Keeping the Circle Strong
Aboriginal Awareness Week; June 14-20, 2015

Aboriginal Awareness Week has been celebrated in Calgary since 2011 to enhance the level of awareness and understanding about the rich heritage, traditions and culture of the First Nations, Metis and Inuit. This year in Calgary, Aboriginal Awareness Week is being celebrated from June 14 to 20, 2015 and will lead up to our National Aboriginal Day on June 21st, which is celebrated nationwide. This year’s theme is “Keeping the Circle Strong.”

Numerous events are being organized in Calgary, including a Family Day and Pow Wow Event at Stampede Park on June 20th. These events highlight the distinct cultural aspects such as teachings, traditions and spiritual beliefs of the Aboriginal communities during Aboriginal Awareness Week.

Participation in these events is a good opportunity to share and learn from each other and celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal communities in Canadian culture and society.

For more information and a listing of events, please visit www.aawc.ca.

Closer to Home has been offering programs and services to families, including families from Aboriginal cultures and communities, since its inception in 1995. If you would like to know more, please contact us at 403 543 0550 or visit our website www.closertohome.com.

Walking Alongside Children and Families

For some families, a crisis arises out of financial troubles, relationship issues, lack of access to basic needs, or mental health concerns. In every case, Closer to Home is there to walk alongside children and families so they can achieve their goals.

“Abby and Justin’s* family’s success is a good example,” recalls Jody. “They show us that it’s possible to succeed.” As parents, they were heartbroken when their children were taken into the care of Children’s Services. A family breakdown meant that their four children, all under six years old, faced long-term separation unless there was a place to stay together temporarily. Meanwhile, Abby and Justin were desperate to improve their situation and get their family back together.

“These struggles challenged us to think differently,” Jody says. “We had to think outside of the box and arrive at a creative solution for this family.”

There were not enough beds available in a single foster home for the four children to stay together and Jody worried that the children would be placed in separate foster homes, further complicating the family’s situation. Until she realized that a Closer to Home Teaching Home in Airdrie was temporarily vacant – and this translated into an opportunity for success.

Soon after the children were placed in the Teaching Home, Justin and Abby were able to attend visits there with their children and receive 24 hour support from Family Support Workers like Jody. For the next 16 months, the children achieved the following social skills such as following instructions, asking for permission and playing respectfully among others. Jody also helped role model important parenting skills for Justin and Abby.

“That was hard for them,” Jody explains. “But it was another opportunity to sit down and honestly say, ‘I understand. No, this isn’t easy for you.’” As their family demonstrated increased strength and independence, Closer to Home’s level of support was scaled back. Remarkably, it wasn’t long before Abby and Justin’s family was permanently reunified.

“We are able to provide high quality services to everyone we meet. We do that through the use of the Teaching-Family Model. Consistency, structure, guidance and advocacy for families who face the most challenging circumstances,” Jody adds. “Everyone is better off because of it.”

Ten years later, Justin and Abby’s family leads a positive life together. Their four children thrive with the parenting that Justin and Abby continue to provide and they have the skills to take on life’s challenges together as a family.

* Names changed

Dress for Success

Closer to Home is an evolving organization that continually makes an effort to address the changing needs of the individuals and families it serves. The new partnership between our West Central Community Resource Center (WCRC) and Dress for Success, a not for profit organization, speaks volumes in this regard.

On March 2, 2015 the WCRC became a referral agency, able to send women seeking employment and attending job interviews to Dress for Success in assistance in obtaining professional attire.

The vast majority of women the WCRC serves are newcomers to Canada and low income women entering the professional work force for the first time. One such lady approached the WCRC and asked if she could be referred to Dress for Success. The WCRC took this as an opportunity to develop a new relationship with the woman, allowing a means to assess for other resources she may need.

In obtaining this partnership with Dress for Success the WCRC will help open many doors for women that once faced adverse circumstances by helping them the confidence to go into an interview well prepared and looking professional. “Since they are often new to the country and our city and are not aware of workplace expectations, many women are unsure about what to wear to an interview. Dress for Success will help them find an outfit that is not only professional but has a touch of their own flair, building confidence and giving them the ability to feel comfortable in a professional interview” said Jodie Moffatt, a staff member at the WCRC.

Let’s Celebrate the Stampede Season!

After a record breaking warm winter in Calgary, we are looking forward to a pleasant spring and summer this year!

And when it comes to summer, how could we forget to celebrate this season with the Stampede.

Our annual Stampede Breakfast will be held in early July and is an occasion when friends, families, neighbours and supporters of Closer to Home engage in fun-filled activities and enjoy delicious pancakes and sausages.

The date will be posted on our website, www.closertohome.com, as soon as it is finalized. Please stay tuned!
Join Our Team!

Alternate Teaching Parent – Full-Time

This permanent full-time position in Calgary, works closely with a team of professionals to support children and youth in our community group homes. Working to support the primary caregivers (Live-In Teaching Parents), the Alternate Teaching Parent’s primary responsibility is to facilitate success for children and youth by assisting them with day to day activities and routines, skill development, crisis management, job and school difficulties and providing relief coverage. Utilizing the Teaching-Family Model, you would encourage the development of close relationships and relevant skills which would enable clients to successfully integrate back into their families and communities.

Teaching Parents – Full-Time

This is a full-time live-in position for a couple able to provide intensive treatment for six youths in a family home environment. The Teaching Parents’ primary objective is to encourage youth to develop to their maximum potential and enable them to successfully integrate back into their families and communities. As ‘parents’, you would be responsible for these youths as you would your own children, with days off and vacation time provided. While modeling the skills needed to be part of a healthy family, within the Teaching Home and in the community, you would assist the youth in their daily activities and routines, implement treatment planning and manage crisis when needed.

For detailed job descriptions and to apply please visit the Career section on our website at www.closertohome.com

Engaging Children in Communities

Nearly twenty years ago, it became clear to Family Support Workers at Closer to Home that children in the community were engaging in high-risk activities after school. During the ‘critical hours’ between 3-6pm, children as young as 12 years old were drawn into high-risk or criminal activities.

Shortly after this observation, the first Homework Club program was organized at Closer to Home with the goal to provide enriching programming and minimize risk when children would otherwise be unsupervised.

The need for after-school programming was matched with community interest and Closer to Home’s first Homework Club was launched in 1995.

Today, the program is offered to children in grades 1-6 as a way to increase study habits and extra-curricular activities. Children are encouraged to make new friends and practice healthy skills that are important in their lives.

Homework Club meets weekly for an hour and a half in southwest Calgary communities such as Shaganappi, Rossca-rock, Glenbrook, and Lincoln Park. Some former participants, now in high school, are helping younger students. They help one-on-one with subjects such as English and Math.

“I love Homework Club and I love Holeigh and Jodie” a smiling six year old girl shared with the group recently. “And now I’m going to sing you a song!”

Through these strong, trusting relationships with students, Family Support Workers like Jodie and Holeigh are able to identify resources within the community and create a sense of belonging and self-confidence for young people and their families.

This shines through when children are able to use their strengths and create a positive environment for others. You can see it in children’s smiles, in their interactions with one another, and in the spontaneous songs that ring throughout Homework Club.

Homework Club is a fine example of the community-based programs at Closer to Home that provide children with the opportunities to excel, learn and grow in a safe environment.