

People

Families

Communities



FAMILY SERVICES OF GREATER VANCOUVER

SUMMER 2008

Family Services of Greater Vancouver
*Strengthening people, families and
communities since 1928*

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Courtesy of Metro News. Raife Arnott, photographer.



Happy Beginnings

As a young girl, Christina Sinitoski dreamed of working in the medical field. She liked the idea of tending to others, helping them to feel optimistic about their health. Dentistry or nursing always

hovered in the back of her mind. "But, then I had some teeth removed and quickly narrowed it down to nursing," she says with a smile.

Unfortunately, that dream seemed elusive. On her own since the age of 16, Christina would spend the next ten years in what she called a series of survival jobs – minimum-wage positions such as cashier, deli worker, barista, simply to make ends

“When I held my daughter, Elizabeth, for the first time, I knew I had to offer her the best life possible.”

meet. At age 26, she'd had enough. Adding fuel to her desire for change was her growing belly. Christina had become pregnant. And, with the prospect of single motherhood looming before her, she knew she had to make a change. "It hit me most right after the birth of my child," says

Christina. "When I held my daughter, Elizabeth, for the first time, I knew I had to offer her the best life possible." Once she emerged from the throes of newborn parenting, Christina began to assess her life situation. She was

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Teri Nicholas, MSW, RSW



Message from the Executive Director

Happy Birthday, Family Services!!! On January 31, the agency officially turned 80 years old—that's 80 years of being there for our community's most vulnerable children, youth, and families, helping them get through life's many curveballs. This is a milestone we are proud of and we will be celebrating with a special benefit event on November 25 to acknowledge our long history. Watch for details coming soon!

Since our last newsletter, Family Services of Greater Vancouver has successfully completed its first ever capital campaign to support the purchase of a building on East Broadway that we have named *The Joanne Brown Centre for Families*. Joanne Brown has been a long time friend of our agency, and I just cannot say enough about Joanne & Peter Brown's outstanding support of this first endeavour for Family Services.

On May 1, we celebrated the grand opening of *The Joanne Brown Centre for Families*. The building lobby was renovated prior to the grand opening, to create a warm and welcoming environment for the families who will be coming to the centre for support. I'd like to acknowledge Paul Pizzolon, our general contractor, who worked tirelessly with his crew to ensure the building was ready for our opening event.

This spring, we conducted an employee climate survey and we were delighted with the highly positive feedback from our staff. Among the many highlights, we were pleased to learn that staff are overwhelmingly committed and engaged in the work of the agency, believe Family Services is a great place to work, and would have no reservations in referring family or friends to the agency for service.

These are just a few of the many highlights from the year. I invite you to join us at our Annual General Meeting on Thursday, September 25 at The Arbutus Club, providing you with an opportunity to learn a little more about the agency, and the many successes of 2007/2008.

Enjoy your summer!

Teri Nicholas, Executive Director

"ALL OF THE FAMILY SERVICES TEAM ARE AMAZING! THE ENVIRONMENT, PEOPLE, SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT HAVE REALLY HELPED US TO GROW AND GAIN STRENGTH. YOU HAVE MADE A HUGE IMPACT ON OUR FAMILY - FOR THE BETTER. THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR EVERYTHING!"

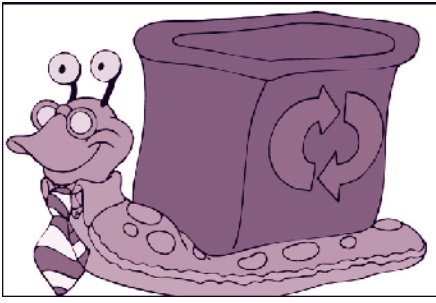
— a family utilizing the agency's services

Newsletter designed & edited by Leah Zille, Manager of Communications. Please submit any comments, questions or concerns about the newsletter to lzille@fsgv.ca.

If you do not wish to receive this newsletter or other mailings from Family Services of Greater Vancouver, please contact Madeline Goheen at 604.731.4951 ext 20 or mgoheen@fsgv.ca.

Historical moment

Family Services of Greater Vancouver first pioneered its Domestic/Family Violence programs in partnership with local police agencies in the mid-'90s—which served as the first of their kind in the province! Today, high risk cases of domestic/family violence continue to be addressed by pairing specialized FSGV counsellors or victim support workers with police officers in Vancouver, New Westminster, and Richmond. Last year, over 500 people were helped by this life-changing service.



Family Services — a greener place to work

We live and work in one of the most beautiful places in the world, and Family Services of Greater Vancouver wants to do our part to ensure its beauty is preserved for future generations. The agency has recently struck a "green" committee to identify and make recommendations on ways the agency can become more environmentally friendly. From providing regular tips to employees on how they can behave in a greener way, to

generating ideas around purchasing practices, to developing an environmental sustainability plan, the agency will continue to reduce its overall footprint on the environment.

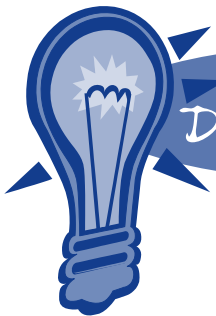
If you are interested in supporting Family Services "green" endeavours, or for more information on the work we are doing in this area, please contact Leah Zille at 604.731.4951 ext 47 or lzille@fsgv.ca.

Community/Government partnerships: working together to make our communities stronger

Strong relationships between government and community-based agencies are crucial to the future of the social service sector. Family Services of Greater Vancouver's 80-year history of long partnerships and quality service delivery positions us as natural leaders in the social service sector—a role the agency takes very seriously. Currently, the agency is leading the way with several sector-wide initiatives that bring government and community agencies together to discuss how the two groups can best work together to most effectively meet the social health needs of the people we serve in an ever-changing world.

Teri Nicholas, Family Services' Executive Director sees this advocacy work as a key part of her job. Teri currently serves as co-chair of a government/not-for-profit task force to identify joint business practices and develop an approach to capacity building in the sector, with the ultimate purpose of improving the well-being of individuals and communities in BC.

As a re-elected Board member of the Federation of Child and Family Services of BC, Teri also participates in quarterly meetings with key Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) decision-makers to identify priority areas and work jointly on solutions. As the Vancouver Coastal regional representative of the Federation, Teri chairs regional meetings with MCFD and community agencies to share information and plan for ways to improve service delivery.



Did you know?

Family Services of Greater Vancouver has been providing detoxification services to youth since 1993 for those who do not have a safe or supportive home and who are struggling against substance misuse problems. Over 325 youth received support through the Youth Detox program this past year. The agency is delighted to announce that the program has recently been expanded to twelve beds (from four) and has moved to a new facility to accommodate the program's growth.

"WHEN I WAS DROWNING IN THE GUTTER WITH A BACKPACK FULL OF RIGS, YOU WERE THE ONLY PEOPLE THAT DIDN'T FORGET WHO I REALLY WAS."

—youth participant

Grand Opening of the Joanne

Through the community's generosity, the Joanne Brown Centre for Families will nurture and support those in need—strengthening families today and tomorrow.

Founding Gift

Our heartfelt appreciation goes out to the **Peter and Joanne Brown Foundation** for their cornerstone gift which launched this legacy for families in Vancouver.

Builders (\$50,000 – \$99,000)

David Aisenstat
Cameron Currie
Kim and Bob Disbrow
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Catherine McLeod-Seltzer
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Rainy River Resources Ltd.
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Visionaries (\$100,000+)

"In Memory of Jack Ridley"
Jim Pattison

*Thank you to the
Building Tomorrows
Campaign Cabinet for their
outstanding leadership.*

*Kevin Ainsworth (co-chair)
Craig Lindsay (co-chair)*

*Carey Bornn
Teri Nicholas
Anthony Ostler
Bill Randall
Ian Warner*

*Thank you to each and every one of the
generous supporters of the
Building Tomorrows Campaign
(including those who wished to remain
anonymous) for turning our vision of a
centre for families into a reality.*

Family (\$1,000 – \$4,999)

Renata Aebi & Brenda, Annie, and
Neve Kelly
Raymond Ahrens
Lisette and Robert Baker
BCR Properties Ltd.
Carey Bornn
Nicole Bradbury & Byron Horner

Barbara and Graeme Brett
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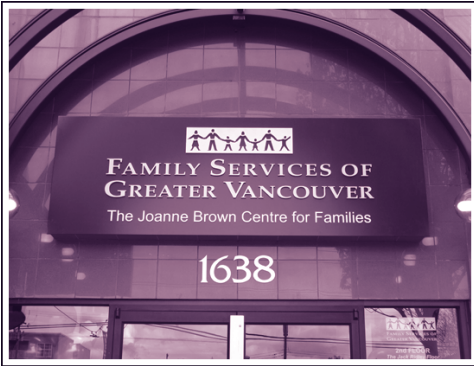
Partners (\$25,000 – \$49,999)

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Teri and Lee Nicholas
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David Rentz
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Bob Thompson
John Zaozirny

Brown Centre for Families



On May 1, 2008, Family Services of Greater Vancouver celebrated the grand opening of *The Joanne Brown Centre for Families*—an event which also served as the official wrap-up of Family Services' first ever capital campaign.

Premier Gordon Campbell joined Joanne and Peter Brown, campaign supporters, board members and agency staff to mark this momentous occasion. Located at 1638 East Broadway, this is the agency's second building purchase, providing an opportunity to combine a variety of services under one roof to support at-risk children and families throughout Metro Vancouver.

The agency's Employment Resource Centre, which has operated out of the building since 2004, is joined by other programs such as a pre-employment service for women on income assistance; community education classes on parenting skills, family life, and financial literacy; along with programs for drug, alcohol, and gambling addictions.



Joanne Brown has long been a champion of Family Services of Greater Vancouver for years, serving on the Board of Directors from 1985 to 1994, and as President in 1990 and 1991. She has reached out to families in crisis as a volunteer on the agency's intake line, has spoken on behalf of children and families, and was instrumental in the success of the 'Building Tomorrows' capital campaign to support the purchase of this new facility. Along with her long term dedication to the agency, Joanne & Peter Brown's cornerstone financial gift helped to get the campaign under way. Their generosity, along with the help of corporate and individual donors has enabled Family Services to raise more than \$1.8 million.

"Through our donors' generosity, we now have the ability to serve families in need from a single location, which makes it easier for them to access help, and more likely that they will follow through on their hopes and goals," says Family Services Executive Director, Teri Nicholas. "In addition, the purchase allows us to control lease costs, which is key to building the agency's long-term capacity."





CIBC Wood Gundy's Caring for Kids Fund Warm bellies to warm hearts

Thirteen years ago, a group of Financial Advisors at CIBC Wood Gundy, Bentall Centre, gathered around the company's boardroom table. They were there not to discuss financial portfolios or market fluctuations. Instead, the focus was on finding a way to make a difference in the lives of those less fortunate—specifically, children.

That eventful meeting planted the seed for what is now known as *CIBC Wood Gundy (Bentall Centre) Caring for Kids*. "Children don't have a choice when it comes to their life

situation, they're simply born into it," says CIBC Wood Gundy Vice President and Investment Advisor, Tom Porteous, who has recently retired as the fund's Chair (Jeff Watchorn is the newly appointed Chair). "Some have a tougher road than others. We're simply trying to provide these children with a better outcome in life."

With money put forward by the advisors themselves, along with matching funds from their employer, *CIBC Wood Gundy (Bentall Centre) Caring for Kids* has cut a swath of goodwill through Vancouver's inner-city neighbourhoods. Its hot breakfast program warms the stomachs of more than 500 school children each morning.

Funding for 'KidSafe' offers meals and a safe haven for children in at-risk homes during non-school hours, and its support for HIPPY provides parents with the tools to nurture children to be pre-school ready. The company's annual Miracle Day encourages its staff to personally contribute, and the fund's budget has increased one-hundred-fold since that significant first day around the boardroom table. In addition, the number of Financial Advisors involved has grown from 13 to 60. Its partnership with the Boston Pizza Foundation, as part of the Boston Pizza Invitational Golf Classic, has enabled CIBC Wood Gundy to stretch its philanthropic hand even further.

Two years ago, *Caring for Kids* joined forces with Family Services of Greater Vancouver to provide crucial funding for the agency's *Respect, Safety & Violence Prevention* program (RSVP). CIBC Wood Gundy's involvement provided the critical support the program needed to continue its commitment to vulnerable children in Vancouver. RSVP's 10-week group program gives children the tools they need to engage in healthy and safe relationships. "For many of these children, the RSVP group represents the first and only opportunity to understand and work through what is happening in their lives in a safe, supportive environment," says Kareen Hudson, program manager.

Says Porteous: "Our fund's mandate is to enrich the lives of inner-city school children. Once we can help them meet their basic needs through shelter and food, we can move to the next level, that is, enhance their life experience. Family Services' RSVP program helps to do that."

Adds Hudson: "Without *Caring for Kids*, our RSVP program would serve fewer schools, and as a result, reach fewer children in need. It's as simple as that. We are immensely grateful for CIBC Wood Gundy, Bentall Centre's involvement. They truly are caring for kids."

RSVP is a comprehensive school-based program that works with at-risk, primarily inner-city, children and youth—with many having been exposed to violence in their families. Through role playing, art, games, films and other activities, RSVP counsellors teach appropriate ways to express feelings, while helping children move beyond troublesome behaviour to understanding what's really going on inside. The students who participate in RSVP represent our community's most vulnerable children.

It is our mission to see that all at-risk children and youth in our communities—those who are most likely to be involved in violent relationships—are given the knowledge and tools they need to lead safe, respectful, violence-free lives.

To date, RSVP has worked with over 3,000 children in 50 schools.

We thank our community partners:

- BMO Financial Group
- CIBC Wood Gundy Caring for Kids Fund
- Diamond Foundation
- The Edith Lando Charitable Foundation
- Face the World Foundation
- John Hardie Mitchell family foundation
- National Crime Prevention Centre
- Vancouver Police Union Charitable Foundation
- Vancouver Sun Children's Fund Society



Brad Armstrong: A History of Giving

Family Services' past board president, Brad Armstrong, may be retired from serving the agency, but, his nine years of dedication to our mission is still felt each and every day. More than ten years ago, Brad was introduced to the agency through an existing board member. After having spent time as Chair of the St. George's School Foundation, he became drawn to community service. Family Services of Greater Vancouver fit the bill perfectly. "The fact that the agency is for children and families who are simply stuck at a certain point in their life—the service is both fundamental and effective. That really appealed to me," says Armstrong.

What also spoke to him was the agency's rich history of serving. Historically, Family Services evolved to help those back in the day when the government did very little. In fact, many services now funded by local governments were first initiated by Family Services. Today, the agency plays a crucial role in advocating for needs as they arise and for filling the gaps for those unable to find the help they need through government-sponsored assistance.

Brad served on the Family Services Board from '98 to '07, two of those years as President. He retired from Family Services' board at the September 2007 AGM. His nine years saw a number of accomplishments that were close to his heart. He was extremely honoured to play a role in the opening of the Directions Youth Services Centre in the downtown core. "We spent many years searching for a location, obtaining permits. It was a long, difficult process, but, well worth it," he adds. The purchase of the agency's new building on East Broadway was another milestone. "It was a significant decision and expenditure. We had to ensure that we could finance it without impacting our current services." Armstrong is also immensely gratified by the appointment of Teri Nicholas as Executive Director. "One of the most important things a Board does is to ensure the agency is taken care of. Hiring Teri was one of the best things we ever did."

Brad's official work with Family Services may have drawn to a close, but he's not likely to remain idle for long. As a QC Lawyer and Partner at Lawson Lundell LLP, Armstrong specializes in Aboriginal, Environmental, Energy, and Constitutional Law. He's a doting father to a young family and even finds time to ski, cycle and play tennis. He plans to take a well-deserved break before looking for other ways to become involved in community service. We can whole-heartedly say, the future recipient is, indeed, truly lucky.

2007/2008 Board of Directors

At Family Services' Annual General Meeting last September, 2007, Family Services of Greater Vancouver welcomed its new Board of Directors for the 2007/2008 term. We are pleased to introduce four new board members to the agency, bringing a diverse set of skills to complement our existing structure:

- **Caroline Campbell** - Caroline brings over twenty years' experience in the social service sector. Caroline is currently residing in Vancouver to assist in the planning of the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games where she supports operational integration with government partners.
- **Brian DeMuy** - Brian is a senior management consultant with Telus, and brings a wealth of knowledge in marketing and corporate development to the table.
- **Chris Sanderson** - Chris is a lawyer with Lawson Lundell LLP, and brings a legal perspective to the agency.
- **Denise Shepperd** - Denise is a freelance writer, and brings her background in communications to the agency.

We welcome back our returning board members: Craig Lindsay (President); Peter Kafka (Vice President); Anthony Ostler (Treasurer); Gabrielle Campbell (Secretary); Karen Choi (Member-at-large); Neil Hershfield (Member-at-large); Ruby Turner (Member-at-large); Lisette Baker (Director); Nicole Bradbury (Director); David Fushtey (Director); and Angela Thiele (Director).

receiving Employment Insurance, and, although she wanted off assistance, she wasn't prepared to resume her dead-end journey of low paying jobs. She realized the only way to change her life, and her daughter's future, was to return to school. The maze of information on educational programs can be daunting for most. Add to that, Christina's need for funding and flexible childcare, the task was, at times, overwhelming.

Christina was eventually referred to Family Services' Employment Resource Centre (ERC). "All I had was a piece of paper with the ERC's address. I remember taking the bus with my eight-month old daughter in the pouring rain. I got lost and went to three different addresses before finally walking through the Centre's door." As luck would have it, an orientation session outlining the centre's services was about to begin. Christina was subsequently paired with Cheryl, her case worker, who guided, supported, and provided the required resources to launch Christina on her nursing path. "When I told Cheryl what I hoped to achieve, she simply said, Okay, let's do it. Let's get this plan in motion," adds Christina.

After navigating the paper maze of educational and childcare funding, and perusing the various nursing programs, Christina's plan was finally in place. With a grant from Service Canada, she applied, and was accepted, into the one-year, Practical Nursing program at Sprott Shaw Community College. When she graduates this November, she'll be able to take her licensing exam to become a Licensed Practical Nurse. Says Christina: "There's so much I can do with my LPN—general patient care, administering medication, giving immunizations—it's truly exciting!" Right now, Christina is leaning towards two areas—paediatrics and gerontology. She loves them both. Eventually, she'll have to pick one. For now, simply having the power to choose – is a dream come true.

Family Services of Greater Vancouver operates two Employment Resource Centres to help people realize their goals by offering resume assistance, job postings, resource information on careers and training, computer access, as well as assigned Case Managers to offer support and assess skills and needs. We opened our first location in East Vancouver in 2003. Demand for the program prompted us to open a second office in downtown Vancouver the following year. We've recently expanded our second location to include a full-service employment resource room – the only one in the downtown core. At last count, we had served more than 16,000 people at both sites. For more information on the program, visit www.fsgv.ca (under Employment Services).

YES! *I would like to help make a difference.*



**FAMILY SERVICES OF
GREATER VANCOUVER**

Please accept my: One-time donation of \$ _____
 Monthly donation of: \$10 \$25 \$50 \$100 \$ _____

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I have left a gift to Family Services in my will. I would like information on leaving a gift in my will. Please send me your newsletter.