor-Trainer and Centre Director, Kim Fiocca, who will be training volunteer tutors for the Niagara Centre in the Orton-Gillingham method. Kim is a fully accredited Tutor who is currently tutoring two children at the Learning Centre for Hamilton. Welcome aboard Kim!

The Niagara Centre has a waiting list of 8 children who are hoping to be part of the inaugural class. However, we are still looking for Tutor Trainees to assist in ensuring that these children will be able to fulfill their dreams of being able to read and write.

While donations are gratefully received, and always put to good use, the new Learning Centre for Niagara is looking for prospective Tutors, Tutor Trainees and Non-Tutor Volunteers, for an extremely worthwhile cause, which will bring enormous satisfaction knowing that they have impacted a child's life and future in a way that cannot be measured. If you are interested, or know someone who might be interested, in becoming a Tutor, Tutor Trainee or Non-Tutor Volunteer, or if you have, or know a child who would benefit from this very successful program look for the application forms at: <https://dyslexiacentrehamilton.com/applytoday>

The Committee for the Niagara Centre recently met with St. Catharines Mayor Matt Siscoe to discuss how he might be able to assist in the success of this very exciting project for the Niagara Region. Following the meeting Mayor Siscoe presented Ill. Bro. Brent Julian 33° with a Certificate of Congratulations in recognition of his appreciation to the Scottish Rite Charitable Foundation for bringing this much needed Learning Centre to our community.

Finally, a big shout out and thank you to Kim Horne, wife of Ill. Bro. Mac Horne 33°, who made a fantastic replica of the Learning Centre Bear, to sit at the reception desk at the Niagara Centre. The Bear does not yet have a name but we feel sure the first group of children to attend the Centre will be able come up with something suitable and possibly meaningful.



*Submitted by Ill. Bro. David Ross, 32°, Chair & Centre Co-ordinator*

## From our Co-directors

The Learning Centre for Hamilton has had another positive year of growth and is operating four days a week with 19 tutors providing Orton-Gillingham tutoring to 25 children. As Spring approaches, the Centre will enter the final months of the tutoring year. Planning will begin soon for year-end child evaluations, and we look forward to the child graduation and tutor certification celebration to be held on Sunday, June 14<sup>th</sup>.

The successful year at the Learning Centre is the result of the hard work and dedication of the many people who generously give of their time on a weekly basis to ensure that the Centre achieves the goal of teaching children to read and spell.

Great thanks to our Board of Directors and:

Reception Room Volunteers: Volunteer Coordinator Bob Phillips, Boyd Behie, Dale Chapman, David Gordon, Kathy Hamilton, Brian Muir, Linda Murray, Dean Nazir, Bill Patterson, Bob Stewart, and Nancy Wood.

Social Media/Newsletter Editor: Lee Gowers

Tutor-Trainer/Supervisor: Meredith Hutchings

Tutors: Elspeth Daley, Iris Duemm, Kim Fiocca, Amber Giosi, Megan Jukes, Joshua Las, Barbara Leisinger, Jennifer Marshall, Donna McManamy, Tracey O'Reilly, Leah Panszczyk, Colleen Reinhart, Claudia Ribeiro, Stephanie Shewfelt, Alex Tadeson, Heidi Tadeson, and Elizabeth Winfield.

Special thanks to the various groups and individuals who support the Learning Centre through their generous donations.

All involved with the Learning Centre contribute to the success of the children we serve.

*Barbara & Michael Baxter*

## From our Tutor-Trainer

The time is flying by, and I hope that you have all fared well over our Canadian winter months.

Over the last few months, we have reached out to a few families to work closely with us regarding their child's participation and progress with the Orton-Gillingham tutoring program at the Learning Centre for Hamilton.

Children, like all humans, are complicated, but luckily we have such wonderful families and parents who can work together with our entire team to best support their child. Through open communication we have been able to establish some effective strategies to help these children return to positive tutoring relationships and re-establish progress with our program.

Dyslexia takes its toll on anyone carrying this load. There can be many challenging emotions that arise from frustration, low self-esteem, and questions about why they need to do extra work outside of school time. The Learning Centre for Hamilton team recognizes these burdens on our children and families which is why the directors, board, tutors and volunteers bend over backwards to provide a welcoming and warm environment.

We are grateful for such holistic support from our families and we are proud of our positive working relationships!

Here's to continued success of all our tutor- child pairs and their families!

*Meredith Hutchings*



### Ableism and the Right to Read

Disabled students continue to face barriers constructed and enforced by our schools. The UN estimates that, globally, children with disabilities are twice as likely to be denied access to education.

Students and their support networks, families, advocates and experts can no longer accept school systems that uphold inequality for the disabled community. Ableist barriers continue to impede the human rights of disabled students in Canada.

The Manitoba Human Rights Commission released the first phase of its report exploring the right to access evidence-based reading interventions in Manitoba's public education system on October 30, 2025. The inquiry was initiated in 2022, after the commission continued to hear that students with reading disabilities were experiencing barriers to accessing timely reading interventions in their local public schools.

Related to this, the Manitoba government has passed Bill 225 to require universal early reading screenings for all kindergarten to Grade 4 students.

In a landmark 2012 case, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that human rights laws in Canada protect every student's right to an equal opportunity to learn to read. While this decision is celebrated as a significant step toward advancing the rights of students with disabilities, in the years since it was released, barriers continued to be reported. This led to the different respective special investigations in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Ontario.

The recommendations from the October 2025 Manitoba report are a first step in addressing the discrimination against children with reading disabilities in Manitoba's public education system. The report details how education is essential for unlocking opportunities, personal growth and allowing students to access their other fundamental rights, as well as promoting equality and belonging. Reading is the foundation of learning and a fundamental skill that shapes every aspect of life. Students who cannot read well are more likely to face challenges in school, work and everyday life. When students cannot access reading instruction, it affects their confidence, mental health and long-term opportunities.

Learning disabilities are the most prevalent disability in the K-12 education system, and reading disabilities are by far the most prevalent type of learning disability.

The Manitoba Human Rights Commission found that "attitudinal barriers and stigma impacting the uptake and efficacy of accommodations" continue to maintain inequalities for the dyslexic community. These attitudinal barriers amount to systemic ableism. Ableism is enacted and upheld by a system that harbours negative attitudes, stereotyping and discrimination towards people with disabilities. Ableism continues to exist because of the combination of prejudice and power, particularly in schools.

One of the consistent findings of the Manitoba, Ontario and Saskatchewan Human Rights Commissions is the need to implement a universal early reading screening. Such a tool allows educators to identify reading challenges as early as possible. This is a critical step in enabling earlier access to evidence-based interventions when they are most effective.

Across Canada and globally, the dyslexia community has initiated a "Right to Read" movement to advance the rights of children, both with and without dyslexia, to gain access to reading instruction and, more broadly, education.

Canadian education systems must confront ableist processes, attitudes and practices if all children, including those with dyslexia, are able to realize the right to read. Our children are capable; we just need to provide them the opportunities and approaches that fit their needs.

*This story was co-authored by Natalie Riediger, who has two children with dyslexia and is an associate professor, Department of Food and Human Nutritional Sciences, at the University of Manitoba.*

*This story appeared in the online version of The Conversation, on 5 January 2026.*





Learning Centre  
for Hamilton

The Scottish Rite Charitable Foundation  
Learning Centre for Hamilton  
"helping children with dyslexia to read"

# Donation Form

## Donor Information

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Prov \_\_\_\_\_ PC \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Direct Donation to:    Learning Centre for Hamilton                       Niagara Satellite

## Payment Options

**Cheque:** Please make cheque payable to: *The Scottish Rite Charitable Foundation Learning Centre for Hamilton*

**E-transfer:**    office@dyslexiacentrehamilton.com

**Credit Card:** Card # \_\_\_\_\_

Security Code (3 numbers on back of card) \_\_\_\_\_ Expiry (MM/YY) \_\_\_\_\_

Name on Card \_\_\_\_\_

Amount of donation \_\_\_\_\_                      One time                       Monthly

Donation is in memory or honour of \_\_\_\_\_

Acknowledgement to be sent to: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



Donations (one time or monthly) may also be made through **CanadaHelps** and directed to either the Learning Centre for Hamilton or the Niagara satellite. Visit CanadaHelps.org and search for Learning Centre for Hamilton. Official receipts for income tax purposes will be issued by CanadaHelps.

Donations of \$20 or more will be acknowledged with an official receipt for income tax purposes.

Donors names will be printed in our newsletter. Please let us know how you would like to be recognized.

Donor Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Anonymous

If donating by cheque please complete this form and mail it and your cheque to:

**SRCF Learning Centre for Hamilton**  
**148 George Street**  
**Hamilton ON L8P 1E5**

If donating by credit card complete this form and email to: **office@dyslexiacentrehamilton.com**



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