Fostering a Legacy of Hope

A Longtime Foster Parent Reflects

“Everybody makes mistakes,” says Ellen*, a Foster Parent with Closer to Home. “We’re all only one tragedy or crisis away from doing the same thing.”

Ellen and her husband, Steven*, have opened their home to more than 50 foster children over the last 15 years. Children have come to them from all different kinds of backgrounds and situations.

Ellen remembers taking in a 3-month-old girl named Lily*. Despite her young age, Lily had a difficult time trusting people and would arch her back away every time someone tried to hold her. Lily’s mom loved her daughter, but due to her own trauma, she couldn’t bring herself to hug her or feed her properly.

“Mom worked very hard to get her back,” says Ellen. “She wanted her back desperately, but it was hard for her.” She had to address her personal trauma before she could effectively meet her daughter’s needs.

Ellen and Steven worked hard to get Lily to trust, love and cuddle. Eventually, she was returned to her mom. And the look on mom’s face when Lily cuddled into her for the first time? 

[Story continues on page 2...]
“Unbelievable,” Ellen remembers, smiling. “It’s the greatest feeling in the world to help a baby go back to her mom.”

While children are in her care, she constantly has her camera out, snapping photos. When parents are ready to reunite with their children, Ellen gives them a memory book filled with photos of birthdays and special moments. “It gives parents back a piece of what they lost when they messed up,” she says. “And hopefully it helps them realize, ‘I don’t want to have this happen again.’”

Ellen says the support she receives from Closer to Home – where staff are on call 24/7 – is a big help. She recalls one incident early on in her time as a Foster Parent, when she needed guidance in a scary situation. “If Closer to Home hadn’t been able to give us that advice on a Sunday afternoon,” she says, “who knows what would have happened.”

“Every time I think I’m not going to continue,” she says, “someone comes into my life and I realize I need to be there for them. Even if I never see them again when they leave, I know I played a little part in their life to get them home.”

“It’s the greatest feeling in the world to help a baby go back to her mom.”

“Every time I think I’m not going to continue,” she says, “someone comes into my life and I realize I need to be there for them. Even if I never see them again when they leave, I know I played a little part in their life to get them home.”

If you’re interested in becoming a Foster Parent, please call Jody at (403) 543-0550 Ext. 243. She would love to answer your questions and get you started in the process.

*Names changed to protect privacy

If you have parenting questions for our staff? Send them to us at jmelnychuk@closetohome.com and you may be featured in our next newsletter!
Kick Starting a Child’s Potential

“I’ve got just one year left, and then I’m going to be a mechanical engineer,” Omar* says with pride.

Fourteen years ago, Omar and his family left everything behind in Turkey and landed in Calgary.

For six-year-old Omar, that meant leaving behind his friends, aunts, uncles and cousins. It meant his new home was different – bigger, but with fewer visitors coming and going.

His new school was different too – a maze of hallways and classrooms filled with unfamiliar faces. The scenery, the weather, and the language were different. In a 14-hour flight, his life had turned upside-down. But Omar and his family were resilient. They were excited to be in Canada, and for all the opportunity and adventure that lay ahead.

During his first summer, Omar’s parents registered him in CTH’s Summer in the City program, a free, educational day camp for children from low income families. That summer, Omar developed vital skills, such as literacy and communication, and explored his new community.

Between field trips to the library and the swimming pool, Omar learned how to care for his physical and emotional health. Quickly, his confidence soared. Suddenly, Omar didn’t feel so alone. He stood out as a leader.

Even when Omar outgrew Camp, he returned to volunteer and mentor other children. Today, he has nearly completed his mechanical engineering degree, proving that with a little kick start, children can reach their potential.

You can help children like Omar access vital programs like Summer in the City. Please consider making a donation by completing the form on page 4.

*Name changed to protect privacy
Thank You!

Closer to Home would like to recognize our supporters for the last quarter (January 1, 2016 - March 31, 2016)

Align Association of Community Services * Andrew McQuiston * Ashley O'Reilly
Barb Henning * Beverly and Larry Flug * Bones, Barks N' Baths * Brown Bagging for
Calgary Kids * Calgary Inter-Faith Food Bank * Calgary South Rotary Partners
Common Ground * Emmanuel Christian Reformed Church * Eric Lumsden
Erin O'Reilly * Geoffrey and Marilyn McMillan * Glamorgan Bakery * Glamorgan
Church of God * Henry Dunfield * James Evans * Janice & Dave Besson * Jennifer Head
Justin Senft * Karen Olivier * Kate Andrews * Kids Up Front Foundation * Koral
Evans * Laura Sletmoen * Layl Alnawwab * McQuiston Executive Wealth Group at RBC
Dominion Securities Inc. * MEG Energy Corp. * Meghan Hilderman-Macdonnell
Melcor YMCA at Crowfoot * Minoush Rafie * Prakash Thapaliya * PricewaterhouseCoopers Canada Foundation * RBC Foundation * Rotary Club of
Calgary Centennial * Royal Tyrrell Museum of Palaeontology * Shaganappi Health
Clinic * Shaw Communications Inc. * Sponsor Energy * Sureway International Inc. * The
Calgary Foundation * United Way of Calgary, Donor Choice Program * Vogel LLP

FAMILY TEACHER

This full-time live-in position in your own home is ideal for an individual or couple looking to have a positive and lasting impact on children and their families.

Living and working in your family home environment with one youth, the Family Teachers’ primary objective is to encourage youth to develop to their maximum potential and enable them to successfully integrate back into their families and communities.

For a detailed job description and for more career and volunteer opportunities, please visit our website at www.closertohome.com.