



Child and Family Services
of Western Manitoba

CFS Matters!

Fall 2020 Newsletter

Hello community friends,

We continue to live in a challenging time. Our Agency and many other organizations have adapted with incredible flexibility and steadfastness in continuing to respond to the needs of children, youth and families in our communities. Trying to find a sense of normalcy of late can seem like a daunting task, however one we know is necessary. The world looks and feels different in many ways, particularly for some of our more vulnerable families and those who are committed to serving them. Inside this newsletter, you will see some first-hand examples of this. From modified programming with safety measures at the Elspeth Reid Family Resource Center and Victoria Daycare, to virtual counselling, to home visits with physical distancing and personal protective equipment.

We remain honored by the continued support of partners which helps us to support others. They too adapted not abandoned their efforts to respond to community needs. This is a wonderful example of the universal message of “we are all in this together”. Please pay special attention to the work of the Road Rebels and the Rotary Club of Brandon.

Thank you for taking the time to read about the happenings at the Agency particularly during a time where it can feel like information overload! Given the challenging times we are facing, we feel it is important to share some of the hard work and success stories that are happening within our Agency.

We will continue to use up to date information about safety and well-being to help us with adaptable planning, programming and responses.

Wishing you health and peace,

Arlene Stewart
Chief Executive Officer

Kris Tufts
President, Board of Directors



Department of Families Minister Heather Stefanson, with MLA's Reg Helwler and Len Isleifson, visited the Development and Engagement Center for Youth

ELSPETH REID FAMILY RESOURCE CENTRE

Lisa Ramsay



Hello everyone!

We hope this newsletter finds you and your loved ones well. It has been a memorable spring and summer for our community. We know this has been an incredibly stressful time for all both personally and professionally. Together, we are getting through this time with a level of determination and steadfast compassion for one another.

Over these past months, we have done our personal best to stay in a supportive relationship with one another and with those we serve. We have provided child care to essential service staff, maintained a kindness clothesline outside, done hundreds of telephone outreach phone calls, provided respite to many families and we have done a small scale summer program. The courage and dedication shown by the staff here has been nothing short of remarkable. I am deeply grateful for the commitment shown.

Mother nature has provided us with an opportunity to practice patience and given us time to reflect on what really matters. We hope that we have all found the strength to make sense of these times. The parents we have worked with are under a new level stress not previously known. The countless stories shared have been heart warming and inspiring. Our donors and supporters stayed on board with us and I am also very grateful for their generosity through these past months.

This past Spring, Leslee McKee retired from the Child Care Coordinator role at the Centre. She was immediately deeply missed. Leslee has been an outstanding staff member and an integral part of us for many years. We wish her all the best as she spends this time with her own beloved family. We welcome Angela Tomkins into the Child Care Coordinator position. Angela joined us at a challenging time in our journey. Angela has been working tirelessly throughout these past months and clearly is a good fit within our Centre. A big thank you to Keirstin Crandall for offering a fun and memorable series of summer activities for our families!

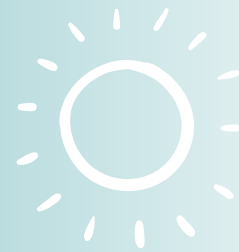
Our fall calendar has gone out to the community and it is our intention to safely resume programs in this new normal world. Be assured we are taking every precaution possible to maintain a healthy, warm and caring environment within the Centre. Our Drop In area will remain closed due to the pandemic. We are each looking forward to seeing our families again. As always, we want to stay in touch. Stay well.

Lisa Ramsay, Coordinator at ERFRC

Big thank you to Marty Snelling and Harvey Laluk from the Rotary Club for donating books to us. With a simple ask, the Rotary Club delivered books within hours. These generous acts of kindness helped us help families in this difficult time. Deep gratitude to these friends of the ERFRC!

SUMMER PROGRAMS

Keirstin Crandall



Another summer at the Elspeth Reid Family Resource Centre has come to a close! Although the Summer Program was impacted by the COVID-19 regulations regarding activities and field trips, we still made the best of our situation and had a lot of fun.

Some of our regular weekly activities included Parent/Child Craft days, Stay and Play, and Kitchen Creations. We were also able to squeeze in some field trips to Albert's Mini Golf, the Rideau Splash Park and the Grand Valley Strawberry Patch, as well as a day trip to Minnedosa Beach closer to the end of the summer.

As the Summer Program Coordinator, I enjoyed my time at the Elspeth Reid Family Resource Centre and met many great parents and children, and had a lot fun planning activities to facilitate a time for families to spend together!

Keirstin Crandall
Summer Program Coordinator
Elspeth Reid Family Resource Centre



We would also like to say a massive 'Thank You' to the Road Rebels for their tremendous efforts during the '2020 Drive Away Covid-19 Tour'. Over \$600 in donations were collected along with a very large assortment of food and household essentials - all of which were donated to the ERFRC to support families. As usual, we are blown away by the continued support of the Road Rebels.



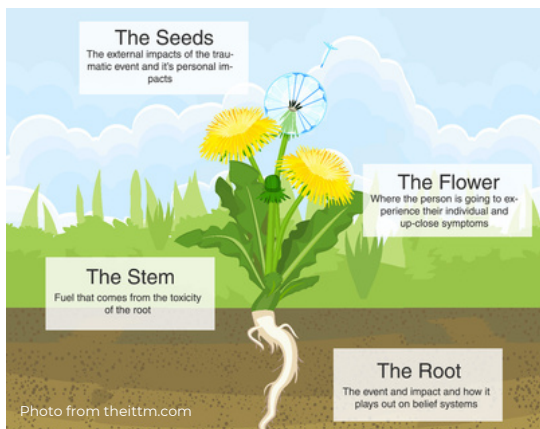
CHILDREN'S THERAPY

Charlene Yaworsky and Alex Paiva



The Children's Therapy Program's goal is to assist in reducing the impacts of abuse and trauma within the individual and family, and to promote improved attachments, healing, well-being as well as strengthened social, emotional and psychological development.

A large part of our role is our consultations with Agency social workers, collaterals and support networks. These consults are focused through a trauma-effective lens and the recommendations that we provide also follow this framework. A recent example of this is the restructuring of our traditional 'group home model' to a 'healing home approach'. This new approach emphasizes the importance of trauma-informed decision making. We believe that the therapeutic relationship provides a framework for healthy interactions, a space for developing trust, and promoting change and growth.



We strive to remain current in our training and education on matters relating to best practices. As such, we are currently participating in a new training model (The Intergenerational Trauma Treatment Model) that attempts to address the unresolved trauma impact histories of parents and caregivers.

Charlene Yaworsky and Alex Paiva
Children's Therapy Program

CHILD CARE & COVID-19

Our staff at the Victoria Daycare Centre and Preschool Enrichment Program quickly answered the call to re-open their programs at the beginning of the pandemic to provide child care for the children of essential service workers.

Both programs adjusted to provide care to school-aged children as well as pre-school children.

Our staff also came up with 'makeshift lockers' at Victoria Daycare Centre to allow for two separate cohorts of children to attend with separate entries, exits and play areas.



PERMANENCY TEAM

Fostering Permanent Connections



One of the goals of permanency work is to ensure that our children in care have permanent relational connections as they enter young adulthood, and beyond. Our Permanency Team works with our children in care, their families, and community collaterals, to understand existing relational connections, to improve these connections, and to form new ones as well. This work often includes (but is not limited to):

- Reconnecting youth with their birth families, past foster families, and other past relationships,
- Adulthood skill-building and preparedness programs,
- Collaborating with community collaterals to build personal and potential employment networks, and
- Connecting youth with the Young Engagement program and other opportunities at the Development and Engagement Centre

While our Agency has always understood the importance of these relational connections, our execution of these services has evolved over the past few years. Perhaps one of the most significant changes has been a shift toward a client-led framework. While working with youth, their families, and community collaterals, our Permanency Team is simultaneously hard at work to ensure that they are building long-lasting, trusting relationships with these youth.

Every child or young adult is unique and so are their challenges, strengths, and connections. As such, we must meet them where they are at and without judgement. It is our belief that these efforts ensure that youth are given every possible opportunity to succeed.

As stated by one of our Permanency Team members, "by establishing human connections with our young adults and their families, we are doing work that makes sense".

Beyond this work, our Permanency Team also prepared Care Packages for our youth living independently during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our team spent a significant amount of time at the DEC cooking and preparing care packages for 13 youth who are on AYAs, living independently and without a lot of support. Staff contacted the youth by phone and arranged to deliver on their front lawn or steps and went back to the street while the youth came out to get their bags. This also gave staff an opportunity to further connect with these youth.

The response from every single one of the youth was quite overwhelming and heartwarming. We feel this was well worth the effort and a unique way to connect with young adults who are managing these difficult times on their own.



2020 VIRTUAL AGM



June 23rd marked our first virtual, but 121st, Annual General Meeting. While the format was very different from previous years, we were still able to highlight the work of the Agency. A significant accomplishment is our now entrenched practice of engaging youth and families in planning and decision-making. We continue to strive for the goal of “nothing about us without us”.

Families and their networks are called upon to make plans that contribute to child safety and well-being. Supports offered to families help meet needs or address safety worries that directly affect parents’ abilities to care for their children. When this is not possible, the children’s natural network is called upon. When children need alternate care, our Agency Resource Parents and Group Homes work to maintain connections to family and assist with reunification or permanency plans. A trauma informed approach to care crosses all of our service areas.

The Agency’s recently revamped vision framework highlights the values and beliefs that form the basis of how we strive to work with our families, community partners and each other.

KEY THEMES FROM OUR VISION FRAMEWORK:

- Safety
- Community
- Relationships
- Innovation
- Family
- Inclusiveness
- Permanency

Benefits of the Family Engagement process include:



Family preservation occurs more frequently



Children are placed at the center of plans and have a voice in decisions that affect them



Meaningful case plans are created that meet families’ needs



Working relationships between workers and families are improved



Families feel respected and improve their own problem solving and decision making

COMMUNITY LIAISON

Lory George



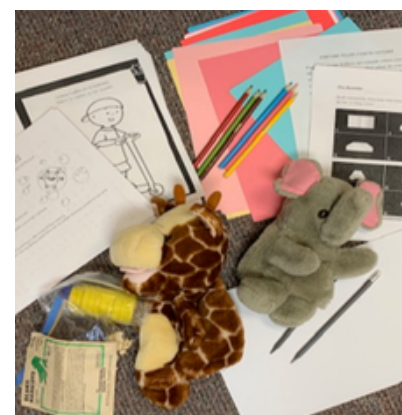
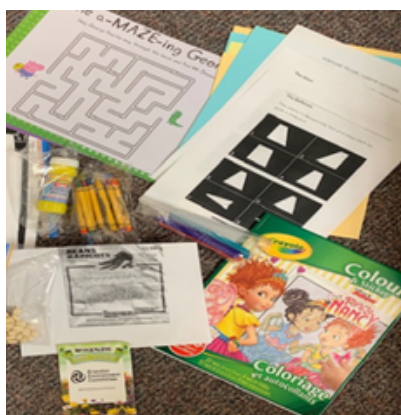
In the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, our Preschool Enrichment Program and Victoria Daycare faced significant changes relating to social distancing rules and closures. With the abrupt end of attendance at the Preschool Enrichment Program, the team immediately began thinking about how these changes would impact children and their families. Many of the families that access the Preschool Enrichment Program rely on and benefit from the structure, support, and outcomes of the program. As such, our staff wanted to ensure that these families were still being cared for during a time of confusion, distress, and intensity.

In order for us to let families know that our thoughts and cares were with them, we wanted to establish connections beyond the setting of the centre. As part of our outreach, we developed and delivered individual activity bags that could support the joy of play for parents and children. We also provided check-ins and assistance for parents regarding their current situation and challenges.

In short, we truly tried to meet children and families where they were. Given what we know about the importance of connection and play, especially in the midst of a global pandemic, our staff went to great lengths to ensure that we were there for children and families.

Lory George
Community Liaison Worker

Contents of the activity bags we delivered for families:



Elsbeth Reid Family Resource Centre
255 - 9th Street
Brandon MB R7A 6X1
204-726-6280



Family & Community Development Centre
Unit 4, 613 - 10th Street
Brandon MB R7A 4G6
204-726-7033



Preschool Enrichment Program
2nd Floor, 2227 Brandon Avenue
Brandon MB R7B 0S9
204-727-6650



Victoria Day Care Centre
1st Floor, 2227 Brandon Avenue
Brandon MB R7B 0S9
204-728-9845

The Foundation Forum

Joe Ball, On behalf of the Foundation

Working in health care, I've had a front-row seat for the COVID-19 pandemic; but all of us in the Westman area have seen just how quickly things can change. From a rumour in Asia to reality in Manitoba was a matter of months; but nothing has been quite the same since. For six weeks in June and July we caught a breather, and it seemed that things were 'back to normal.' We all felt relieved, even as we continued, to varying degrees, to reduce our risks.

We've learned, to our chagrin, that we can't turn our backs on the risks with this illness. For the last seven weeks as the numbers have climbed, we've had to react, restrict, and renew the practices that keep us – and our communities – safe. Hand washing, mask wearing, and limiting our contacts with others. These are big changes, and a new normal.

Families involved with CFS of Western Manitoba face similar challenges, as they seek to make changes. They may be dealing with marital breakdown, or family violence. Or maybe it's the blessing of a new baby, whose needs may overwhelm a family's supports. Whatever the reasons, when people turn to CFS of Western Manitoba, it's bound to be a big change.

Our goal is make that a change for the better. Not just for that family, facing their own personal stress; but for the community that family calls home. As with the COVID-19 pandemic, we're really all in this together. Every family's health and wellbeing affects the whole.

At the Elspeth Reid Family Resource Centre and the Victoria Avenue Daycare, we've had to pivot so that we can provide care in new ways through this COVID-19 crisis. CFS of Western Manitoba has moved to provide daycare spaces for essential workers serving on the front lines of the pandemic. We've also found ways to reach out when it hasn't been safe to bring people into our Centres. In these and countless other ways, we're seeking to offer a consistent message through a time of challenge and change. Families matter.

Your support for the CFS of Western Manitoba Foundation helps to drive that message home. Through your gifts, we give in support of the programs that reach families, to strengthen them and to build a better future, for all.

Thanks for that!



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