



Child and Family Services
of Western Manitoba

CFS Matters!

Winter 2021 Newsletter

Winter Greetings everyone,

We want to share some stories with you about the work of the Agency in the community. Like everyone, we continue to experience new and unknown situations that require creativity, flexibility, commitment and sometimes courage. Families are trying to cope with the on-going, seemingly never ending pandemic crisis. We know a basic human need is connection, and finding ways to maintain supportive connections and relationships has been challenging. In their various roles, our Agency's staff, volunteers and resource homes are doing their best to support families, while managing their own health and well-being.

Recent research and our own experiences are telling us that children and families are struggling in these extraordinary circumstances. The pandemic has added another level of trauma for many. There can be limited access to other services that provide for a specific need. Agency direct service staff, as essential workers, recognize this impact on families and continue to provide in person and often, in home services. Now, more than ever, our Agency's commitment to providing trauma informed care is needed to best serve families.

Thank-you for taking the time to read this newsletter and the stories it highlights. It is one way to stay connected and to be reminded of the resiliency of the human spirit and the children, youth and families directly impacted by the many changes and challenges of 2020.

Wishing everyone health and wellness and a hopeful 2021.

Arlene Stewart
Chief Executive Officer

Kris Tufts
President, Board of Directors

HEARING FROM OUR RESOURCE PARENTS



When issues in a family result in children needing care outside of their own home, resource families provide care and support for them while their family's problems are being worked through. In recognition of the critical role that our caregivers play, we wanted to share some quotes from our Resource Parents and Staff: We have shifted our language from Foster Parent to Resource Parent. While Resource Parents continue to foster nurturance and care of the children in their homes, they are also a critical resource to the children's first families and to the Agency.

"There are many positive benefits of being a Resource Parent. There are also many heart breaking drawbacks. But all told, my life with these many children has been rich in love, excitement, worry, learning, heartbreak, spiritual growth as well as personal growth. Many opportunities to help others on their road to self discovery and personal growth. Teaching them to forgive and move on. Helping them to put sometimes very terrible experiences behind them, learn from them and move on to become a better person for their experiences.

There are so many positive stories I could share. Most every child brings something positive into my life. I guess hearing years later from the children that are now adults, that yes, I did make a difference in their lives back then. There are just too many discoveries and stories to put just one forward."

- Anonymous Resource Parent

"We wanted to share a truly inspiring story from one of our Resource Parents. Recently, one of our Resource Parents went out of their way to help a child in their care connect with their birth parent. Specifically, this Resource Parent worked collaboratively with the birth parent to make sure that they had an opportunity to be a part of the child's homework and school reading tasks.

It was a small gesture, but it was incredibly meaningful for this family. Most importantly, teamwork like this positively influences the degree to which families buy-in to working with our Agency. In the long term, this translates to better outcomes for children and families in our community."

- CFS of Western Manitoba Staff Member

"The most amazing thing about our Resource Parents is their devotion to caring for and about someone else. In doing so, they are being somebody who makes everybody feel like a somebody.

- CFS of Western Manitoba Staff Member

IN-HOME SUPPORT AND SUPPORTED ACCESS

Lisa Jackson



Hello everyone,

The purpose of this newsletter piece is to talk about the In-Home Support program and to share some of the excellent work that is being done by our staff.

ABOUT IN-HOME SUPPORT



In-Home Support is meant to give Westman families healthy and positive resources to help make them stronger before their situations reach a crisis point.



An In-Home Support worker acts as an important advocate for the family in their own community to help reduce their isolation and to make sure they have access to available and appropriate community resources and programs.

SOME OF THE INSPIRING WORK BEING DONE

- Providing in home support for a mother whose children have been apprehended to help her understand the trauma-impact on her children that living in a domestically violent environment has caused. Teaching this mother how to rebuild the relationship with her children in order to move forward with the goal of reunification into a nurturing and safe home
- Working with a perpetrator of domestic violence to hold him accountable for his parenting choices, and mend his behaviour so that he can co-parent with his former partner safely
- Working with a young mom with an intellectual disability to develop and enhance her parenting skills so that she can parent her child
- Working with a young male single parent with mental health issues to overcome his anxiety, providing therapeutic access between him and his children, developing parenting strategies and lifeskills, and working toward reunification with his children
- Working with a father to learn how to parent his trauma-impacted children so that they can live with family and not in stranger care
- Helping a young mother living in poverty access medical care, recognize her own self-worth and rebuild after leaving a violent partnership, helping her learn how to single-parent her three young children
- Helping a young mother with FASD develop life skills and work toward overcoming addiction so that she might resolve protection issues and potentially raise her newborn.

This work is challenging, and relies on the coordination of many hardworking staff at all levels of the Agency. However, we know that this work is essential in supporting the children and families in our community!

Lisa Jackson

In-Home Support and Supported Access Supervisor

ELSPETH REID FAMILY RESOURCE CENTRE

Lisa Ramsay



Greetings all!

It has been a learning curve to find new ways of supporting families during this pandemic. However, I am proud to share that we are meeting that challenge!



CHRISTMAS

We have remained in service during this past fall and winter season at the Centre. At Christmas time, we were so blessed to receive donations from the community to allow us to pass along gifts to many families. It is a heart warming time of the year here as we see kindness and generosity in action. As we all understand, it was a different Christmas and we did our best to bring joy to many doorsteps.



GOING VIRTUAL

Many parenting classes, support groups and family literacy courses have been delivered online and we're so pleased that parents are also learning with us. Our child care staff have been offering respite and also assisting the Preschool Enrichment Program and the Victoria Day Care Centre. Our staff are doing more outreach as we safely connect with families on doorsteps to deliver packages and maintain our precious relationships. It has truly been a team effort!



WESTAWAY BAY

Our Westaway Bay Family Centre remains active thanks to Sandy Smith! She has been safely supporting many families on the Bay. We are excited to share that we'll soon be adding an outdoor library as we nurture the joy of literacy in the neighborhood.

We are eager for the days of having a full house once again. Planning is underway for our spring and summer programming at the ERFRC. It is with great optimism that we approach these seasons. Our face to face time together as a community will have a renewed level of appreciation after this past year. In the meantime, remember we are here for you and only a phone call away.

Stay safe and well. As always, we welcome your feedback.

Lisa Ramsay, Coordinator at ERFRC

HOLIDAY POSITIVITY



Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we were not sure about how our Agency would be able to support our families during this Holiday season. While the Holiday season was perhaps more turbulent than in typical years, our Agency and our community stepped up to make sure that the families we serve were able to access the many Holiday services that many rely on. Here are some of our success stories!



UNITED WAY

With the cancellation of the Christmas Cheer Holiday Hamper program, the United Way of Brandon and Area (UW) decided to run their own hamper program. Their efforts ensured that many families in need did not go hungry on Christmas. The UW also held their annual Tree Auction event, providing trees, food, and gifts for 9 CFSWM families. This event also raised \$21,000 that will go back to the community! We would like to shout-out our very own Breanne Martin for volunteering her time to make sure that the gifts reached their destination.



CFSWM COMMUNITY GIFT DRIVE

Typically, our Agency relies on the generous donations of community members for our annual Community Gift Drive. However, with donations down due to the pandemic, our management team decided to place a large order with Toymasters to make sure that we had enough gifts to go around. These gifts are provided to parents to give to their children.



CFSWM ANNUAL CHRISTMAS STORE

This December, Katherine Chalmers ran our annual Christmas store for children in care with our Agency. This is a great opportunity for children to get involved with the spirit of giving, and is done at no cost to them or their families. Donations were collected from several of our amazing staff and our community partners. The children who attended picked out gifts for about 10 people in their lives each, and there were 23 children who utilized the store this year!



In previous newsletters, we have highlighted some of our unique programs such as Youth Works, Sun Fund for Kids, Summer Programming at the ERFRC, Children's Therapy Program, our Permanency Team, our Community Liaison worker, Caring Dads, and the Westaway Bay Family Resource Centre. The purpose of this is two-fold:

- 1 To shine a light on some of the hard work that is being done by our dedicated staff
- 2 To explain to our readers how this hard work translates to positive outcomes for children and families

When it comes to our Rural Family Services team, there is a great deal to talk about!



WEARING MANY HATS

Supporting families in rural areas often means that our Rural Family Services workers must occupy many roles at a time. These roles can range from crisis intervention, transportation, client advocacy, safety planning, managing intakes, and much more. Because of limited access to other resources, these rural communities often come to rely on our Rural Workers for a variety of services. This has been demanding and it requires a significant amount of flexibility and independence.



CHALLENGES UNIQUE TO RURAL FAMILIES

This pandemic has created numerous challenges for all of the families we work with. However, our rural families have faced a unique set of challenges. For instance, many school busses had to stop their routes, leaving many parents scrambling to find safe alternatives for their children. Further, many face-to-face support services were put on hold. For families without access to cell phones or reliable internet, this significantly increased isolation. However, our rural families are resilient, and many schools utilized local arenas and recreation centres.



RESPONDING TO THE PANDEMIC

Our Rural Family Services staff have experienced a number of unique challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic. More restrictions on contact can sometimes mean less opportunities for collaboration. In cases where clients have experienced reduced access to other supports as a result of the pandemic, our Rural workers have helped out where possible.



SAFE AND TOGETHER

3 of our staff presented at the Virtual International Safe and Together Conference on our Agency's implementation of this framework in working with domestic violence.



TRAUMA COHORT

Staff in this cohort continue to mentor other staff to further our implementation of trauma-informed care.



GROUP CARE

Staff from our 3 group homes participated in trauma training designed and delivered by Alex Paiva (Children's Therapy Program) and Dr. Lise Milne (University of Regina). The training was influenced by the ARC framework (Attachment, Regulation, Competency) which is designed to promote healing and growth.

TIPI INSTALLATION

We are honoured to host this Tipi as part of the Tipi Legacy Tour and as a symbol of the impact of child welfare's 60's Scoop. The Tipi was installed under ceremony with Knowledge Keeper, Frank Tacan.



The Foundation Forum

Joe Ball, On behalf of the Foundation

I was speaking with a friend who, in the midst of this deep cold snap and the ongoing pandemic, has been spending a lot of time holed up in a remote farmhouse. Our conversations are now all on the phone, as we can't safely meet in person. We tell each other 'stay safe!' and 'stay warm.'

Our conversation left me aware of how much we are all just trying to survive this moment in time: to get through winter, and the pandemic, to some future that will be 'good' in the way that the past was good – or at least, normal and ordinary. He remarked that as a society, we're not used to having to hunker down, or having to endure anything for very long.

We need life to be stable and predictable, but even a long stretch of peace and prosperity will be marked by moments of chaos and uncertainty. What's remarkable isn't that crises arise; but that, in times of crisis, people seek to create community, and to restore stability. This is why we reach out by phone and zoom and facetime, to say to friends and family that they are not forgotten or forsaken, and things haven't come to a place beyond repair.

Our Agency – CFS of Western Manitoba – exists to be there when families face more personal moments of crisis and stress. When things fray and threaten to fall apart for children and families, the Agency is there to provide supports and safety, and to develop strengths that leave families more resilient and children more likely to thrive.

We exist to support the programs that have the greatest impact on our families' success, because we know that strong, loving families help build good communities. And that is something that we all need.

Your support for the CFS of Western Manitoba Foundation helps make good things happen. Here and now.

Thanks for your support, again and always.



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

