

Board of Directors

Continuing Terms

Cecilia Nisell (Second Year of Second Term)

Cecilia holds a Bachelors of Arts Degrees in Communications and Economics (University of Stockholm, Sweden), a diploma in Food and Nutrition Management (Centennial College) and a Family Supports Certificate (Ryerson University).

Cecilia has been working with diverse families in a variety of community settings for more than 20 years and currently serves as Family Resource Services Manager at Heart Beatz EarlyON Child & Family Centre in Scarborough, Ontario. Cecilia is passionate about her work, serving and helping young families. She is familiar with and especially sensitive to the needs of newcomer families, as she herself arrived in Canada as a young mother, and knows first-hand many of the issues they struggle with.

Cecilia's vision is to make FSIO a household name for all staff working in family support programs across Ontario! Cecilia envisions FSIO as an organization where all family support workers can see the benefits of joining FSIO and the impact it can have as an organization representing their collective interests.

Jane Realmo (Second Year of First Term)

Jane has been a Board Member with FSIO since 2019. Her areas of specialization include child development, family-centered practice, adult education, and contract/case management. She has over ten years of experience working with children and families in a variety of early childhood settings. Jane has had the privilege of experiencing various roles such as Early Interventionist, Community Program Coordinator, Professor of Early Childhood Education, Research Assistant at Ryerson University and as a Registered Early Childhood Educator.

In her current role as an Early Interventionist, Jane supports families and educators to understand child development. Jane coordinates social services for children and families as well as prepares and delivers presentations to families on topics such as children's learning and development, parenting, and accessing resources. She supports educators by providing capacity building workshops to childcare centres on topics that are meaningful and relevant to their needs. She is passionate about her work in supporting children, families and educators and is committed to making a difference in the field.

Jane has a Master of Arts in Early Childhood Studies from Ryerson University where the focus of her thesis was "Understanding How Parenting & Family Literacy Centres Help Families Experiencing Poverty & Immigration". She is currently pursuing a post-graduate certificate in Project Management at Ryerson University and is looking forward to exploring ways to implement new skills in her work.

Chanel Tsang (Second Year of Second Term)

Chanel has worked with children and families in a variety of educational and family support environments after receiving her Hon. B.A. (University of Toronto), Montessori Elementary Teaching Diploma (Toronto Montessori Institute), and then the Family Supports and Community Engagement Award (Ryerson University). Following her years facilitating a Parenting and Family Literacy Centre with the Dufferin Peel Catholic District School Board (DPCDSB), Chanel continues to support families through her children's podcast and teaching child and family mindfulness and yoga, and currently works at the Centre for Child Development, Mental Health, and Policy at the University of Toronto Mississauga.

FSIO has been a leader in family supports for so many years and it is Chanel's hope that FSIO can continue working to connect family support practitioners across the province and beyond and lift up their voices as the field moves forward together in this new context. The impact of the pandemic will undoubtedly impact the wellbeing of children and families, as well as staff, and it will require our combined efforts to continue to support and meet families where they are, especially when that can mean something different day by day, hour by hour. To meet these needs, FSIO will need to continue to innovate in order to make this happen (e.g., ongoing online town halls addressing urgent and emerging issues and challenges in the family supports sector, giving staff space to connect and voice their ideas and share their experiences).

Carrie Youdell (Second Year of First Term)

Carrie is a Registered Early Childhood Educator and graduate of Ryerson University, specializing in family support, adult learning, and health promotion. She currently works with Davenport-Perth Neighbourhood and Community Health Centre as the Manager of the Early Years, Adult Literacy, and Volunteer Services. Her work is rooted in the social determinants of health, principles of family support, infant mental health, and inclusive practice. She is currently enrolled in her Masters of ECE at the University of British Columbia. She has been a member of FSIO for the past five years and is moving into her second year as a board member.

Catherine Moher (Second year of Second Term)

After receiving her B.A. in Early Childhood Education, Catherine accepted a position at the Gerrard Resource Centre at Ryerson University where she worked for 37 years. Catherine has had the privilege of working with hundreds of families and their children in a variety of programs including the GRC's EarlyON Child and Family Centre, Emergency Childcare program, Afterschool program, the Every Child Belongs program where it was always her mission to put the needs of children and families first. Catherine also held the position of Academic Coordinator for the Family Supports Certificate and Course Series with the G. Raymond Chang School of Continuing Education at Ryerson University, where she was able to support the learning and educational needs of numerous family support practitioners locally, nationally and internationally. Her work at the GRC also gave Catherine the opportunity to manage several research projects that supported the work of practitioners working with families and their children.

Along with her work at the Gerrard Resource Centre, Catherine has participated on several boards and has continuously advocated for a strength-based approach to service delivery that enhances the well-being of families and their children. Catherine believes in the power of relationships that we build with our families and children as well as those we build between our partners and colleagues.

Catherine retired from GRC in 2019 and now spends her days caring for her two grandchildren. She has desperately missed the connections that she and her granddaughter, Sadie made at her local EarlyON program during the pandemic. However, it has brought to light the unique role that FSIO can play to strengthen and become the voice of practitioners as they continue their work with families and children in numerous communities across Ontario in very different ways. Catherine has been honoured to hold the position of Co-chair for the past two years.

Standing for Re-election – First Year of Second Term

Barb Brown (Second Term)

Barb has worked in the Family Support field for over 30 years. Her family support experience began in a parent-child cooperative program and continued with Connections Early Years Family Centre where she has held several positions including Drop-In Coordinator, Community Developer, Parent Education Facilitator, Program Manager and currently Executive Director. Barb's educational background includes a degree in Education and a diploma in Early Childhood Education.

Past experiences include being an Ontario Leader in the *Listening to Families: Reframing Services* research project conducted by the School of Early Childhood Education, Ryerson University in partnership with FRP Canada and Family Supports Institute Ontario (FSIO), a member of Council for the College of Early Childhood Educators and part-time instructor in Early Childhood Education at St. Clair College. Most recently, Barb was part of *the Flexible Model Child Care* research project with other partners, funded by Employment and Social Development Canada.

Barb has participated on the FSIO Executive as our Secretary for the past two years. Barb sees the FSIO as the support service for individuals and agencies working in family support in Ontario.

Valerie Kenny (Second Term)

Valerie first came to experience the Family Support approach as a young parent in the throes of a post-partum depression after the birth of her first child in 1978. Such was the transformative experience that she had during her participation in the program over the following two years that a deep and lasting belief in and passion for the work began to take root.

She went on to work in the field in many different capacities including 15 years as a frontline practitioner at St Paul's Parent Child Centre in Toronto and subsequently at the Gerrard Resource Centre in a project focusing on combining family support with community development called The Healthy Child Development Project. Valerie has a B. A. and her Masters in Early Childhood Studies from Ryerson University

The Early Years implementation of 1999 brought another opportunity to work in the field of family support with a focus on early literacy for Macaulay Child Development Centre offering group sessions promoting early literacy activities for parents and caregivers. Later at Macaulay, in 2005 Valerie took on the role of manager of the Family Home Visiting program (Healthy Babies, Healthy Children) supporting a team of women who brought family support into families' homes and also connected them to local community resources. In 2009, she undertook to oversee the implementation of 5 Parenting and Family Literacy Centre for Dufferin Peel Catholic District School Board and also assisted with the implementation of the Full Day Kindergarten Program for the same board. Since 2012 she has had the great pleasure of sharing her belief in family support with students as an instructor in the Theory and Practice of Family Supports for G. Raymond Chang School at Ryerson University.

Valerie became involved in the Metro Association of Family Resource Program in the 1990's serving as co-chair for one term. She has never stopped believing in the power of family support and when the association was considering closing due to a feeling of redundancy when the OEYC network was formed in 2000 she along with other board members convinced the board of the necessity of keeping the voice of family support strong in Ontario. Valerie wholeheartedly believes in the power of family support to enhance the lives of families and would like to see the training and practice extend well beyond EarlyON programs to every sector working with children and families. She is currently Co-chair of the Family Supports Institute Ontario.

M. Terry Kelly (Second Term)

Terry Kelly is a Registered Early Childhood Educator, and a Registered Yoga Therapist. Terry is also mother/daughter/sister/aunt. She currently teaches in the School of Early Childhood Education at Seneca College in Toronto and York Region, and also works/consults in supporting ECEs and family support practitioners in rethinking our work through social justice and land-based lenses.

Terry is also part of the Pedagogists Network of Ontario. She is a registered yoga teacher, specializing in child, family and older adult yoga. Her volunteer work includes many years as a member of FSIO, sitting on committees and planning events, providing family yoga for The 519 EarlyON program, supporting the Afro Women and Youth Foundation, participating in knowledge exchanges with the early learning and care communities in China, Jamaica, Japan, Rwanda, St. Lucia, and Uganda. She is currently involved in projects to promote support for Missing, Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls awareness, and volunteers locally in environmental clean-up and advocacy.

Standing for Election – First Year of Two-Year Term

Marnie Bernstein

Marnie first became involved with the Family Resource Programs and the field of Family Support as a parent participating in programs with her children. Over 24 years ago, Marnie walked through the door at College-Montrose Children's Place with her youngest child who was two weeks old, as her daughter was experiencing her first day of kindergarten across the hall. Marnie spent every day in the program until her son started kindergarten four years later, and continued in the program and as a Board member for five years after that.

In total, Marnie served on the Board of Directors for College-Montrose Children's Place for 9 years, and during that time, she was chair of the Program Committee, ran regular Participants' Meetings, and served on a number of committees where she gained invaluable experience developing policies, reviewing by-laws, supporting volunteers, organizing Public Awareness campaigns, Fundraising Events, and speaking to the press. She was also a member of the BOD during the transition to OEYC for Trinity-Spadina and was part of developing that bid, and in the process sat at numerous Community Riding Tables. Marnie continued to develop her knowledge and education even after securing paid work at the Scarborough Centre OEYC for Family Day Care Services, and obtained a Family Supports Certificate at Ryerson University.

Through these experiences Marnie has learned a great deal about Family Supports, and how to work with partners to build connections and strengthen communities. Presently, she is working in partnership with 4 separate agencies on an initiative to open a Food Bank in the neighbourhood of the Gooch Family Resource Program. Marnie understands first hand that Partnerships and Community building comprise the core of the work that we do in the field of Family Support.

Marnie is a passionate advocate for family support programs. Marnie learned the value of following and applying the Guiding Principles of Family Support, which informs her practice in both her volunteer and professional work. She believes in them, and understands on a very personal level, the impact that they have on the lives of parents, caregivers, and families of all types and circumstances. She believes in them because they speak to her at the level that is most foundational and integral to her both professionally and personally as a parent. The place from which she has always approached her work is as a parent, and she will always be an advocate for supporting and empowering parents and caregivers of young children, the most difficult and simultaneously important job in the world.

Adebola Adefioye

Adebola was born in Nigeria and had her primary education at Subuola Memorial Nursery and Primary School, Ibadan. She did her secondary school education at Federal Government College, Ogbomosho, Nigeria, from 1994-1999. Adebola gained admission into Ekiti State University, Nigeria, to study Banking and Finance in 2002. Due to her family's financial difficulties, her parents could not meet up with the tuition and other financial responsibilities needed at the university, so she eventually dropped out of

university in her second year. She decided to forge ahead by acquiring some entrepreneurial skills and started a small millinery and beaded jewelry business while volunteering a few hours weekly with The Real Woman Foundation and Foundation for Skills Development, Lagos, Nigeria. In these organizations, she assisted in planning and facilitating HIV/AIDS awareness programs, Gender-Equality programs and Vocational Skills programs for women and girls. While Adebola's financial challenges remained, she derived tremendous joy in supporting people in her community. After a year of volunteering, The Real Woman Foundation offered Adebola a paid position as the 'For Girls Only' program coordinator. She worked in this position for four years, facilitating empowerment programs for young girls across Lagos State, Nigeria.

Adebola moved to Canada with her husband and two young children in 2016. She had another child shortly after arriving in Canada. As a newcomer, her family experienced racial discrimination, which led to the decision to start the Afro Women and Youth Foundation. Adebola is very passionate about advocating and creating inclusive spaces for children and families. While doing her ECE program at Seneca College, she worked part-time at Seneca Lab School. Upon graduating from the ECE program with Honours in 2018, she got another job as an Educational Assistant with the City of Toronto Early Learning and Child Care.

She recently completed the Women's Leadership in Conflict Transformation, Peace Building and Community Development course at Coady Institute, St Xavier University. She is also a Certified Leadership Speaker, Coach and Trainer with the John Maxwell Team. Adebola is now in her 7th semester of the Bachelor of Child Development program at Seneca College.

At Seneca, Adebola has been an enormous asset to her peers at the college as a tutor, mentor, and advocate for Black representation and retention in Seneca's ECE program. She naturally seeks to add value, and with this spirit, she will be a great addition to FSIO. She dreams of seeing many child and family programs in Ontario become inclusive and safe for all families, and creating leadership opportunities for minority educators to enrich program planning and delivery.

Kim Couch

Kim is the Executive Director at Communities Together for Children, EarlyON Child and Family Centre in Thunder Bay. Kim began working for this organization over 16 years ago in the evening drop-in programs. Over the years she has had the opportunity to work alongside many children, families and colleagues and feels that she has been on an amazing journey of learning. She has had the opportunity to work directly in programs with families and later as the coordinator for the EarlyON programs prior to becoming the Executive Director. It's been very enlightening to be a part of various committees in her community and she values the relationships and work she has done with others to make a difference in the lives of children and families.

Kim is excited to become a member of Family Support Institute Ontario's Board of Directors as she recognizes that we can do so much more for so many when we work together. Kim thinks this will be a great opportunity to advocate for the work that we do to support families in our community. The Vision, Mission and Values of Family Support Institute Ontario resonate with Kim. Connecting with colleagues, collaborating, supporting families and making a difference by being involved in the development of new policies, procedures and practices intrigues Kim.

Margaret Hajdinjak

For the past 30 years, Margaret has worked in the field of Early Childhood Education starting as an ECE at Confederation College and proceeding to Coordinator of Family Resource Programs, now called EarlyON Child and Family Centres. She taught at the college level in the Early Childhood Programs teaching both virtually and in class. Margaret worked at the college for 25 years and enjoyed every minute of it, but she wanted to do more so when she retired so she went to work full-time for another program. Margaret has worked for Our Kids Count (OKC) which is a PHAC program, CPNP and CAPC program since 2001, starting part-time while she was still working at the college. Upon retirement from the college she went to work full-time at OKC as the Program Manager where she supports 4 sites and 10 plus staff. Margaret has been an advocate for families of young children during this time, providing supports that they have identified as needing and has worked in partnership with many other community agencies to provide these supports.

Margaret is also a Roots of Empathy Instructor, Mentor and Trainer in Thunder Bay. She has delivered the program for over 15 years and has had opportunities to travel to Ireland and New Castle for 3 years to train international instructors and mentor them from afar. She believes in the value of this program and the empathy the program instills in the young children that receive the program. Her great niece and nephew and grandson have been Roots of Empathy babies.

Margaret also volunteers at the local hospital as the Patient Family Advisor. In this role, she helps support decisions and directives that involve Mental Health policy at the hospital. She has been a regular volunteer for over 10 years. Margaret's interest in this work was to help change the stigma around mental health and suicide after losing her eldest son to suicide at the age of 26 when he took his life to end his pain. Margaret created a local walk called *Out of the Darkness* for suicide awareness and spearheaded this walk for 9 years. She also volunteers at the local CMHA with a team of her son's friends racing in the Dragon Boat race. The One in a Million dragon boat team raised over \$40,000.00 in her son's memory to support local programs in Thunder Bay.

Margaret's interests have always been about supporting families and children in her community and seeing the strengths that families have and helping them become aware of them, providing mentoring and support in their parenting role and mentoring students from college and universities so that they really understand families.

Margaret is a grandmother of 4-year-old Jax who gives her hope and joy each day. Margaret has one surviving son, Adam whom she is immensely proud and a large extended family with many nieces and nephews.

Lisa Steadwell

Lisa is a graduate of Early Childhood Education and the Research Teacher program and has been working in the field 15+ years with indigenous children, youth and families. Currently, Lisa is the Coordinator for the EarlyON Child and Family Centre as well as an advocate in the SPOCK program. Lisa has always had a passion for helping marginalized families and supporting them to meet their needs.

Lisa is a co-parent to three children, aged 18, 14 and 5 years. Her youngest is on the Autism Spectrum which has opened up a new interest in both her personal and professional life. Lisa is committed to the pursuit of knowledge and training to continue to expand her scope of practice and experience.

Susan Quaiff

Susan has been working in the early childhood education field formally for 30 years. In 1996, Susan graduated from the Early Childhood Education program at Loyalist College. Susan has worked at the HUB in Prince Edward County for 29 years. Throughout her career, Susan has held many positions at the HUB but most exciting was in 2016 she interviewed and became the Executive Director. Susan has worked in licensed child care, home child care, EarlyON and Special Needs. Families often have complex needs and she enjoys assisting them to get the services that they need. The programs at the HUB are driven by parents/guardians in their rural community where the HUB provides the services that meet these needs.

Susan was also an elected member of the College of ECE and held a position for two terms from 2012 to 2016. Susan currently sits on the roster for discipline hearings at the College of ECE. She has also held volunteer positions on the council for health, community fundraising committees and is a member of many networks.

Vandana Ananth

Vandana has been in the field of early years for 15 years working with children, youth and families' in the areas of program development and project management in community groups in the municipal sector. Currently, Vandana's is the Children's Service Representative with York Region, where she is working with families to support them through childcare fee subsidy process and connect them to other resources in the community.

Born and raised in New Delhi, India, Vandana completed her undergraduate degree in Science, Vandana came to Canada and started a family in York Region. Inspired to work with children and families in Ontario, she obtained credentials as a RECE, her Resource Teacher Certification and Adult Education. Vandana was featured for her commitment to working with families in the City of Toronto's: Toronto Works Here Campaign in 2013. She has been very interested in educating family and staff in wellness, resource awareness and self-advocacy. She is involved in increasing diversity in Integrated Children's Services in York Region and has a management interest in anti-racist policy, procedure and practice. Vandana will continue to promote equity, education, advocacy and meet the needs of children and families in York Region. As a board member Vandana will commit to the vision and work required