Caring for the Community

It is always inspiring to see community members coming together to achieve their common goals. Such opportunities are sometimes rare but when they come, such collective efforts yield exceptional results such as strengthening neighborhood relations, building a neighborhood support system, or making the community a cleaner and safer place to be. Additionally, if children are involved, they get to learn from these events and understand that participation helps build confidence and promotes connections with the community they live in.

One such event was recently held in the community of Glenbrook. Residents came together to meet their neighbors and do a community clean-up. The clean-up program was facilitated by the Women in Need Society of Calgary, the City of Calgary, Calgary Housing and Closer to Home Community Services (CTH).

“The event helped to make the community clean, safe and vibrant”, says CTH Program Coordinator Minoush Rafie. “It also gave a message that we have to take care of our community and make it presentable.”

The children were all excited to join their parents in the clean-up efforts and contribute to the good of their community. They also played games and enjoyed the delicious BBQ after all their hard work.

Closer to Home would like to thank Glamorgan Bakery and Emmanuel Christian Reformed Church of Calgary for their support in organizing the event.

If you are looking for ways to get involved in community events or programs being organized by Closer to Home, please call our West Central Community Resource Centre at (403) 543-0550, ext. 222.

Kiwehtata Parenting Program – Keeping the Circle Strong

We all need a little extra help sometimes. Often, young parents rely on their own family experience to develop effective parenting strategies and build a strong, healthy family. However, when these supports are not available, and life’s challenges make parenting extra difficult, a parenting program such as Kiwehtata may prevent more serious problems in the future.

Closer to Home’s Kiwehtata Parenting Program (Kiwehtata means “Bring it Home” in the Cree language) is designed to actively support Aboriginal families facing a variety of life challenges. The program teaches effective parenting and life skills for parents of children aged newborn to three years old.

Through intensive, hands-on learning experiences, parents gain basic parenting skills and deepen their understanding of child development, positive discipline and healthy eating. These classes are taught by Aboriginal Program Leaders who present concepts in a way that respects and promotes family lifestyles. “We share and listen to each other and find a solution to each of our unique situations or problems”, says the Kiwehtata Facilitator, Jan Tailfeathers.

I had an opportunity to witness one of Kiwehtata’s Parenting Classes recently. When my colleague and I entered the doors, there was a wonderful smell coming from the kitchen and a “humm” around the house as families and volunteers gathered. Jan and two longtime volunteers, Rhonda and Belva extended a warm welcome. It felt like family.

The Kiwehtata Parenting Program is currently held in a house in Northwest Calgary. This cozy home environment creates a true sense of family for participants. As I looked around, I noticed that each couple seemed quite happy to be with their kids throughout the parenting class.

Together, we watched a very informative video about positive child-care and nurturing skills, and a discussion session followed where participants shared their thoughts about what they learned. Jan also recapped what participants had learned about parenting in the past two weeks and invited feedback about the challenges parents might have implementing some of the skills. The participants were eager to share their experiences. Since this was the final day of the course, Jan offered to be available for continuous help and support for parents in their communities. After a lunch, a sharing circle was led by Randy Bottle, an Elder in the Aboriginal community and a volunteer for Closer to Home. Randy is present during these training sessions to facilitate ceremonies and sharing circles to deepen families’ awareness of the Aboriginal way of parenting and raising children.

Thanks to the help provided at Closer to Home’s Kiwehtata Parenting Program, families are able to keep the circle strong!
Closer to Home would like to recognize our supporters from the last quarter (Apr 1, 2015 - Jun 30, 2015)

Barb Henning • Beverly & Larry Flag • Calgary Inter-Faith Food Bank • County of Barrhead No. 11 • Emmanuel Christian Reformed Church Employees of Twin Butte Energy Ltd. • Eric Lumsden • Erin O’Reilly • Geoffrey & Marilyn McMillan • Glamorgan Bakery • James Evans Jennifer Head • Justin Senft • Kaitlin Nelson • Karen Olivier • Kate Andrews • Kids Up Front Foundation • Koral Evans • Laura Sletmoen Minoush Rafie • Office of Councillor Evan Woolley • Prakash Thapaliya • Shaganappi Health Clinic • Twin Butte Energy Ltd.

Building Confidence, Pride through Summer Camp

Can you feel it? Summer is here. With a break from school schedules and routines, children and youth will experience fresh air, exercise and build new friendships in the summer months.

Every child deserves the opportunity to experience summer camp. But for many children and youth from low-income families, summer can mean too much free time. Some families are at risk of isolation, as they cannot afford to send their children to summer programs while school is out of session.

Youth such as Ankita (name changed) eagerly count the days until Closer to Home’s free summer camp program because it provides a structured routine and safe place to go during the summer months. Before attending Summer Camp, Ankita was bored. “I never had anything to do. Then, a great opportunity opened up and that was attending Closer to Home Summer Camp.”

Closer to Home’s Summer Camp program offers children and youth from low-income families the opportunity for continuous skill building and connections to their community through educational activities and field trips throughout the city. Nutritious lunches and snacks are provided to enhance youths’ understanding of health and well-being.

Last summer was full of firsts for Ankita and her peers. She tried new outdoor activities such as golf. In doing so, she made new friends, discovered a sense of confidence and a persevering attitude. “I love golfing and I would definitely come back with my family to teach them some day,” Ankita explains. “I got to go to Summer Camp for one whole month and I was never bored.”

Under the supervision of a camp coordinator, Summer Camp also involves youth volunteers. Often, these volunteers are alumni of previous camp sessions and other Closer to Home programs such as Homework Club.

“There is always something to look forward to. Anything is possible at Summer Camp. Our volunteers and leaders always keep us happy and entertained.”

Give the Gift of Camp Today!

Every child deserves to go to Summer Camp. And you can make that happen when you make a donation to Closer to Home.

For 20 years, Closer to Home has provided free, educational and engaging summer programming for children and youth from low-income families. Our Summer Camp program gives children something to look forward to during the summer months, such as swimming and crafts, field trips to parks and museums in the city, as well as team-building activities that develop self-esteem and social skills.

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Will you give a child impacted by poverty, such as Ankita, the meaningful summer camp experience she deserves?

When you give today, your donation says “yes” to every child or youth whose family experiences financial barriers and limited access to community resources.

Your gift ensures that these children are involved in positive summer activities, which increases the strength and safety of their living environments.

Give the gift of camp today and help children achieve the true sense of safety, connections to the community and healthy futures that they deserve.

I would like to make a MONTHLY GIFT of:

☐ $30/mth ☐ $20/mth ☐ $15/mth ☐ $10/mth ☐ Other $ ____/mth

OR, here is my SINGLE GIFT of:

☐ $500 ☐ $250 ☐ $100 ☐ $50 ☐ $25 ☐ Other $ ____

Name ____________________________

Address ____________________________

City ______ Prov ______ Postal Code ______

Phone # ____________________________

Email ____________________________

☐ I would like to receive email communications from CTH such as the quarterly e-newsletter.

☐ I consent to receive email communications from CTH such as the quarterly e-newsletter.

Method of Payment:

☐ My cheque made payable to “Closer to Home Community Services” is enclosed.

☐ I would prefer to use my credit card.

For credit card donations, we will call you to verify information and process your donation through the CanadaHelps website (www.canadahelps.org).

Cardholder Name ____________________________

Card # ____________________________

Exp _____/______

Cardholder Signature ____________________________

Questions? Contact us at (403) 543-0550 Ext 235.