Dear Friends of Closer to Home,

April showers are bringing May flowers at this very moment, and as we welcome summer with open arms, we also welcome you to our 2013 Annual Stampede Breakfast on July 4 at 9:00 am. Mark it on your calendars; there is a surprise this year so you won’t want to miss it! In this newsletter, you will also read about some remarkable, community minded organizations that have partnered with Closer to Home in a variety of ways to aide us in our mission of *Uniting vulnerable children, youth and families*.

**Sponsor Energy - Use Your POWER for GOOD!**

*By Mahmoud Rahim, Volunteer Journalist*

Alberta has a new electricity retailer, Sponsor Energy, and it has chosen Closer to Home Community Services to be one of its new community partners.

If you choose to sign up with Sponsor Energy, regardless of whether you are a residential or small business customer, Sponsor Energy will not only donate 50% of its profits on the sale of electrical power to a charity of your choice, you will also save money on your electricity bill when compared with other leading electricity providers in Alberta.

Sponsor Energy’s business model revolves around its customers and its local community. Its core business values are modeled on helping others and improving our society. Sponsor Energy does not inflate its prices in order to give back to its sponsored charities, and it has made the socially conscious corporate decision to reduce its profits in order to support charities all over Alberta.

Sponsor Energy has more than 50 community partners ranging from food banks to health research organizations, homeless shelters, and, of course, youth and family support organizations like Closer to Home Community Services. We encourage you to consider switching to Sponsor Energy in order to improve our local and regional communities. Switching your electrical retailer is easy, and maintaining your support for Sponsor Energy is even easier considering it offers one of the lowest electricity rates in Alberta.

**Check it out and sign up today!**

Donor Profile - About Staffing
By Rohan Somers, Volunteer Journalist

About Staffing has been donating to Closer to Home (CTH) since 2010, and has made numerous contributions to CTH and our clients throughout the years.

About Staffing first became involved with us when we contacted them for their recruitment services. Upon meeting with us and learning about our services and cause, About Staffing decided they liked what we were trying to do and wanted to help out by donating.

About Staffing Operations Manager Chris Massie says the company became enamored with our cause because of how it aligned with their own mission and values.

“Our mission is to enhance lives and companies by creating meaningful workplace connections,” says Massie. “But the most important part of that is enhancing lives, which is what we’re able to do by supporting Closer to Home.”

One of About Staffing’s many contributions is the donation they make based on direct hire placement. Normally, when About Staffing provides their recruitment services to a company and someone is directly hired as a result, they receive a percentage of the annual salary from the client company as payment for their services. When a client is a not-for-profit, such as Closer to Home, About Staffing returns a third of that amount back to the client as a donation.

The organization also makes contributions in the form of gift cards and calling cards for kids in group homes. In addition, they make in-kind donations, where a request for a specific item may be made by Closer to Home, and About Staffing will either go out and buy it or check to see if any staff members have something extra to donate.

About Staffing also participates regularly in the Adopt-a-Family program during the Christmas season, where the organization is given a profile of a family and gets together as an office to buy gifts for the family.

The value of services that Closer to Home provides to our clients is the reason About Staffing says they are happy to be a donor.

“It’s our way of enhancing Closer to Home’s ability to impact people’s lives,” said Massie. “We really believe in their cause.”

The Birthday Party Project
By Tina Chapman

Remember playing Pin the Tail on the Donkey, Musical Chairs and Simon Says at your childhood birthday parties? Remember filling yourself full of sugar and cake and running circles around your parents while they tried their best to capture those memories on film? These priceless childhood memories are a sweet recollection of a simpler time when we celebrated another year on Earth and another milestone reached.

Most of us have celebrated each of our birthdays with friends and family, so it can be quite heart-breaking to hear about a child who has not had the chance to celebrate these fun occasions.

While reading a story about birthday parties at one of our Homework Club programs, Minoush Rafie, Program Coordinator at Closer to Home, discovered that a young boy who recently turned 7 did not have a birthday party.

“I asked other children in our program, all ages six to 12, and the majority of them also said they did not have birthday parties,” explains Katie McArthur, a Family Support Worker at Closer to Home. And while some of the reasons for this are cultural or religious, another major factor is low income or large families, which can make it difficult for parents to have disposable income for each child to have their own special day.
"I contacted The Happy Birthday Project, a non-profit organization in Calgary, knowing that they provide supplies for birthday parties for one child at a time. They generously, without hesitation, agreed to do a birthday party for 28 kids!" says Katie. "Not only did they agree to make loot bags for each child, decorate the room and bake a cake to accommodate all the children’s dietary restrictions, they also volunteered to help out on the night of the party!"

The mission of The Happy Birthday Project (THBP) is to help families in need in the Calgary area to provide memorable birthday parties for their children. They deliver party packs that include all the decorations and supplies needed to throw a birthday party, as well as a new gift for the birthday boy or girl, and loot bags for the kids who attend the party. It is all made possible by donations and volunteers.

"We wanted to help a little bit more. We were hoping to provide Katie with all the decorations and everything to serve cake and juice to the kids, as well as 28 loot bags," says Crystal Gelsinger from THBP. Crystal, Mandy Watts and Ashley Landry (of THBP) posted on their Facebook group looking for volunteers to help make the gift bags and the response was phenomenal. Michelle Shoebridge, a friend of Crystal’s, offered to make a dairy and nut-free two-layer cake for the children. They were also surprised to receive a response from Flip Factory in Northeast Calgary, indicating that they would like to donate the space for the party. Flip Factory provided staff and closed down the entire space to host our party exclusively!

"We (also) contacted Southland Transportation, and after hearing about Katie and her hope to throw this celebration for these children, they were on board! They graciously offered up a bus and driver (free of charge) to make sure everyone was able to attend the event," says Crystal. "The birthday party was a blast, and it was so wonderful to meet the amazing kids we were celebrating! The smiles on their faces said it all."

Some more things the kids were saying:

“I liked the birthday. It made me very happy” – Age 8

“The surprise made me so excited and my heart pounded a lot” – Age 8

“It was so fun and I felt so excited for the surprise” – Age 10

“It was exciting and the bungee jump was super because it was the highest I’ve ever jumped!” – Age 9

“It was my first time seeing gymnastic stuff and I liked it when I went on the trampoline” – Age 9

“The bungee jump was so fun” – Age 12

The community partners who helped make this happen:
Happy Birthday Project - http://www.thehappybirthdayproject.org/
Flip Factory - http://www.flip-factory.com/
Southland Transportation - http://www.southland.ca/
CTH 2013 Annual Stampede Breakfast - Save the Date!
By Mahmoud Rahim, Volunteer Journalist

Street cleaning is currently underway in Calgary, and that can only mean one thing: summer is on its way, which means the 2013 Calgary Stampede is just around the corner.

This year, just like every year, Closer to Home Community Services (CTH) is proud to host its annual Stampede Breakfast on Thursday, July 4 from 9 a.m. – 11 a.m. in the parking lot of the Closer to Home office. This year’s CTH Stampede breakfast will be a fun morning of tasty hot pancakes cooked up by Calgary’s Batter Boys. Closer to Home is also happy to announce that community volunteers from Crystal Glass and Greco’s Pizza will be hosting and sponsoring children’s activities and face painting for the event.

We invite you to join us in celebrating The Greatest Outdoor Show on Earth, the Calgary Stampede, and to come visit us for some good food, great conversation and boot-stompin’ music as we celebrate one of Calgary’s most cherished annual traditions.

When: Thursday, July 4, 2013 from 9 a.m. until 11 a.m.
Where: Closer to Home Community Services Parking Lot, 3507A – 17 Avenue SW, Calgary, Alberta

Donor Appreciation
Closer to home would like to recognize our supporters from the last quarter (January 1, 2013 - March 31, 2013)

- Arjun Davda
- Barb Henning
- Bonnie & Rick Muir
- Brandy Bursey
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*For credit card donations, we will call you during business hours to verify information. All credit card donations are processed through the Canada Helos Website.

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: 3507A - 17 Avenue SW, Calgary, AB T3E 0B6
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