



iSisters connects women in need with technology through mentoring.

Our mission:

To provide access to technology; to develop and deliver technology mentoring programs; and to enhance career opportunities through technological awareness.

Our vision:

iSisters Technology Mentoring, leader in technology learning and development, helps empower women in need to live better lives, create brighter futures and build stronger communities.

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Graduates Honoured at Immigrant Women Services Ottawa

By Fran Harding

"Be strong, be patient, be courageous", was the advice given to the level one graduates of the most recent iSisters' course at Immigrant Women Services Ottawa by Viktoria Volkova, an iSisters' teacher and recent arrival from St. Petersburg, Russia.



The 30 women from iSisters training Levels One through Three were honoured at a ceremony recognizing their achievements in learning to use computers. They had come a long way from their initial fear of the equipment to becoming accomplished users who could

prepare resumes, manage spreadsheets, and safely use email and other internet-based programs.

Their pride and happiness were reflected in wide smiles and friendly supportive comments to their fellow students. Their satisfaction with the course and gratitude to iSisters was apparent. "Here it's our house; here it's our school; here it's our new life", enthused a Spanish/English-speaking graduate, referring to the remarkably successful partnership iSisters and IWSO have forged.

Lucya Spencer, Executive Director of IWSO, reflected on the growth of the computer training program and recalled one of the first students. "She looked anxiously under the desk and along the walls looking for holes, because that was where she assumed the



Zahide Yilbas, iSisters Program Manager and a proud student

mouse would be. She later told me how proud she was to know how to use a mouse".

The graduates frequently juggle language training, iSisters courses, jobs, and responsibilities for families. It is a very busy life for these students but the combination of iSisters training, job search support and counselling at IWSO have helped hundreds of newcomers become proud, contributing members of their community.

Spotlight on iSisters' founder and board member Cathy Lewis



By Louise Bradford

When people ask Cathy Lewis if she has kids, she replies with a beaming smile, "Yes, I have a baby and her name is iSisters."

From teen moms to women struggling with abuse or addiction to new Canadians and Inuit women, helping women thrive and succeed in our community is Cathy's passion.

This year, Cathy has received two distinguished recognitions for her achievements with iSisters, her other volunteer work and her contributions to the corporate world. She's been named one of Ottawa Business Journal's Top Forty under 40 and in April received a Leading Women/Leading

Girls, Building Communities Award from local MPP Yasir Naqvi.

"What's really ironic," she explains, "is in finding ways to support women and promote success through technology, I was learning new skills, too." Ask her about the various roles she's played in iSisters, and she's done it all, teaching herself from the ground up as teacher, web master, tech supporter, governance expert, communications and patent specialist, and of course, e-learning guru.

"Volunteering is a compulsion for me. It gives me purpose and that purpose brings me happiness." Cathy is living proof that when it comes to giving

back to the community, we all benefit.

"If you live, work and benefit from your community, there is a roll for you to play to give back. We have enough housing, food and resources for everyone, we just need people with a little time, energy and passion to work creatively with organizations in place to make things happen."

Meanwhile, Cathy's baby is growing up. This June iSisters celebrates its 1000th graduate, and next year it will celebrate its 10th anniversary. Cathy has big plans for iSisters for the next 10 years and that's a very good thing.

STUDENT FEEDBACK

My name is Linda. I took part of the level 2 computer course in September and October. The course was useful because it taught me computer skills in an organized, systematic way. The teacher, Zahide, was very patient, and also showed us ways that we can use a computer in creative ways (e.g. using colour and pictures).

It opened many many locked doors in front of me. I'm getting now a new job and after my interview they gave me the job because I finished level 1 and 2 and attending level 3 now... So we are very lucky to be here and I'm coming to level 3 class direct after finishing my night shift and without having any sleep because I don't want to miss any minute of my class (me level 3 computer class). Thank you very much for providing us with this wonderful opportunity. Thanks again, Sarah

Before taking computer classes with IWSO and iSisters, I was always lost when I wanted to use the computer, however, after 2 courses (level 1 and level 2) I feel very comfortable using computers. I think that the teacher I had before in level 1 and the one I have now in level 2 have played an important role in my computer learning process. My teacher Zahide has taught me a lot and I feel very comfortable with her because she is very knowledgeable and dedicated. Her work is really admirable to me. Morea

Executive Director's Report

By Jolynn Sommervill

I was warmly welcomed into the iSisters family in April as the new Executive Director. In that time, I have had the privilege of meeting many members of this remarkable community including of course, the women whom we serve.

I have attended graduation ceremonies at Cornerstone and Immigrant Women Services Ottawa (IWSO) where we currently run programs, as well as with previous partner centres at Youville and St. Mary's Home. I have witnessed over sixty women receive recognition for their accomplishments.

At these graduations, I was frequently taken aside by students who wanted to tell me about the importance that the iSisters program had had

on their lives. They talked about the confidence they had gained in just a few short weeks, or their delight in being able to share and demonstrate their new found technology skills with their children.

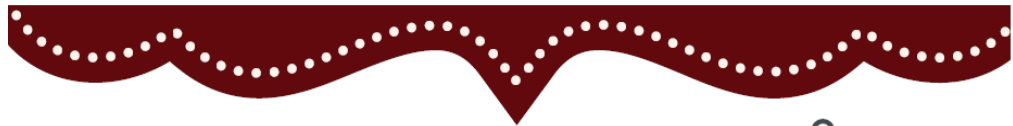
My meetings with the staff highlighted what the students were already telling me. In the words of Sue Garvey, the Executive Director at Cornerstone, "iSisters technology programs are one of the most effective ways to help women to escape cycles of poverty, homelessness and isolation. Invariably the women gain confidence to move into more learning opportunities leading to employment and independence".

In just a few short weeks, I too have gained confidence on many levels; in iSisters programs, in our phenomenal program manager and teacher, Zahide Yilbas and with our board of directors. I am proud to be part of this community and look forward to contributing to its future growth and continued success.



iSisters' Executive Director
Jolynn Sommervill

Successful Yoga at Work Fundraiser Extended Through 2010



elationcentre
educate.empower.enrich.



By Paula Pyne

A group of certified and inspiring Yoga teachers, from Elation Centre have designed a program aimed at improving physical and mental well being in the workplace in support of – iSisters Technology Mentoring.

Yoga at Work has been in the community for only a couple of months now and has raised over \$1800 dollars! And, we've got some great news.

The program is being extended and will be offered all year. Over 90 people have participated so far and the feedback has been outstanding. Participants leave feeling refreshed and revitalized, taking away a few tools and techniques like healthy breathing, meditative techniques and yoga postures that can be incorporated back at their desk. The health benefits are amazing and so easy to implement. Let Yoga at work show you how!

Coordinate a session at your office today! Contact ppyne@isisters.org for further information.

Thank you for your generous support and making Yoga at Work a great success in your workplace: Entrepreneurial Moms, NRC, Health Canada, Transport Canada, Carp West Health Group, Yoga at the Park, Kiwanis Club of Bytown, The Diner and PCI Geomatics.

www.elationcentre.com

iSisters Paints the Town During National Volunteer Week

By Andrea Melvin

During National Volunteer Week (April 19-25) volunteers with iSisters unleashed their creativity at a "colourful" evening of pottery painting at the Mud Oven in Ottawa.



iSisters' volunteers may come from all ages and walks of life but share a key quality – a passion for making a difference in their community. They were honoured for the vital role they play with the organization by sharing their time and expertise in teaching, event planning, fundraising, marketing and as members of the iSisters' Board of Directors. As their vibrant and artistic pottery pieces demonstrated, their enthusiasm for their work continues to shine. Thank you volunteers!

To learn more about volunteering with iSisters please contact Diana Vidal at diluvica@gmail.com

iSisters Always Moving Forward

By Pat den Boer and Paula Pyne

Who ever said volunteer efforts are decreasing? At least that's not what we saw earlier this month when the iSisters Board of Directors met on a Sunday to take stock and reflect on its future plans.

Armed with the exceptional know-how of our facilitator, Debi Zaret, of Capacity Building Consulting, the Board assembled for an annual retreat to build on the knowledge, tools and best practices on what it takes to be a strong board and what it requires to lead iSisters into the next decade.

Strong leadership in the volunteer sector is vital for successful operations and the team at iSisters found itself learning fresh perspectives to increase the overall effectiveness of how it supports our new Executive Director, Jolynn Sommervill, staff in the classroom, and discussions in the board room.

A continuous reminder throughout the day was our reason for existing: passionate people who care about our communities and the women we serve in our programs. Female education is a key source of support for long-term economic growth. It has been linked to higher productivity; higher returns to investment and a more favourable demographic structure (Goldman Sachs, 2008). More than ever before, iSisters' services are needed.

A big thank you to Debi Zaret, and all of the Board Members for a productive and informative day.

Our Team

Board Chair, Pat den Boer
Volunteer Manager, Diana Vidal
Director, Melissa Peneycad
Director, Karen Soloman

Treasurer, Carolyn Ho
Secretary, Linda Milton-Perreault
Director HR, Cindy Newell
Founder and Director, Cathy Lewis

Director, Paula Pyne
Director, Arlene Hall
Director, Eileen Dooley

Executive Director, Jolynn Sommervill
Program Manager, Zahide Yilbas

Newsletter team: Fran Harding, Paula Pyne, Andrea Melvin, Louise Bradford and Cathy Lewis

Contact Us

Web: www.iSisters.org Mail: 167 Frank St. Ottawa, ON K2P 0X4 Phone: 613.565.7337 Email: info@isisters.org

Upcoming Events!

Tim Horton's Ottawa Dragon Boat Festival, June 18-20th
iSisters is volunteering at the 2010 Ottawa Dragon Boat Festival www.dragonboat.net

B2B Volleyball Tournament, Sunday, June 20th
www.Begin2Believe.com

Can't Stop the Serenity Fundraiser, Sunday, June 27th
iSisters has been chosen as the charity of choice for this unique event. Stop the Serenity at the Mayfair Cinema.

Visit [the iSisters events page](http://www.isisters.org/news/eventspage.html) for updates and more information: www.isisters.org/news/eventspage.html

Happy Birthday! iSisters Turns 10 in 2011

Later this fall, the team at iSisters will ramp up the excitement to celebrate a milestone 10th anniversary. The organization began with very humble roots, but it's grown to serve more than 1000 women at risk in the Ottawa community. We're very proud of the work that iSisters has accomplished and how we have positively changed the lives of so many women who would not have had the opportunity to learn technology skills. We want to share our excitement with our partners, our generous funders and most of all you – our iSisters' family and friends. Stay tuned for more news.

How Can you Help?

Please share this newsletter, tell others about iSisters.

Volunteer at iSisters. Email info@isisters.org or visit our website for information.

Allocate your United Way donations to iSisters by including our charitable number and name on your pledge form.

Secure a matching gift. Many employers will match your donation to a registered charity of your choice.

Donate lightly used magazines and cookbooks. Our learners love to read and share recipes.

Come out to our events.

Support our supporters like Elation Centre www.elationcentre.com