



**CONNECTIONS
COUNSELLING AND
CONSULTING FOUNDATION**

N E W S L E T T E R

The Connections newsletter is distributed to update our Friends with current information about our fundraising activities, staff and board notes, and general events at Connections.

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October 26, 2006

Notes from the Agency Director



As I write my notes, gentle flurries of snow are floating past my window and I'm shaking my head wondering how could it possibly be mid October? Plans for programs and special activities for Christmas are underway and our thoughts are turning to what is ahead in 2007.

This fall, I will mark my 7th anniversary at Connections Counselling and Consulting Foundation. Our growth during this time, in terms of the number of families we support, the programs we offer and the staff required to

carry out our mandate has been very exciting. Growth within any organization, particularly a small organization, presents many opportunities and challenges.

In May of this year we were saddened by the death of Brenda Aries, a long-term board member. Brenda had been a true advocate and supporter of Connections and the work we do. Brenda joined Connections Board of Directors in the year 2000. Her wisdom, insights and humor were great assets to the agency. Brenda once said that Connections was a "small agency with a big heart". I've often used that quote along with the recognition that it requires more than a big heart for the agency to carry out the work we do.

If we start with the big heart and add dedicated staff, board members and volunteers we have a good base from which to begin. Add to that the support from individuals, corporations, businesses in the community, funders and community partners, and then we can collectively address any challenges and opportunities we might face in our growth. Together we will make a positive impact in the lives of individuals with disabilities, their families and in the community at large.

I'd like to acknowledge and thank the agencies that partner with us to offer Sibshops. Please read the article on Sibshops and the Conference to learn more about who those partners are and about this great program. We welcome the Family and Community Resource Centre at the Alberta Children's Hospital who have joined that partnership.

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Mission Statement

Empowering individuals through education and advocacy by providing:

1. *Ongoing family support to parents with a developmental disability and their children.*
2. *Counselling to persons with a developmental disability, their families, and their caregivers.*

Notes from the Agency Director, con't

Connections continues to partner as well with *Families Matter* in providing facilitators for the Parent Child Mother Goose program and Nobody's Perfect in various locations in the city. We also partner with the Calgary Board of Education to facilitate the Roots of Empathy program.

As you read the articles below you will learn more about partnerships with Calgary Children's Foundation and SVP Calgary. Check out the information about the production of DVDs and some of the neat activities that Connections' families have participated in. Should you have any questions about Connections and the information in our newsletter, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Best Regards,
Pat Morris, RSW
Agency Director

Congratulations Lindsey!



On July 19, 2006, Lindsey, one of our staff members, her husband David, and big brother Jaxon welcomed Paige Lily to their family. What a little cutie she is!

Connections' 3rd Casino



Connections' third casino will take place some time in the first half of 2007. No specific date has been set, but we will let you know as soon as possible.

Our casino dollars help support daily operating costs, exciting and innovative programs, and technology. Aside from *United Way* funding, the casino is our largest fundraising initiative and puts the most money in our piggy bank!

We need your support for this event to be a success. Approximately 40 people are required to run a casino. If you have not already signed up to volunteer, please give Lauren a call at 209-1100. Your support will make all the difference!



Connections' Family Camp

The first annual family camping trip was attended by many of Connections' families. We all made it to the zoo parking lot where a school bus was waiting to take everyone to our two-night outing. The camping trip was held at *Our Lady of Peace Ranch (NoKaOi)*, just outside of Bragg Creek. The families were treated to hay rides; boat rides, canoeing, and horse back riding. This is to name just a few of the activities enjoyed by everyone. The ranch supplied all of the wonderful activities, as well as all of the meals. It was great to sleep in the large teepees, and many appreciated the indoor washrooms and showers. Games of badminton and frisbee were enjoyed by large groups of kids and parents at all times of the day – Connections' families have wonderful frisbee and badminton talents! Our group's teenagers provided music, so it was very up beat.

The Trading Post, a free of charge thrift store, was open to visitors on Saturday afternoon. Families were able to pick up items such as clothes, shoes, and toys. The shopping spree was enjoyed by all.

Special thanks need to go out to many people. First, a big thanks to the staff and volunteers at *Our Lady of Peace Ranch*. They made everyone feel very welcome. Thanks to Connections staff for their participation and to Charlotte who made the trip possible for our families.

Connections' Vision

"People with developmental disabilities will be accepted as valued members of their families and communities."

In order to realize this vision, we rely on the support of our funders, community groups, schools, service clubs, foundations, and individuals.

Connections' Family Camp, con't

Many thanks to the teens, T.C., Heinz, Ashton, Cody, and Ryan for including and helping with the little ones. The caring and kindness you showed everyone helped the trip go so smoothly. Finally, thanks to all the parents and families who participated. We'll see you all again next year!

Here are some comments parents had to say about their trip to *Our Lady of Peace Ranch*:

"Interesting, amazing, a whole bunch of things to do"

"Make it longer"

"There's something for everyone to do"

"I am looking forward to seeing everyone at the next family night and the Christmas party"

Written by Donna Cashin



Sibshops

A fun program for kids and teens 7-17 years of age

Connections is extremely pleased to announce that the **Calgary Children's Foundation** has once again provided us with a grant to ensure the continuation of our current Sibshops programs. We'd like to express our sincere appreciation to the *Calgary Children's Foundation* for their generous support.

In May, the Junior High Teen group was launched. The enthusiasm shown by the participants was incredible and speaks to the importance of having Sibshops available for teens as well as for younger children. Our Senior High/Young Adult group continues to meet every other month.

We are delighted to announce that the **Family & Community Resource Centre** at Alberta Children's Hospital has joined **Connections, Between Friends, Calgary SCOPE Society, Community Inclusion Support Society, and Renfrew Educational Services** to offer Sibshops in Calgary.

Sibshops, con't

Our Saturday morning Sibshops for children aged 7 to 11 years of age is currently taking place at the **new** Alberta Children's Hospital site. Six very capable facilitators from the partner agencies are there each Saturday, leading the 24 kids (our biggest registration ever) in the fun activities that are part of Sibshops. The new Hospital site is bright, inviting and an awesome place to host Sibshops.

Reunion groups for past participants 7 to 11 years of age will be happening every other month. Our next one will be mid-November (actual date to be confirmed).

Our next Saturday Sibshops program for new participants ages 7 to 11 years will be held in late February or early March.

Written by Pat Morris

Sibshops Conference

The agencies who partner to sponsor Sibshops, hosted a two day training conference on September 22 and 23 called **Brothers and Sisters of People with Special Needs: Too Important to Ignore**. Based on the evaluations, we are very pleased to say our first endeavour at hosting a conference of this nature was a huge success. Within days of the conference ending, we started to receive calls and emails asking when we'll do it again!

Don Meyer, the creator of Sibshops and Director of The Arc of the United States' Sibling Support Project, traveled from Seattle, Washington to conduct the workshops much to the delight of those attending. Don's insight, compassion and humor ensured participants left the conference with greater understanding of the impact siblings with special needs have on their brothers and sisters.



Sibshops Conference, con't



Sixty-four people, including parents of children with special needs, adult siblings, service providers and other professionals attended the workshop and Sibling Panel presentation on the Friday. Thirty-four service providers attended the remaining training workshops and "demo" Sibshops on the Saturday, from various parts of the province. One of the main goals of this conference was to train potential Sibshops facilitators so that this very worthwhile program can be offered throughout Alberta.

Our sincere thanks to the Sibling Panelists: Sarah Andrews-Luft, Ashley Carle, Lindsey Cartwright, Hilary Foulkes, Erin Gruber, and Stefan Herlein. Their honesty and openness in responding to the questions posed by both Don Meyer and the conference participants was appreciated and had a powerful impact on everyone.

Great thanks to Lisa Tuplin and Pam Matsumiya for all their hard work ensuring no one left thirsty or hungry. These two ladies have amazing organizational skills and their gift for hospitality was experienced and very much appreciated by all.

In addition to the sponsoring agencies and their reps, we'd like to acknowledge the time and dedication of the Conference Committee members who included: Sheri MacLaren, Pat Morris, Rhonda Phillips, Lauren Raymore, and Lisa Tuplin. Thank you. As well thanks to Patsy Casselman from the Alberta Children's Hospital for the "goodie" bags for the Sibshops participants.

To the Sibshops kids who attended the mock "Sibshops" with Don and the rest of us on Saturday – you were awesome and we had such fun.

Last but not least, thanks to the various agency representatives and other participants who so kindly helped the committee with clean up, including putting away chairs and tables both days.

Written by Pat Morris

Social Venture Partners

We are extremely pleased to announce that SVP Calgary has chosen Connections Counselling and Consulting as its 2006 investee. Social Venture Partners does so much more than provide financial grants to non-profit organizations. They truly partner with small agencies by giving their time and expertise to assist and strengthen the organization in its growth and development, which leads to successful outcomes. The partners gain greater understanding of the issues faced by the individuals and families the agency supports, and strive towards making positive changes in the community. We look forward to this new partnership.



Family Fun Day Picnic *It Was a Hail of a Picnic!*

On July 6th, over 30 clients, staff, and board members gathered at Edworthy Park for what turned into a very memorable Family Day picnic.

Not long after we began eating our way through sandwiches, veggies, and other assorted goodies, the sky turned a very foreboding shade of grey. Without warning, the hail was upon us, making even loud conversation impossible. Luckily, Pat had reserved a covered site which protected us as the hail and rain pelted us relentlessly.

Throughout all of the noise and commotion, not a complaint was heard, only laughter and the sound of people trying to stay safe and dry. We were even treated to pictures of the latest addition to the Connections family, Leland, born earlier that day.

After it had all passed, the children had a wonderful time playing in the mud puddles while others played ball or took the time to chat, making new friends or getting reacquainted with old ones.

Written by Lauren Raymore

United Way Kick Off

On Thursday, September 7, 2006, the United Way held its annual Campaign Kick Off event, and 8 people were there to represent Connections, including staff, board members, and clients with their families.

We gathered downtown on 3rd Street to join the large crowd of United Way supporters and then marched with banner and pom-poms in hand through the streets to the Eau Claire Market. Music played and the group cheered.

Upon our arrival at Eau Claire, the celebration began with speeches made by campaign co-chairs Hank Swartout and Linda Hohol, along with a few words from Mayor Dave Bronconnier. Several provincial politicians also attended. The festivities were added to with live music provided by the *Mocking Shadows* band.

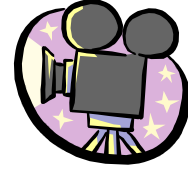
Each year, agency staff and board members participate in our own agency campaign to support United Way in their efforts to spread the message, "For a city to be truly great, it must be great for everyone."

Written by Jordan Polson

Board of Directors October 2006

Daryl Pamplin, President
Valerie Diane Wallace, Vice President
Michele Brooks, Treasurer / Secretary
Alia Azim
Lisa Tuplin

We're in the Movies!



Earlier this year some of Connections front line staff met with staff from Calgary SCOPE Society and parents with developmental disabilities to discuss joys and challenges of being a parent and what good support looks like. This round table discussion was taped and is in the final stages of the editing process. The DVD will then be used for the purpose of educating others.

We had another exciting "movie" opportunity, when NUTV at the University of Calgary selected Connections and produced a teaching video for use with the client families. The video features two of the parents Connections supports, along with their babies and toddlers and addresses positive interactions between parents and their children through play, dressing, feeding, and bath time. A huge thank you to Jen and Mary and their daughters for being the "stars"; to Jan McInnis for her narration and to NUTV, Danny Cox and his filming crew for an awesome job.

As a result of NUTV video, and the generosity of Social Venture Partners, Connections will work with Danny on the production of two more videos. The first will be a promotional/awareness video highlighting Connections programs and the second video will be a documentary style video feature parents with developmental disabilities telling their stories. We are in the pre-production phase of the first video.

Special Thanks

We would like to express our sincere thanks to the following individuals, corporations, and foundations for their generous support of Connections.



Calgary Children's Foundation
AM 770 CHQR/WESTIN HOTEL



G. W. Hart

Bob McInnis

