Winter 2017

Message from CEO

Building a Legacy of Hope for Families

Christmas 2016 was a joy-filled event at Closer to Home! Our donors and supporters came in droves to support 215 families in need and gave 876 people – of whom 579 were children – a very special and magical Christmas. Calgary’s generous spirit shone through and increased the number of families receiving gifts from their wish list and a week’s worth of food by 124% from last year.

It is clear that more families are feeling the impact of the recession and the stress that comes from strained finances. When the basic needs of food and shelter security are not met, we also see an increase in interpersonal and family violence, poor coping strategies, hopelessness and upset or withdrawn children. Our donors understand the impact of the economy and are finding ways to reach out and share what they have with others. Thank you for giving so many families help and hope during the Christmas season!

As we enter into a new year, we know that families continue to face many challenges and uncertainties. At CTH we stay focused on the positives - building family strengths and increasing community capacity and timely responses to crisis. Having resources and skilled staff available at a moment’s notice ensures families are supported before the issues they face are too overwhelming to solve.

Strong families living in strong and healthy communities - it is the ideal world for healthy and happy children to grow and to thrive. It is what we all want our city to have and to become. We continue to embrace our mandate of supporting, teaching and healing families when life throws them a curve ball or becomes so challenging that their family starts to break down. Rebuilding the family, providing strategies and teaching skills that help parents cope and change, and helping children and parents become more resilient, benefits us all and makes Calgary a good place to live.

So many of you continue to support our work at Closer to Home. We truly appreciate the leaders in the community that champion our agency, and our donors who give generously to support CTH programs. We will continue to help children thrive, be there for families who need help and together with you, build a legacy of hope.

Karen Olivier, Chief Executive Officer

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Let’s be social!

Follow us on social media for more updates:

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Is your child on the verge of creating a social media account?

Jodie, a Family Support Worker with CTH, has some advice for how you can keep your child safe online without invading his or her privacy.

Visit www.closertohome.com/blog to read more.
This past Christmas, we were able to support a record number of families, thanks to all our donors.

From new donors providing generous and year-round support like the Calgary Lexus Dealers to longtime supporters including students and teachers from local school, Calgary Academy, to our wonderful Adopt-a-Family title sponsor, McQuistion Executive Wealth Group, to staff members at local businesses, families and individuals - you all took a moment to think of less fortunate families and stepped forward to help them out during Christmas.

Stories like Dina’s* inspire all of us to give back to our community whenever we can, despite our own challenges.

Dina moved to Calgary from Eastern Europe three years ago to escape armed conflict. Like many families in a new country, the first year was stressful for Dina and her 6-year-old son. She was looking for a job, trying to connect with new neighbors and also get her son enrolled in school.

When researching local community organizations for possible support, she learned about Closer to Home. She was received counselling and referral services. And, since Christmas was approaching, she was also referred to our Adopt-a-Family initiative. Her son was all smiles after receiving the gifts he had wished for and Dina was thankful to Closer to Home and her donor. Mom and son had not expected their Christmas to be this bright only few weeks earlier!

As time passed by, Dina and her son began to settle into their new home. Dina found a job and her son was doing well in the school. Moved by the support she received from CTH, she started volunteering for the agency in her free time.

Last year, considering the increased need in our community during Christmas, CTH called upon its supporters to help out and we received an overwhelming response, including Dina and over 200 new donors! Dina was thrilled to be able to give back to families who needed support in a way she once had. She signed up as a donor and enabled us to provide Christmas gifts to more families in need. It was a full-circle moment for the staff at the agency who knew her.

On behalf of the families who received support during Christmas 2016, we thank Dina and all of our donors for your generous community spirit. With your support, we’re confident that we will continue supporting families like Dina’s in 2017, and perhaps we will see another full circle moment next Christmas.

*Name changed to protect privacy

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**Power Play**

Closer to Home was invited to help with supervision of children and youth participating in Power Play, a program organized by the Calgary Police Service (CPS) that helps kids learn skating skills and hockey. Upon receiving the request, staff at the West Central Community Resource Centre (WCCRC) assigned a staff member to supervise the kids while they travel on the bus from the community of Shaganappi to MaxBell Arena and back.

Gat Bichoik, Family Support Worker at the WCCRC, who has been supervising the kids says the children, mostly from new immigrant families, really enjoy learning skating and hockey. The parents are delighted to see their kids learn hockey and skating under supervision of CTH staff and we are equally glad to be able to help when asked.

**Westside Interagency Community Meeting**

Closer to Home is part of an inter-agency group in the south west community that meets once every two month between 12:00 to 1:30 pm to discuss programs and services offered by agencies in south west Calgary.

Minoush Rafie, Coordinator at the WCCRC, attends the meetings regularly and says the members are looking to see involvement from more organizations like community associations and schools to better understand the issues in the community.

If you would like to know more about the forum or provide feedback, you can write to Minoush at mrafe@closer-to-home.com or speak with her at (403) 543-0550 Ext. 224.
Making It Happen

Mark, Group Care Program Coordinator

Alberta was only supposed to be temporary for Mark, the new program coordinator at Achievement Place One, one of Closer to Home’s three community group homes.

In the summer of 2015, Mark planned to spend the teaching offseason hiking in the mountains before heading back to Yellowknife, NWT, where he worked as a substitute teacher and classroom assistant. But he soon decided to make the big move to Calgary, and began his journey at Closer to Home in July as an Alternate Teaching Parent, working with youth who had been separated from their families. He quickly became an integral member of the team.

“I’m very invested in the kids,” he says, recalling the success of one of his youth who has since moved out of care to live with his family. “Cam* spent almost half his life in care with Closer to Home,” Mark says.

“Being able to see Cam move into a family placement after such a long time in care, and to have it be successful – that’s pretty cool,” Mark says. “I still see him every six weeks or so. I’ll take him to lunch or to a movie. I call him and he tells me he’s doing really well and that school is going well. His success is a huge deal.”

Mark takes great pride in watching his youth grow into successful young adults. “Most of them have gone through so much trauma in their lives – neglect, abuse – and to bring them to a point where we’re seeing them succeed is amazing. It doesn’t always happen. But when you do see it, it’s all worth it.”

Mark credits the team at Closer to Home for facilitating the success of the youth, right up to executive management. “Everyone has each other’s back,” he says. “Everyone is willing to work in the programs – managers, directors, even people from other programs will help out when they can. To have all that support trickles right down to the kids.”

Transitioning from Alternate Teaching Parent to Program Coordinator over the last two months has been exciting for Mark, who enjoys taking a larger role in planning for the success of the youth.

Closer to Home operates three group homes, called Community Teaching Homes, in Calgary and Airdrie. Visit our website at www.closertohome.com to learn more about how these homes help to reunify youth with their families.

*Name changed to protect youth’s privacy

Reflecting on Our Year

Thank you to everyone who came out to our Report to the Community in November. It was a wonderful evening full of stories, laughter and even tears, as we heard from some of our clients, staff, donors and volunteers. And, thanks to the support of some generous community donors, we raised more than $1,000 to support our programs and services into 2017.

Photo Credit: Dean Mullin
Join Our Team

ALTERNATE TEACHING PARENTS
This permanent full-time position, in Calgary or Airdrie, works closely with a team of professionals to support children and youth in a community group home. The Support Worker’s primary responsibility is to facilitate success for children and youth by assisting with day to day activities and routines, implementing skill development strategies, managing crisis, assisting with school difficulties and providing relief coverage.

FAMILY TEACHERS
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.

TEACHING PARENTS
This position 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.

HOMEWORK CLUB VOLUNTEER
Homework Club Volunteer works closely with the Homework Club Program Facilitator to assist school aged children with homework, test preparation and other learning activities. The volunteer is responsible for assisting with set up and clean up, before and after the program. Homework Club Volunteer will also help with the preparation of materials for learning and recreational activities when needed and keep program materials, files and the motivation system up to date.

For detailed information on above positions or to check out more career and volunteer opportunities, please visit our website at www.closertohome.com.

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 CanadaHelps (www.canadahelps.org). Ph: _____________________

Cardholder Name __________________________
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I would like to remain anonymous, please do not recognize my name in the Donor Recognition section of CTH publications such as this quarterly newsletter.

Visit www.closertohome.com for the full list of donors and supporters.

Thank You!

CLOSER TO HOME WOULD LIKE TO RECOGNIZE OUR DONORS AND SUPPORTERS FOR THE LAST QUARTER (OCTOBER 1 - DECEMBER 31, 2016)

We are overwhelmed by the support our community has shown over the past few months. Thanks to you, more families will be able to access critical programs and services in 2017.

Visit www.closertohome.com for the full list of donors and supporters.