

Fall 2012



Closer *to* Home

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Uniting vulnerable children, youth & families

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On September 29th, the youth in our GAP Teaching Home became **official tree stewards**. GAP received an ornamental crabapple tree through the City of Calgary Parks' **NeighbourWoods** Program. The tree stewardship initiative engages citizen and community involvement in the replenishment, growth and preservation of Calgary's urban forest. Keep up the great tree care and watering work, GAP! We can't wait to see your tree in full bloom this coming spring.

#### Dear Friends of Closer To Home,

This fall Closer to Home hosted our 17th Annual General Meeting where CTH staff came together to celebrate success, recognize practitioners and provide special recognition to our Volunteer, Donor and Practitioners of the year. On November 1st we launched our annual Adopt-a-Family campaign! Please read on for information about this campaign and how you can participate.

### Adopt-a-Family 2012 is Here!

By Mahmoud Rahim

With Christmas just around the corner, the staff and volunteers of Closer to Home Community Services are excited to be gearing up for Adopt-a-Family (AAF) 2012. Closer to Home is so excited about the Adopt-a-Family program that we began our campaign on Nov. 1, earlier than ever before. The purpose of the Adopt-a-Family program is to ensure a less stressful, more joyful Christmas for the children and families who participate in Closer to Home's programs, such as the Teaching Homes, Foster Care, Aboriginal Services and Community Programs.

Over the last few years, Closer to Home Community Services has teamed up with Calgary Academy School to help less fortunate children and families through the Adopt-a-Family campaign. Calgary Academy students and teachers in Grade 7 and 8 adopted 10 Closer to Home families last year. The students did their own fundraising, shopping and wrapping for the families they adopted. The families received gifts like toys, food, complete Christmas meals, household goods and clothes along with many other items on their wish lists. In total, about 340 people, 97 families and 205 children were served and more than \$83,000 was raised by Closer to Home's Adopt-a-Family 2011 campaign.

This year Closer to Home Community Services is again partnering with Calgary Academy School, and is including high school students and teachers so the Adopt-a-Family program can bring joy to even more families than last year.

If you have questions about this program, see the frequently asked questions about the Adopt-a-Family program on the Closer to Home website, [www.closetohome.com](http://www.closetohome.com). If you have further inquiries about the Adopt-a-Family program or any Closer to Home programs or services, please don't hesitate to contact us.

**If you would like to adopt a family, contribute to the Adopt-a-Family program or have any questions, please call Closer to Home at 403-543-0550 ext 226, email [aaf@closetohome.com](mailto:aaf@closetohome.com), or visit our website at [www.closetohome.com](http://www.closetohome.com) for more information.**





## CTH Annual General Meeting 2012

By Mahmoud Rahim

Closer to Home's 17th Annual General Meeting (AGM) was dedicated to unveiling our Annual Report, celebrating success, recognizing those practitioners who have achieved certification, and providing special recognition to our volunteer, donor and practitioner of the year.

Held on Oct. 29, the theme of this year's meeting was "Picture This..." Karen Olivier, Closer to Home's Executive Director, asked those people who attended the AGM to picture these images: a new mom attending her first parenting class; a child who was struggling in school but who just got an A on her last test; and a father who resolves family problems peacefully rather than resorting to anger.

Karen outlined the goals of Closer to Home and emphasized the importance this organization places upon the healthy development of children and the reuniting of families. She also acknowledged the efforts and dedication of staff and volunteers, and said they represent "pictures of determination, ingenuity, and perseverance."

Arlene Oostenbrink, an Associate Director at Closer to Home, presented certification awards to Krystina Cassidy, Rufina and Ian Sleight, Sonia Lopez, Cheryl Hanley, Minoush Rafie and Gwen Stewart. Certifications are integral to the professional development of practitioners using the Teaching-Family Model.

Erin O'Reilly, another Associate Director at Closer to Home, presented service awards to Tina Chapman, Megan Pelletier, Kandi Santerno, Janet Tailfeathers, Sonia Lopez, Rufina and Ian Sleight, Teresa Chan, Gwen Stewart and Jo-Ann O'Hara, some of whom have been with the agency for fifteen years!

The latter half of the AGM consisted of heartfelt speeches, stories and presentations by people whose lives have been changed for the better because of the programs and support available at Closer to Home.

We had special presentations from two women, each of whom gave personal and inspirational stories of strength and perseverance. While each of their stories had different themes and obstacles to overcome, the one thing these presentations had in common was the vital role that Closer to Home had in providing them with the programs, support, and tools to overcome the incredibly difficult, emotional and personal obstacles they had to face.

Kandi Santerno spoke about Nick Rafie, our Donor of the Year and the donations of time and money he has made to families in need. Anna Melissa Coletta and Josh Mann, Teaching Parents at Closer to Home, presented this year's Volunteer of the Year Award to Jodi Wright who has been volunteering as a mentor with a young lady in one of our Community Teaching Homes for almost two years and has made an amazing impact on the young woman's life. Finally, Erin O'Reilly presented Betty and John Mostert with the Practitioners of the Year Award Betty and John were also informed they had been nominated for an international award and are this year's recipients of the Lonnie and Elaine Phillips Award through the Teaching-Family Association.

***Thank you to everyone who came out to spend the evening with us and congratulations to the people who received recognition on this special night. We are proud to recognize their outstanding commitment to the Closer to Home mission; uniting vulnerable children, youth and families.***

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## November is Family Violence Prevention Month

By Milica Jankovic

Alberta has the second highest family violence rate in the country. The role of smaller community service agencies like Closer to Home is pivotal in developing strategies that focus on family violence prevention and early intervention.

Most family violence incidents that come to the attention of larger systems, like the police, result in charges being laid. In 2011, around 3,500 cases were investigated in Calgary. This leaves the majority of family violence incidents in the city - about 15, 000 in 2011 - unattended. Ken Froese, the coordinator for Prevention of Family Violence and Bullying with Calgary and Area Child and Family Services, points out that collaborative programs, such as the Domestic Conflict Response Team (DCRT), address community needs. The efforts are focused on early intervention such as counseling, basic needs referrals and court support. "A lot of abuse is unreported," states Ken, observing from the frontlines. "It is not a simple thing to just leave.

***(continued on page 3)***

The cycle of family violence (the honeymoon stage, the tension building stage, the explosion itself, and then back to the honeymoon stage) reveals that intervening as early as possible is essential in preventing abuse. Educational outreach refines the notions of abuse and community awareness. Domestic violence and abuse can be physical, emotional, verbal, sexual, or financial, explains Jennifer Bradley, an Outreach worker with the DCRT, who responds within the first 48 hours of an incident. In fact, timing can be everything, especially in Alberta; in 2009, Alberta had the third highest domestic homicide rate in Canada.

November is Family Violence Prevention Month which started in 1986 as a local initiative in the town of Hinton, Alberta where concerned residents launched a family violence education and prevention campaign.

Enabling action, and thus prevention through awareness and education, may not uncover all the answers as to why family violence happens. It happens everywhere, across different social and economic groups, age brackets and cultures. Being too afraid to leave, not knowing where they would go, what they would take, and not having any money are common reasons why “just leaving” is not a simple thing to do.

Community services lead the way in assisting families at risk of or experiencing domestic violence into safer situations, both emotionally and physically. The unreported nature of family violence tears the fabric of a community’s safety and well-being, because it allows for some individuals to live in isolation and fear.



***If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic violence or spousal abuse, please call the Family Violence Information Line, toll free 24/7 at 310-1818 or visit the Government of Alberta Family Violence Prevention page at [www.child.alberta.ca/home/593.cfm](http://www.child.alberta.ca/home/593.cfm) for more information. If you are in need of immediate help, dial 911.***



## **Social Service Groups Working Together to Reduce Poverty in Calgary**

**By Andrew Torry**

On April 11, 2012 Premier Redford promised, if re-elected, her government would eliminate child poverty in Alberta in five years and reduce overall poverty within 10 years. This promise provides hope for the future of Alberta’s children.

Locally, the Calgary Poverty Reduction Initiative, a joint initiative of the City of Calgary and United Way of Calgary to develop a long-term, community-based strategy to significantly reduce poverty in Calgary, was launched in January 2012.

One of the challenges facing this initiative is how to define poverty. Indeed, how can you fight something if not everybody agrees on what it is? There are many definitions of poverty. The United Nations defines it as a denial of choices, opportunities and the ability to participate effectively in society. The Copenhagen Declaration defines Absolute Poverty as a severe lack of access to basic needs like food, shelter and sanitation. Finally, the World Bank describes poverty as a low income coupled with an inability acquire basic goods and services necessary for survival with dignity. The theme of “dignity” is key in all of these definitions. The idea of human dignity is that all people are worthy of honour and respect, a regard for their rights, feelings, wishes and traditions. Poverty, generally speaking, denies dignity to its sufferers.

There are some metrics of poverty that depend on social context; these metrics measure income inequality rather than material deprivation or hardship, and often refer to Relative Poverty. The most common determinant of Relative Poverty is whether an income is above or below the median income for the population. While Absolute Poverty may mean lacking access to basic needs, Relative Poverty may manifest itself as a mother’s inability to afford nutritious meals and having no other option but to live in dilapidated housing. Absolute Poverty is clearly a crisis, but Relative Poverty can still affront human dignity.

Minoush Rafie, Coordinator of Closer to Home’s West Central Resource Centre, says that one of the most effective ways to reduce poverty in Alberta is to ensure our citizens are able to obtain a post-secondary education and develop skills that are in demand before entering the workforce. The problem is that for many people, this equation is made arduous by Calgary’s cost of living, which far outpaces income from government subsidies and minimum wage. Further, Minoush says that persons undergoing major transition periods, such as new Canadians, or persons experiencing divorce or escaping domestic violence, are especially vulnerable to the city’s costly living expenses. People struggling with mental illness and disability are also at risk of poverty.

***(continued on page 3)***

For example, a single mother facing language barriers with few employable skills will depend on government subsidies; but when confronted by high rental costs, expensive childcare and other living expenses, her chances of affording school to learn English and gain employable skills is sharply reduced, and her viable employment options will likely be low-paying jobs. Minoush suggests that social service providers need to review and adjust their policies to improve the living conditions of Calgary's impoverished citizens. Service providers across the city need to coordinate their services to help people afford housing, childcare, and other basic needs, in addition to helping them access education. Minoush feels that such a policy review would help more people survive with dignity as they educate themselves and make the transition from poverty to self-sufficiency.



## Donor Appreciation

Closer to Home would like to recognize our supporters from the last quarter (July 1, 2012 - September 30, 2012)

- Andrea Gleason
- Burns Memorial Fund
- Calgary Inter-Faith Food Bank
- Cristin Forbes-MacFarlane
- Deacons of ERC
- Erin O'Reilly
- Geoffrey McMillan
- George Demitropoulos
- Glamorgan Bakery
- Greco's Pizza and George's Lounge
- James D. Lytle, P. Eng.
- Jennifer Head
- Karen Olivier
- Kids Up Front Foundation
- Laura Zahr
- Linda Kolner
- Media Marketing Group Ltd.
- Minoush Rafie
- Neil Gidney
- Nikos Enterprises Ltd.
- Paul Schneider
- Sisters of Charity of St. Louis
- Susan Valdez
- Tina Chapman

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Do you wish to receive further correspondence from us such as our quarterly newsletter, donor recognition, or upcoming events?  Yes  No

Does Closer to Home have your permission to publish your name in the Donor Recognition section of CTH publications such as our quarterly newsletter and Annual Report?  Yes  No

Please send completed form to:  
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www.closetohome.com  
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Please visit our website at [www.closetohome.com](http://www.closetohome.com)  
To be removed from our mailing list, email [funddevelopment@closetohome.com](mailto:funddevelopment@closetohome.com)