

An association to help build enduring relationships

PAUL WALDIE - From Saturday's Globe and Mail Last updated Friday, Nov. 12, 2010 4:33PM EST



Susan Schumacher

The Donors: Susan and John Schumacher

The Gift: Creating the Attachment **Association** of Canada

The Reason: To provide resources and support for families dealing with attachment disorder

When Susan and John Schumacher adopted a three-year-old boy from Russia in 2000, the transition wasn't easy.

Their son had difficulty relating to other family members, which included three other children, and the couple spent months looking for help. They finally discovered the problem was attachment disorder and after following a series of therapeutic tips they found online, the family noticed dramatic improvements. Today, their son is an award-winning student with a bright future.

The experience prompted Ms. Schumacher to try to help other families in a similar situation. "There are organizations in the U.S. but there wasn't a comparable one in Canada," she said from the family's home in Toronto.

Attachment disorder is a condition that develops in infancy and leads people to have difficulties forming intimate, trusting and enduring relationships. While the most severe cases are found in orphans and children in foster care, Ms. Schumacher says many other children can have milder forms.

"It has ramifications for all sorts of relationships; your peer relationships growing up, your ability to settle with a partner and your ability to raise children and have an enduring relationship," she said.

Last year the couple formed the Attachment Association of Canada, a registered charity that provides information about the condition and a list of Canadian therapists (www.attachmentcan.ca). Next month they are sponsoring a workshop in Toronto with Daniel Hughes, a leading U.S. expert. The Dec. 7-10 workshop includes sessions for parents, teachers and clinicians. They're also planning another conference next spring and they've started support groups for parents. All of the financing has come from the family's private foundation.

Ms. Schumacher said she hopes to make "this journey not so difficult" for families and to ensure there are far more resources available to parents than there were 10 year ago.

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