



CFS Matters!

Spring 2020 Newsletter

Dear Agency Friends,

The rapid spread of COVID-19 and its social consequences are impacting the lives of children and families in our community in unprecedented ways. Every day we are learning about new government guidelines on social distancing, school closures, parents working from home or who have lost their jobs. This, coupled with increased financial, emotional, and potential physical stress, means that parents and caregivers in our community will be strained. For some, many of their natural supports are not available to them. As well, community services and support programs are either closed or have found altered ways to reach out to families. Our role as a child welfare Agency is becoming more essential than ever.

Our staff are keenly aware of their role in this, and they are prepared to respond to this public health crisis.

Our staff, however, are not immune to the same impacts and stressors. Our Agency is committed to fulfilling our mission and goals, following our belief in strengthening and supporting families. Our ability to continue to provide essential child and family services and help to keep families safe, is dictated by our ability to keep our staff safe, healthy and looked after.

To help do so, at the time of writing this message, we have taken several steps. These include:



Stopping all group programming at Elspeth Reid Family Resource Center



Initiating a rotating staffing schedule



Offering a clothesline outside of the ERFRC with items that families may need and are free to take.



Implementing safety measures when in-person contact is required



Reducing access to our office buildings



Cancelling our Annual Conference

The General Authority and the Department of Families are also providing direction and information that is being utilized to continue to provide essential services in the safest way possible.

Despite the enormous challenges that everyone is facing, staff remain dedicated to helping families through this.

The rest of this newsletter is dedicated to showing examples of some of things that had occurred prior to living and working in these current circumstances.

Arlene Stewart
Chief Executive Officer

Kris Tufts
President, Board of Directors



Clothesline of Kindness
Elspeth Reid Family Resource Centre

ERFRC

**** Please note that this article was written prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. At this time, the ERFRC is closed to the public. Please stay tuned for more information. ****

In November of 2019, we welcomed our new receptionist, Darla Shillington. We love her warmth and compassion for this work.

We would also like to announce the retirement of one of our team members. Leslee McKee is retiring from the Agency, effective mid April 2020. Leslee has been with our Agency and the ERFRC as a child care supervisor for many years. Leslee exemplifies our philosophy and values daily in her way of relating to our families – she is child-centered and compassionate to our parents. She has an amazing work ethic and has consistently been a major contributor to the overall operation of the Centre. I will miss Leslee at work very much. We all wish Leslee the very best in her retirement and we hope that she enjoys her well-deserved time with her husband, children and grandchildren. We appreciate all that you gave Leslee – staff and families are better from your time here. Thank you

We remain grateful for all the kind words and expressions of support we receive on a regular basis from our families and supporters. Often parents share their gratitude with us. Donors continue to give and we'd like you to know that we deeply appreciate your support for this work.



We are hopeful to be offering a new program called "Circle of Security". Stay tuned to our calendar to learn about your opportunity to get involved. The program is about how to create an inclusive environment where children of varying physical, emotional, and cognitive abilities are cared for and meaningfully participate in daily activities. A critical element to pursuing this is ensuring children have a strong sense of connectedness and belonging. The Circle of Security (COS) approach is one technique that can be used to strengthen attachments.

All the best!

Lisa Ramsay, Coordinator at ERFRC

Road Rebels

For over ten years, the Brandon Road Rebels Car Club has been graciously donating their yearly fundraising dollars to the Elspeth Reid Family Resource Centre. On December 11, 2019, the club held a meeting at the Elspeth Reid Family Resource Centre. At this meeting, the Road Rebels presented a cheque to Lisa Ramsay (Facility Coordinator), in the amount of \$5,590.25.



These funds were raised at the Road Rebels' Cruisin' Winter Style Social, the Sud/Spud event at Houston's Roadhouse, and the Season Finale BBQ car show at Dinsdale Park in September. Over the course of our partnership, the Road Rebels have donated more than \$30,000. This support has significantly boosted our Agency's ability to offer programs and services like Drop-In Play Time and our Free Transportation.



Community support like this is the reason that our Elspeth Reid Family Resource Centre has been able to effectively support children and families for over 35 years. We are honoured to be able to do this work every day and we would like to sincerely thank the Brandon Road Rebels Car Club for their support over the years.

For more information on the kinds of programs we are offering, visit our website at www.cfswestern.mb.ca



Elspeth 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 DEC

**** Please note that this article was written prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. At this time, the DEC is closed. Please stay tuned for more information. ****

Over the past six months, things had been quite busy at the DEC. Here are some of the highlights:



Teen Talk: This 8 week program for both teen girls in care and on protection files was concluded. We met once a week for 8 weeks to engage in different activities that focused on many different issues that teen girls can face such as relationships, communication, values and beliefs etc. We also cooked supper each week and ate together as a group.



Holiday Party: We had over 40 social workers and youth in care attend the holiday party at The DEC in December. Lots of board games were played, appetizers were eaten and each youth left with a gift.



DEC one year Anniversary Party: We held a come & go drop in event at The DEC to celebrate its one year anniversary. Kids came to hang out with one another and staff to eat some snacks and play some games in their youth-friendly, space.



Movie Night: In the Halloween Spirit we held a Halloween movie night at The DEC; youth came to mingle with one another and watch a movie over popcorn and snacks. Youth and staff had a great night!



Teen Talk Alumni: In the new year we have held a Teen Talk Alumni once/month for the girls who have taken teen talk to continue to gather over a fun activity and food in our youth space, The DEC.



Work Experience: Youth continue to log work-experience hours for their resume and in the Agreements with Young Adults (AYA) program by cleaning The DEC, sorting, washing and hanging donated clothing for the thrift store area and counting inventory.



Pop-socket Art Night: Youth were invited to come and bring out their creative side at The DEC with painting smart phone pop-sockets. We had a great turnout of boys and girls in care get together at The DEC over snacks and creative art.

Breanna Dick, Youth Engagement Specialist & AYA Social Worker



Christmas

On December 16th, 2019, our Agency held our Annual Christmas Gift Shopping event. Over the course of November and early-December our Agency received a number of donations for the kids in our care. The purpose of this Shopping event is to display all of these donations to our social workers and to allow our staff to parse through these donations. If our staff find something they think their families could benefit from, staff will pick up the item(s) on the behalf of the parents.



This event ensures that the kids in our care wake up on Christmas day with a gift under the tree. Our Agency is thrilled to be a part of this process and we would like to send a sincere thank you to each of our community members who donated a gift for this event. Our Agency was also excited to be a part of the United Way's Annual Christmas Tree Auction. Every year our Agency partners with the United Way to match donors with families. This year, the theme was 'A Very Whoville Grinchmas', and it was a major success. The United Way was able to raise a significant amount of money that will be returned to the community, and several of our families received a decorated tree and a heap of gifts Christmas morning.



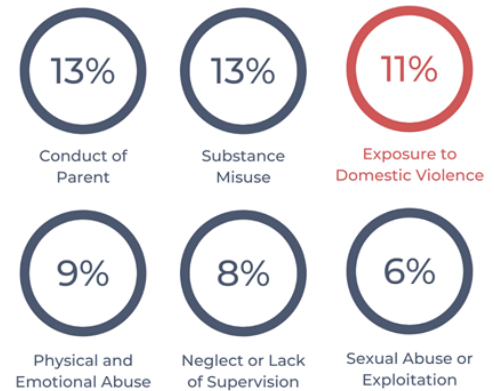
Thanks to the team at the United Way and the following sponsors who made this day possible: Cando Rail Services, Guild Insurance, Maple Leaf Foods, No Place Like Home Realty, Q Country/Star FM, Public Service Alliance of Canada – Prairie Region, RBC Royal Bank, Re/max, Valleyview Realty, SMD Society of Manitobans with disabilities, Sutton-Harrison Realty, Toromont Cat, Wawanesa Insurance, Branstone Financial Strategies, IG Wealth Management

Caring Dads

Child and Family Services of Western Manitoba has drastically shifted its practice around working with domestic violence since 2016 when the Agency began its partnership with the Safe and Together Institute. The Safe and Together Model has allowed the Agency to further its purpose of supporting families and ensuring child safety in cases related to domestic violence.

One of the core principles of the model is to intervene with perpetrators to reduce risk and harm to children. The model calls for the perpetrators to be part of the solution rather than them continuing the behaviors that are cause for concern. The Canadian based Caring Dad's program fills this gap. Caring Dads is a group intervention program for men who have abused or neglected their children, or exposed them to domestic violence.

Most Common Issues Identified at Intake



The Caring Dads program was designed from the premise that gender based violence and violence against children are intertwined, and that these two issues should both be addressed together. Our first round of Caring Dads began in February of 2017 and we have been able to have 25 men complete the program to date. I am thrilled to report that among these men that 60 children have been impacted by this program. The domestic violence research tells us that children who grow up in homes where domestic violence is prevalent, they are more likely to be in violent relationships themselves in the future. Intervening with these men in such a way is a true form of prevention in creating healthier families in the years ahead.

Upon completion of the group, all men reported they are more child centered, they experience an improvement in their relationships, and have a stronger understanding of the impacts of gender based violence on children. One gentleman stated; "I look at that list of effects of violence on kids and I don't want that to be my son, I would never want him to see me that way". Furthermore, the workers involved with many of these men report observable differences in behaviors with their children, the mothers of their children and with the workers themselves. A vast majority of past participants are actively involved in parenting currently, have improved their understanding of positive fathering, and are no longer involved in the child welfare system.

Simply put, I can safely report that when men are able to complete the Caring Dad's program, it can be life changing for them. Perhaps more importantly, the program is life changing for the many children and women these men are involved with.

Joshua Van Mulligen, Supervisor

Program Facts



The program is 17 weeks in length, 2 hour sessions



Male and female facilitator, modelling of respectful relationships



Our Agency currently has 4 accredited facilitators (2 Male/2 Female)



Program takes place at the Elspeth Reid Family Resource Centre



Our Agency has completed 5 rounds of the program to date



25 men have successfully completed the program to date. 60 Children attached to these respective fathers as birth children or as step-children.

The Foundation Forum

Joe Ball, On behalf of the Foundation

**** Please note that this article was written prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. ****

In my work as a hospital chaplain, I am often reminded of how little we see clearly when we look ahead into the future. Hindsight is always 20/20, they say, but the farther we peer into the future the less clearly we are likely to see.

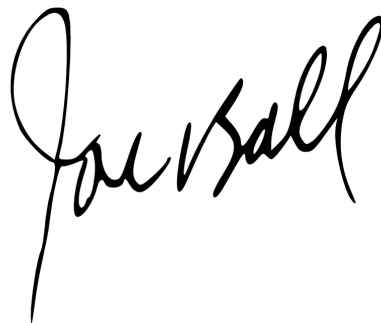
For example, Westman has changed immensely since I lived briefly in Brandon in the summer of 1985. No one then predicted the demise of the Crow rate, the expansion of the hog industry, and the subsequent transformation of the region into the busy, multicultural place that it has since become. The circumstances that CFS staff deal with have changed immensely as the region has developed so rapidly in the last 20 years.

What hasn't changed is the needs of the families we serve. Children thrive when they are loved, when they feel secure and safe and cared for. The changing economic and social situation will create new challenges for families; but the needs of children and youth are as they ever were: Across every age and every culture, kids need to be nurtured and loved.

As a Foundation, we're working today to ensure that in the future our Agency will be there to meet those needs. By investing in programmes that seek to strengthen families, we're really investing in the future. Whatever it brings, by way of change and challenge, CFS of Western Manitoba is committed to being there to help families meet their children's needs.

The Foundation is a proud partner in this work, because we know that the programmes we support make a difference in the lives of children, to the benefit of us all – today, and into that unfolding future.

Thank you for being part of this work.



255 9th Street, Brandon MB R7A 6X1
204-726-6122
www.cfswestern.mb.ca/foundation

