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**Child Welfare Agencies Amalgamate**

Barrie- As of April 1, 2015 Simcoe Muskoka Child, Youth and Family Services (SMCYFS) will become the only child protection agency across Simcoe and Muskoka, replacing Simcoe Children’s Aid and Family, Youth and Child Services of Muskoka.

Susan Carmichael, will lead the new organization as the Executive Director; she has been the ED at Simcoe for the past four years.

The only changes that will occur on April 1 will be the new name and the governing Board of Directors, in every other respect things will remain business as usual. The contact information and office locations will remain the same, the staff will remain the same, the foster parents will remain the same, the unions will remain the same and the service will remain consistent as well.

Muskoka is also an integrated agency providing children’s mental health and youth justice services in Muskoka, these services will remain in place in that area.

The work of actively bringing the child protection services together will begin after April 1 and will be a methodical and careful process guided by stakeholder needs, best practice and with a strong infrastructure.

The amalgamation was initiated when The Commission to Promote Sustainable Child Welfare reviewed the entire sector and made recommendations for change. “Muskoka, on its own was not sustainable but I believe that joining the two agencies will provide strengthened services to this region across both jurisdictions” said Ms. Carmichael.

The new board of directors will complete a Strategic Plan for SMCYFS after which a full rebranding will take place.

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