

# Halifax Region Children's Aid Foundation

## SPARKLE FUND NS Report

July 2016

Submitted by: Jane Boyd Landry



## Healthy Teeth, Bright Future

The SPARKLE FUND NS Committee met three times in the past year to further their work on this exciting initiative, and are happy to say they are officially open for business. Over the last two years our work has focused on getting the logistics in place to allow us to begin providing funds for oral health care to low income youth ages 15 to 21 across Nova Scotia. This included developing our logo, mission and vision statements. We partnered with Dalhousie University's Schulich School of Law, Pro Bono Dalhousie Program, and were fortunate to have the services of a law student. His work involved researching best practice policies, determining some of the most significant gaps in the oral health care for youth, and the impact treatment would have on their overall health and well-being. As well he looked at the oral health care coverage provided by the Nova Scotia Children's Oral Health Care Program for children under age 15. This in turn allowed us to develop policies surrounding the Sparkle Fund Guidelines and Grant Application form, which is available on the NSDA website. We designed Sparkle Fund rack cards which were distributed to dental offices across the province, and have been promoting Sparkle Fund at all the HRCFAF fund raising events and presentations. We encourage you to visit our new website [www.SparkleFund.ca](http://www.SparkleFund.ca) which is expected to be ready the first of September. Work is also taking place on an awareness campaign targeted towards potential corporate and private donors in the community.

The Sparkle Fund Committee would like to thank the NSDA for organizing a wonderful Gala Dinner and Fundraising Event, and for successfully raising over \$11,000! A huge thank you to Holly Carr for donating one of her unique silk painting that perfectly captured our east coast culture. This piece of amazing artwork was created before our eyes and led to some very exciting bidding at the auction later in the evening! We would also like to thank Scotiabank for holding a raffle draw and raising over \$800. The funds raised at this event allowed us to reach one of our most important strategic goals: establishing the treatment fund.

With money in the bank we were now able to begin promoting the Sparkle Fund in our communities throughout the province. This included making calls and sending e-mails to youth centres, family resource centres, doctor's offices, Dalhousie Dental Clinic, Department of Community Service's Social Workers, Public Health Nurses, and Boys and Girls Club outreach workers. We made presentations to the Halifax Dental Hygienists Association, SchoolsPlus Outreach Workers, School Board Social Workers, IWK Social Workers, and other groups who work with youth. Many of these professionals belong to inter-disciplinary focus groups and were able to share the information about the Sparkle Fund Program with their colleagues. This played a significant role in our ability to quickly spread awareness about this new program. The scope of our work on this project began to emerge, and after approximately four months we started to see significant uptake.

To date we have received 15 grant applications, and have been able to offer treatment to 12 youth across the province from Yarmouth to Glace Bay, and points in between. Our initial Guidelines allowed for \$500 per year per youth, and followed closely the NS Children’s Oral Health Care Program. What we have found after 6 months of providing this oral health care initiative, is that a fund we intended to focus on prevention and education, is instead being directed towards treatment to help alleviate oral pain. These youth have been silently suffering, many with 7-8 cavities and in desperate need of root canals. Transportation was also found to be a barrier to accessing dental care, and a major social determinant of health. The youth were living in kinship homes with grandparents, and other family members, couch surfing or in homeless shelters. SchoolsPlus, a student services program administered by the Department of Education, have been a huge resource in both bringing awareness to the Sparkle Fund as well as helping the youth to seek the dental care they need. In many of the cases the assessments we received were easily \$2,200 and up. The outreach workers have been very instrumental in helping us partner with other charitable organization in the community to cover the cost of the treatment plan. The dentists providing the care have been extremely generous and offered many procedures at a discounted price. As well, we have been able to help a youth living on Income Assistance with a co-pay amount. One of the best outcomes to date is a call we received from an outreach worker, who helped a youth requiring an extensive treatment, with setting up the appointments and transportation. She was now inquiring on his behalf to see if he would qualify for a check- up and cleaning next year. 😊

**Stats for Youth Served  
December 2015-July 2016**

Gender	#Served	Age	# Served	Location	# Served
Male	3	16	3	Amherst	1
Female	9	17	6	Bridgewater	2
Transgender	0	18	1	Dartmouth	3
		19	0	Halifax	3
		20	2	Sydney	1
		21	0	Yarmouth	1
<b>Total</b>	12		12	Glace Bay	1
<b>Average request</b>	\$2,200				

As we move forward with this initiative in the coming year, we have a much better understanding of the severity of the oral health care needs of our young people, and will take steps towards improving our program to address those needs. Our vision is to have an overall positive impact on the quality of life of those we serve. I would like to thank our committee, the NSDA and all our stakeholders across Nova Scotia for helping bridge the opportunity gap and improving access to oral health care for underserved youth in our community. We believe investing in a child’s development is investing in a community’s future!

If you have any question regarding the Sparkle Fund NS please feel free to contact Jane Boyd Landry,  
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