

## Message from the Director

The Offord Centre for Child Studies is named after Dr 'Dan' Offord – a much loved and respected child psychiatrist whose mission in life was to level the playing field for all children in Canada. Dan was a champion for children born into disadvantaged circumstances and through his work sought to improve their opportunities in life. One important example of this is Christie Lake Kids Camp. Dan was the volunteer camp Director for 47 years and created many of the skill development programs aimed at improving the capability of disadvantaged children and youth. Dan died in 2004, leaving enormous sadness at his passing and joy at the good works he left behind.

Although the Offord Centre was renamed in 2002 to honour Dan, core members came together under his leadership in the early 80s when he received funding to conduct the 1983 Ontario Child Health Study (or OCHS). The 1983 OCHS provided estimates of child mental health need in the population, socioeconomic factors influencing the distribution of need, and concerns about the small number of children and youth with need accessing child mental health services. The study drew attention to 'children at risk' in the 0-6 year age group and prompted federal and provincial governments to allocate resources to child and family support programs aimed at strengthening the health and development of these children.

Today the Offord Centre includes twenty-two faculty from psychiatry, paediatrics, nursing, clinical epidemiology, psychology and sociology – all inspired by Dan's vision of creating an equal playing field. It is a collegial, multidisciplinary group whose work falls into a number of themes:

- 1) child mental health and neurodevelopmental disorders;**
- 2) influences on child health and development arising from early experience, families, schools and neighbourhoods;**
- 3) services and interventions for children with mental health needs; and**
- 4) knowledge translation and community connections and partnerships.**

Members of the Offord Centre are committed to understanding and reducing health inequalities among children and youth. We believe that an important opportunity to achieve these objectives lies in conducting research that will inform policies, programs and practices of the institutions critical to our civic society and embedded in our education, health and child and youth service systems.

The Offord Centre is undergoing renewal. A tangible indicator of renewal is the redevelopment of our website and new attempts to engage you in our research. We would like your ideas especially about questions that you think when answered would help level the playing field for our children. Thank you for visiting us.

**Dr. Michael Boyle**

*Director, Offord Centre for Child Studies*