



When Enough is Not Enough



At Christmas time, the need for extra support becomes increasingly apparent for many Calgary families. Many are barely making ends meet with their regular expenses, and with bills already piling up, the thought of budgeting for gifts and a special holiday meal seems like an impossible task.

This past Christmas season, Closer to Home's community of donors stepped up to support a record number of families through Adopt-a-Family, presented by McQuiston Executive Wealth Group.

"The increased need in our city is substantial," says Karen Olivier, Closer to Home's Chief Executive Officer. "More families are struggling, but there are fewer initiatives like this out there where support can be accessed."

More than 1,900 people came to Closer to Home for help in 2017, nearly a 20% spike from the previous year. Some are struggling with basic needs like food and shelter, such as the single dad who is injured and cannot work, or the family of four who don't quite qualify for government assistance despite taking a \$20,000 hit to their income when Mom lost her job this year.

Many of these families first connect with our West Central Community Resource Centre (WCCRC), through Adopt-a-Family, other community programs like Women's Group or Homework Club, or simply by walking in.

Staff at the WCCRC are trained to help families with a variety of situations that could put them in crisis, such as job loss, illness, family violence, divorce, home evictions and more. Many newcomers to Canada also come for support connecting with their new community and getting a positive start.

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Most Needed Donations



Closer to Home is in need of some new items to support the children, youth and families we serve.

- Infant/Baby Wraps
- Towels
- Face Cloths
- Recreational Passes (Bowling, Movie)
- Zoo Passes
- Sport Socks
- Subway, Tim Hortons Gift Cards (\$5-\$10 each)
- Hygiene/Toiletry Items (Shampoo and Conditioner – Unisex)
- Gift Certificates for Hair Cuts
- Tupperware, Water Bottles
- Garbage Cans, Laundry Baskets
- Soft Blankets
- Room Decorations (Posters, night lights, desk lights)

Should you have any of these items, please contact Jessica at (403) 543-0550, Ext. 250 or jmelnychuk@closerhome.com.

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When Jeff* walked in to Closer to Home, he had a difficult time asking for help. As a single dad with three kids, he works hard to provide for his family. He'd never had to ask for help before. Jeff works full-time in retail, but his income isn't sufficient to meet all of his family's needs. When his hours were cut at work, he was forced to put his home on the market to try to stay above water.



In order to qualify for subsidies with programs like the City of Calgary's Fair Entry Program, which helps families access critical services such as the low-income transit pass and recreation fee assistance, a family of four like Jeff's must make no more than \$46,362 per year.

Jeff's salary is slightly above this threshold, which means he does not qualify for assistance. But after taxes, mortgage and utility payments, groceries and other bills, he has almost nothing left for things like taking his kids to the dentist, lunchroom or field trip fees, recreation expenses or saving for his children's futures.

"It can be so challenging for families like Jeff's," says Laura Eeles, Family Support Worker at Closer to Home. "They are educated and employed, but due to circumstances out of their control, they end up being stuck in this sort of limbo."

"Their income isn't low enough to qualify for supports, but they're struggling every month living paycheck to paycheck," she continues. "They try to be proactive – like seeking help for utility payments before a disconnection notice – but still end up at risk of financial crisis due to the lack of early intervention resources. It's like they have to hit rock bottom before they qualify for many supports."

With everyday expenses continuing to pile up and utility bills rising through the last cold months of winter, families like Jeff's need early intervention and prevention programs and resources that help them avoid crisis.

You can help.

Fill out our form on Page 4 or visit our website to make a donation today. Your donation will support Closer to Home programs like the West Central Community Resource Centre and its Family Assistance Fund, which provides emergency supports for families who are facing potential crisis.

*Name changed to protect privacy

PARENTING TIPS

I am a single parent. I work full time and my daughter, goes to after care at her school. Unfortunately, it is closed during spring break. I can take a few days off work, but not for the entire break. Are there any low cost or no cost activities she can participate in while I am at work, and how can I plan better for this scheduled break next year?

As a single parent, it can be challenging and expensive to plan care for children during school breaks. However, there are some affordable options and ideas for you.

One idea would be to coordinate with neighbours, co-workers, family or friends to plan a childcare swap or, you could try to find a teenage babysitter. Registering for school break camps is another option.

The City of Calgary offers spring break day camps, most with pre and post care available. Vivo (formerly Cardel Place) and the YMCA have school break camps with options for one day or multiple days.

In addition, KidZinc has camps for \$165/child/week. You can also check your community's resources like churches and libraries to find out what programming is being offered.

Finally, you can connect with our staff who can tell you about after-school programs we offer in the community and help you plan ahead for next year.

For more information, or links to these resources, please contact us at 403-543-0555.

- Minoush Rafie, Coordinator - West Central Community Resource Centre

Do you have parenting questions for our staff? Send them to jmelnychuk@closerhome.com and it may be featured in our next newsletter!

This year, Closer to Home connected with hundreds of new volunteers thanks to United Way's Day of Caring program.



185 people across **17** companies
volunteered **962** hours of their time

Volunteers completed **13** different projects, including yard maintenance, Christmas shopping and decorating, baking and creating care packages for youth



Thank you to all of our Day of Caring volunteers, including:

- ARC RESOURCES
- BANBURY CROSSROADS SCHOOL
- CANADIAN PROGRESS CLUB - MOUNT ROYAL
- CBRE LTD.
- CITY OF CALGARY ASSESSMENT DEPARTMENT
- ENMAX
- ENTERPRISE HOLDINGS
- IMPERIAL OIL
- PERPETUAL ENERGY INC.
- REPSOL OIL & GAS INC.
- SAIT
- SHELL CANADA LTD.
- STANTEC CONSULTING LTD.
- SUNCOR ENERGY
- UNITED WAY OF CALGARY AND AREA
- UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
- AND VARIOUS INDIVIDUALS

Thank You!

Our heartfelt gratitude to all our donors and volunteers for supporting Closer to Home in 2017.

Your generous support not only helped 325 families in your community have a merrier Christmas, it also provided families with year-round programs, services and supports. You are empowering families to stay together.

Please visit www.closetohome.com/blog to find the full list of donors and supporters from September 16, 2017 to December 31, 2017.

Join Our Team

FAMILY SPECIALIST

In this full-time position, the Family Specialist works as part of the Family Matters program, to support families in learning skills necessary for them to more effectively meet the needs of their family and life situation. Utilizing the principles of the Teaching-Family Model, the Family Specialist assists families and individuals with problem solving, parenting skills, child development needs, budgeting, advocacy and other skills which increase the families' ability to set attainable goals and create success.

FAMILY CAFE VOLUNTEER

This is an opportunity to give back to your community by getting involved with the Family Café Program. Family Café is a place where parents and their children ages 0-5 can come to connect with one another and take part in early educational activities. The program runs every Thursday morning until June 2018. The volunteer will be responsible for assisting the Program Facilitator with setting up, cleaning up, and engaging with parents and children as they participate in activities.

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

Adopt-a-Family Impact

325
families

PEOPLE HELPED

Our donors supported 110 (51%) more families than last year. Out of 1,352 people helped, 828 were children

1,352
people

309
donors

DONOR SUPPORT

309 donors opened up their hearts and gave over \$225,000 to support local families in need

\$225k

91
volunteers

VOLUNTEERS

91 volunteers, including individuals and corporate groups, put in over 300 hours of volunteer work

300
hours

YES, I WANT TO HELP FAMILIES LIKE JEFF'S!



I would like to join *The Circle*, with my **MONTHLY GIFT** of:

\$100/mth \$25/mth \$10/mth Other \$ ____/mth

OR, here is my **SINGLE GIFT** of: _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Prov _____ Postal Code _____

Phone # _____

Email _____

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.

Method of Payment:

My cheque made payable to "Closer to Home Community Services" is enclosed.

I would prefer to use my credit card.

We will call you to process your donation through CanadaHelps. Ph: _____

You can also make your contribution online at www.closetohome.com, just click the DONATE button.

Please return your completed form to:

3507A 17 Ave SW Calgary, Alberta T3E 0B6
Or fax your completed form to (403) 246-6406

Questions? Contact us at (403) 543-0550 Ext. 250