

Alcohol Babies Anonymous
St Catharines, ON
May 2009 – April 2010 Annual Report

The year 2009-2010 was one of growth and learning for Alcohol Babies Anonymous. In the local Niagara regional community, steps were taken to provide education and support on FASD to the local residents and other interested parties.

Two presentations were given to local organizations, one to a Seventh Day Adventist church in St. Catharines, which had located our organization through an internet search, and one to the Niagara Child and Youth Services (NCYS), in Thorold, outlining the reality of prenatal drinking damage and describing the services our organization offers. A PowerPoint version of the presentation was created and is being edited for potential wider use. At a meeting with a manager Kevin Rawlings at NCYS, the possibility of funding for a respite care course for caregivers of pre-natally impaired individuals, was explored.

We interacted with the Mayor's office in St. Catharines to request the posting of warning posters at the Niagara Grape and Wine festival in the fall of 2009. Peter Secord, who is in charge of the city's connection with the festival, accomplished this posting, after our own initial efforts with festival organizers were met with deaf ears.

A meeting was also held with Dean Allison, Grimsby-Lincoln MP, about amendments to [Sandy's Law](#) which would more successfully communicate the alcohol-free-pregnancy message. We also have been in touch with Ernie Parsons, retired MP from Orangeville and author of "Sandy's Law", to explore avenues for legislation.

The "Sandy's Law" posters, which warn of the dangers of prenatal drinking, have become the focus of one of our main projects in 2010. We are approaching licensed establishments and asking permission to place the posters on ladies' washroom walls, irrespective of whether the postings have already been carried out in other locations within the establishments. This is to address the fact that many of the legally-mandated posters are completely unseen by the public. In anticipation of FASD Day2010, we hope to cover at least one municipality in the region completely, in addition to encouraging other regional groups to do the same.

After extensive consultation and discussion, we re-designed our "alcohol-free-pregnancy" maternity T-shirts, purchased 100 new shirts and began their distribution. We entered into a partnership with the Niagara Region Public Health services, in which a promotional postcard for the T-shirts will be included in every pre-pregnancy packet provided upon request at physician's offices. This partnership promises to extend the advertising for the shirts significantly, given that upwards of a thousand of the pre-pregnancy packages are given out by the department annually.

We also continued to conduct monthly support meetings for persons touched by FASD. Depending on the needs expressed, appropriate advocacy and information are identified and supplied. In one case this year, a senior person obtained tax information to assist her

adult son, who has been employed for many years while suffering the limitations of FASD. In conjunction with Margaret Rohan, of the Grimsby Lincoln Community Living, a package of tax credit information, (the Disability Benefit Resource Kit), was made available, which could save this individual hundreds of dollars yearly.

Alcohol Babies Anonymous joined the working group of the “FASD Task Force in Niagara” last year. We have been represented at almost all of the quarterly meetings and have designed and contributed a [*Directory of FASD Resources in Niagara*](#) to the group. This directory has been accepted for electronic publication by a sub-committee within the task force.

Our members continued to write letters to editors of local newspapers. “[Food, Wine, and Alcohol-damaged Babies](#)”, was published in the St. Catharines Standard on January 26, 2010.

In addition to these regional efforts and initiatives, our organization reached out geographically far beyond the Niagara area. One of our board members was interviewed by prison chaplain David Schuringa in Michigan on September 20, 2009, and the resulting broadcast, titled “[What Happens When Mommy Drinks](#)”, aired on a radio station there, as well as posted on that ministry’s website, www.crossroadbible.org/MP3/WebRadioBroadcast.htm.

A strong response was also received from an article titled “[An Invisible Disability](#)” published by an international denominational magazine with a circulation of 40,000 ([The Banner](#), February 2010; pp. 38-40), alerting readers to the dangers of prenatal drinking. Reactions were received from individuals interested in the possible the risks and persons who had been in contact with prenatally impaired children, and who had just realized that the behaviours they were observing were in fact FASD.

Lastly, thanks to a grant from the Niagara Community Foundation and a contribution of expertise from *iCatcher Web Design*, we had our updated website translated into Spanish and French. This makes the site usable by many millions of people who would have been unable to read it previously. (We plan to have the site registered on search engines more extensively now that it is available in three languages.)

Many other plans and possibilities are under consideration, and promise that our upcoming fiscal year will be a busy and productive one.