

CONDOLENCE MOTION

Moved by: **Councillor Michael Thompson**

Seconded by: **Mayor John Tory**

The Mayor and Members of Toronto City Council are deeply saddened to learn of the sudden and tragic passing of Erica Stark on November 6, 2014, at the age of 42.

Born Erica Katharine Bissinger on September 10, 1972 at Grace Hospital in Toronto, Erica spent most of her life in Toronto. She was raised in Leaside and attended Rolph Road Elementary School, Bessborough Drive Elementary and Middle School, and Leaside High School. In 1991, she began her studies at McMaster University and graduated in 1994 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Anthropology. During her second year at McMaster, she met her life partner, David Stark. They were married on August 30, 1997 at Bloor Street United Church in Toronto.

Erica began her working career in 1994 the travel industry. In 1999, Erica and David bought a house in Leslieville and Erica began work at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH). In 2001, Erica and David moved to Riverdale where their three sons, Dylan, Gavin and Matthew were born. Erica left CAMH in June, 2006 to become a full-time homemaker and community volunteer.

Erica was passionate about her family and the importance of giving back to others. Her extensive volunteer work focused on children, people with disabilities, and service dogs. In 2005 and 2006, she and her son Gavin participated in the Roots of Empathy program, in which parents and their infants visit elementary schoolchildren in their classrooms every three weeks during the school year. The Roots of Empathy program reduces levels of aggression among school children while raising social and emotional competence and increasing empathy.

When son Dylan started attending Withrow Avenue Junior Public School in September 2006, Erica joined the Home and School Association. Over the years, she participated in numerous fundraising events and was also instrumental in having Withrow added to the select list of Canadian schools participating in the No Child Without charitable program. Established by the Canadian MedicAlert Foundation, the program ensures that students with medical conditions or allergies receive free MedicAlert protection regardless of their financial resources.

When school was out, Erica and her family volunteered at YMCA Geneva Park, on Lake Couchiching near Orillia. Geneva Park is an affordable and welcoming place for non-profit groups to hold meetings and for young people with differing abilities to participate in leadership programs.

In 2012, Erica and her family were accepted by the Lions Foundation Dog Guides of Canada to foster a future service dog. Over the next two years, the family prepared three dogs for training. Besides travel, cooking, baking and serving her community, Erica loved visiting the library, reading books and discussing them at her two book clubs. She also enjoyed snowshoeing, brisk walks, yoga and Zumba dancing. Most of all, she treasured family time, adoring every minute she had with her husband and young sons.

The City Clerk is requested to convey, on behalf of the Members of Toronto City Council, our sincere sympathy to Erica's husband, children, parents and the rest of her large, close-knit family.

February 10, 2015