



Annual General Meeting Report

iSisters connects women in need with technology through mentoring.

Our mission:

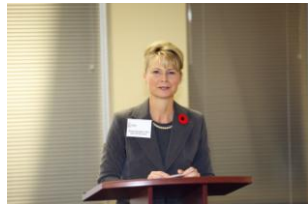
To provide access to technology; to develop and deliver technology mentoring programs; and to enhance career opportunities through technological awareness.

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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Pat den Boer, Chair of the Board of Directors

A big thank-you to all who came out to our Annual General Meeting on November 2, 2010 at the United Way Ottawa's headquarters on Coventry Road. We had over thirty friends, volunteers, sponsors, partners, students and stakeholders join us to celebrate our accomplishments and learn of our goals and objectives for the year ahead.

The beautiful space, generously donated by the United Way Ottawa offered us a perfect venue to showcase our achievements this past year including: a presentation by our e-learning, iTeachology team, the premiere screening of our iSisters video, news on our Asset Map, a moving testimonial from a staff member, Alison Telford from Cornerstone Women's Centre as well as our annual appreciation awards for our remarkable volunteers, including a surprise United Way Community Builder Award!



Alison Telford (Left) from Cornerstone Women's Centre and Zahide Yilbas (Right) iSisters Program Manager

At the event, our e-learning team demonstrated the newest version of our web-based learning tool, iTeachology. Funding from Inukshuk Wireless has permitted us to create a more dynamic, interactive and flexible Web 2.0 system that will allow for more effective learning and can be easily customized by our instructors without the need for programmers or IT support.

In addition, we were privileged to witness the premiere screening of our iSisters video which is now viewable on our homepage www.iSisters.org. The video includes several interviews of our learners and staff from our partner centres and speaks of the tremendous value and success of the iSisters program. Please watch it! We are very thankful to Graham Law and Associates who produced the video. www.glaw.com



Executive Director, Jolynn Sommerville reported on the progress of our Asset Map project which is working to connect our learners to their community through the generous support from the Leacross Foundation. Chair of our Board, Patricia den Boer outlined the strategic priorities that the Board of Directors has identified for the year ahead and acknowledged the contributions of our outgoing directors and welcomed in our newest members, Arlene Hall, Melissa Pennycad and Joanne Lincoln.

Our Volunteer of the Year award went to Laura Westley. This past year, Laura succeeded in ensuring the computer lab at Cornerstone Women's Centre would remain open at night so our students could practice and build on the skills they'd learned during the day. Thank-you Laura!



Jolynn Sommerville, Executive Director presents Laura Westley with the Volunteer of the Year Award

The wonderful Karen Soloman received our certificate for the five years of service she's devoted as Director of Community Relations on our Board of Directors. Cindy Newell, our much admired Human Resources Director stepped down from the board this year and was awarded our Board of Directors Service Award. We will miss you Cindy!

The highlight of the evening was the surprised look on the face of our volunteer project manager, Tim Birch-Jones when he was awarded the United Way Community Builder of the Year Award for the tremendous contribution he has made on our iTeachology project.

We would like to extend our thanks to the volunteers who helped us out prior to and during the event and to our excellent MC and Volunteer Manager, Diana Vidal. We look forward to the year ahead!

iTeachnology on Moodle

By John Seck, President, BlackCherry Digital Media Inc.

BlackCherry was approached by iSisters volunteer and Project Manager Tim Birch-Jones in the summer of 2010 to help with updating and expanding the iTeachnology™, Online Employability and Technology Training for Women. The goals of the project were relatively straightforward. Rework the existing program to give it a clean contemporary Web 2.0 design and create a number of interactive activities. However, as with any technology project, the devil is in the details, or to be more accurate, the devil is in the machine.

After surveying the current state of learning management systems our team decided on Moodle (moodle.org). Moodle seemed like an obvious choice. It's an open-source, freely available Learning Management System (LMS), that has many users and a large support

community worldwide. As the system was explored further however, our team ran into some limitations. The main problem was the navigation system was less than user-friendly.

At this point BlackCherry's team had no choice but to rework the core Moodle system. While this posed a serious challenge from the programming standpoint the results were worth the effort. iSisters now has what could arguably be described as the most advanced and user friendly Moodle system in the world.

The interactive activities presented another challenge. Created entirely in Adobe FLASH, these learning activities required close collaboration between BlackCherry and the iSister's team, especially Instructional Designer Louisa Lambregts. To ensure the interactive activities would resonate well with students, Zahide Yilbas also reviewed the content and

design. The result of these collaborations is focussed, engaging, interactive and user-friendly content that will have value for years to come.



John Seck, President, BlackCherry Digital Media Inc.

BlackCherry Digital Media Inc. (blackcherrydm.com) is an interactive production studio creating the next generation of online and mobile learning and entertainment products. For an example of BlackCherry's game based learning approaches see www.pathoftheelders.com.

Yoga at Work Still Going Strong To Raise Funds For iSisters Programs!

By Paula Pyne

This year, Elation Centre Ottawa has taken Yoga at Work to offices in the greater Ottawa area to do hour-long sessions with clients, with all proceeds going to iSisters Technology.

"By the end of the day we often end up with our shoulders wrapped up around our ears, holding our breath and getting a crick in our neck from being at our desks," says Sylvie Gouin, a founder of the Elation Centre. "Our goal is to get people to be aware of their body, aware of their posture and be conscious that we don't need to be in a panic to be productive.

Knowing when to take breaks and how to sit properly go a long way towards reducing workplace injury."

Gouin and her associates have been to more than a dozen workplaces so far, raising hundreds of dollars for iSisters Technology Mentoring.

Among Gouin's clients is Kathy McBride, a physician at West Carleton Family Health Team in Carp, Ont., which is just outside of Ottawa. McBride says the session at her workplace was a helpful reminder to her staff to stretch – even during the most hectic days – since it will help

keep them well-rested and better able to care for patients. "Whenever I tell people to exercise six or seven days a week, the excuse I get is 'I'm too busy, I'm too busy'" McBride says. "But as the mother of two small children, I know that if you want your kids to grow up and be healthy, you have to be a model."

Thank you for your generous support and for making Yoga at Work a great success in your workplace this year.

For more information or to book a Yoga at Work session please contact Paula Pyne at paula.pyne@gmail.com.

Technology and Beyond: Connecting our Learners to Their Community

By Fran Harding

Providing women in need with access to computers and training in their use is the heart and soul of iSisters. Hundreds of women have gained these 21st century essential skills through our courses in word processing, power point, excel and the safe use of the internet.

These fundamental tools help empower women to improve their quality of life and strengthen their chances for greater economic independence.

iSisters is currently looking to enrich this training program by helping the women connect with the multitude of resources in the community.

Through the generous support of Roslyn Bern and the Leacross Foundation, we are piloting an "Asset Map" for use by our students. The Asset Map has two dimensions: first, the assets of the students, which involves identifying their personal experiences, talents, skills and interests and second, a comprehensive database of the rich resources of the

community. These community assets include services provided by government organizations, schools, libraries, non-profit groups, volunteer bodies and a host of other community organizations the learners can access or contribute to.

By learning to use this internet-based map our students can find such things as job or volunteer opportunities, language training, educational offerings, social activities, support groups and the like.

If the pilot project with the Immigrant Women Services Organization is successful in connecting the students with the community resources, it will be followed up with a similar trial with our partner, Cornerstone Housing for Women.

Eventually, we hope to include an introduction to this mapping process as an element in the iSisters' curriculum.

iSisters' Stalwart Named Community Builder

By Fran Harding

The name of another long-time iSisters' volunteer is being added to the *Wall of Inspiration* at Ottawa's City Hall.



Award being presented to Tim by United Way volunteer, Sarah Onyango

Tim Birch-Jones, who has contributed countless hours to iSisters over the past five years, was selected as a "Community Builder" by the United Way. Tim was presented with the award at the iSisters Annual General Meeting on November 2nd.

While on the iSisters' Board of Directors, Tim provided his expertise in project management, process implementation, capacity building, and most recently, leading the redevelopment of the award-winning iTechnology (TM) program.

This recent upgrade is a major step in providing a sustainable program for iSisters' partners and will allow our learners to work independently online with content specifically designed to meet their needs.

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.

Have a fundraising or grant development idea? Contact Jolynn Sommerville at jommervill@isisters.org.

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.

Book a Yoga at Work session at your place of work. Contact Paula at paula.pyne@gmail.com

Contact Us

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