

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

International Day of Families ~ May 15

by Lori Stryker

Cultures around the world view the family as the basic unit of all societies. As a reminder, we are encouraged to celebrate May 15th as the *International Day of Families*, as decreed by the United Nations.

The United Nations has recognized since 1994 that we need to respect diverse forms of families, protect the basic rights of all family members, including women and children, and promote equality and equity between men and women. The 2006 theme is most fitting – “Changing Families: Challenges and Opportunities”.

It seems that the family is under attack. In many places worldwide, this very basic unit and its members face the challenges of indignity, degradation, poverty, exploitation and other human rights violations. In Canada, the family is hardly a protected institution; it is continually weakened by domestic violence, pressures and strains by increased economic and market demands, unemployment, obesity, illness, disease and other problematic issues that make the family increasingly vulnerable.

At a time when the family may be at the apex of crisis, has the need for a professional, exclusively trained and dedicated to the health and well-being of families, been dismissed as a cultural artifact? Surely not!

Home Economists and Family Studies Educators uphold high professional standards so that they may assist families and individuals to achieve and maintain a desirable quality of life. Home Economics classes faded slightly from the radar as the movement to hi-tech and out-of-home experiences became the trend. But our frenetic lifestyles crave the return of home-cooked meals and the embrace of family at the end of a day.

The word “home” offends some and conjures images of oppression, ignorance and inequality. But where should we look forward to going at the end of a day’s work or study? Where should we spend time with our families? And where do we choose to invest most of our earned income? The notion that the skills needed to achieve a healthy home and happy family is inherent in all and not worthy of academic and professional study is clearly contradicted by the growing angst and problems evident in our homes every day.

Can you identify the courses in school that teach life skills, parenting, healthy eating and lifestyles, housing, family issues, human growth and development? They’re all in the Family Studies program. Family Study Educators, many of whom are Home Economists, teach children how to understand and respond to the problems facing families in a rapidly changing world. This academic discipline, often dismissed as unimportant, highlights the importance of family, brings family issues to the fore, and promotes knowledge to benefit the family in all areas.

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Food and Nutritional Sciences, Personal Life Management, and Living and Working with Children are important choices on your child's option sheet. In fact, these Family Studies classes have never been more important.

The call should be to entice back Home Economics by expanding Family Studies Departments in secondary schools and reviving the Home Economics programs in our elementary schools.

When we are physically ill, we seek medical attention. But where do we go when the family needs help and its members need crucial skills to move forward in our society? We must equip and empower families to prosper and to adapt to an ever-changing world. We must value home and family life and consider the social cost of ignoring it.

The Ontario Family Studies Educators, Ontario Professional Home Economists and Ontario Home Economists in Business are a dedicated alliance of professionals helping families thrive and will be among those helping the United Nations celebrate the *International Day of Families* on May 15.

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Ontario Home Economics Association (OHEA), a self-regulated body of Professional Home Economists, promotes high professional standards among its members so that they may assist families and individuals to achieve and maintain a desirable quality of life.

Ontario Family Studies/Home Economics Educators Association (OFSHEEA) is the subject association for Family Studies Educators in Ontario. Its ultimate goal is to strengthen the family by facilitating the professional development and personal growth of educators to promote Family Studies programs in Ontario.

Ontario Home Economists in Business (OHEIB) is a group of professionals working in diverse areas such as marketing, advertising, public relations, media (print, radio and television), food styling, consumer relations, product testing, teaching freelance or consulting services. Its purpose is professional development, networking and communication among its members.

Ontario Family Studies Leadership Council (OFSLC) is composed of representatives of boards of education throughout the province of Ontario. Its purpose is to assist school board staff with the implementation of the family studies/social science curriculum and to provide a forum where issues that impact on family studies programming may be investigated, analyzed and appropriate action initiated.