

**On Saturday November 16, 2002 Mei Chen, a former youth at PARC now completing her last year at Law School at Queen's University was asked to speak at the "Teddy Bear Affair", a fundraising dinner organized by the Children's Aid Society Foundation.**

When I first began thinking about what I would say tonight I first thought of the theme in the video- Here I Am –but I couldn't get any where with that because I couldn't help but think; how mundane, how ordinary.

Then I thought about the role that the Children's Aid Society and the Children's Aid Foundation has played in my life. I thought about the funding project I participated in at the Pape Adolescent Resource Centre, (PARC) which gave me the opportunity to talk to youth in care, and child welfare professionals about what it means to be in care. I thought about the scholarships and the bursaries the Foundation has given me while I pursued not one but two degrees. And I thought these are extraordinary.

And then I realized that the ordinary and the extraordinary are inseparable – rather than two separate entities. They are two halves of a whole.

A child who receives a new bike does not merely get two wheels and a frame: she also gets the feeling of being special. The feeling that she is deserving. And for a kid in care, believe it or not, feeling that you are a person who is worthy and deserving is a big deal.

And I think that until you believe you are worthy and deserving of a bicycle, you simply can not begin to believe you are deserving of a future.

A bike is not a bike; it is the ordinary that makes the extraordinary possible.