

People

Families

Communities



**FAMILY SERVICES OF
GREATER VANCOUVER**

FALL 2009

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

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The above artwork, titled "My Gift: A Hug", highlights Maria's journey through her work with Healthy Connections.

Mom finds support through 'Healthy Connections'

At age 20, Maria moved away from home. New to a big city, she was unaware of the dangers that lurked. In fact, it took her a while to make sense of what happened the night she was drugged and taken to a motel. She would never have thought her new 'friend' was actually a pimp preying on innocent women, manipulating them into prostitution. Fortunately, she escaped. Unfortunately, she never recovered from the trauma - until 'Healthy Connections'.

"Much later, when I became pregnant, the health care professional asked me a list of questions. One of them was whether or not I had ever been sexually assaulted," says Maria, now a mom to a 3-year-old. "I began to have flashbacks - reliving what happened."

Maria was referred to the 'Healthy Connections - You and Your Baby' program run by Family Services. "For me, it was my home, my shelter," says Maria. "I felt safe and could be myself without the fear of being judged or manipulated."

For Maria, trust was an issue. She was guarded and unable to become close to others. "My mother recently passed away. I never told her what happened," she says. "Sometimes I wonder what it would have been like if she had known."

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*"This has been a great program.
I don't feel as afraid,
I'm more confident with myself and
my parenting"*

— a family utilizing the agency's services

This newsletter is published by the Communications Department at Family Services of Greater Vancouver. Please submit your questions, comments or story ideas to Anita Deiter at adeiter@fsgv.ca.

If you would like to update your mailing address, please contact Anastasia at 604.731.4951 or apalubiski@fsgv.ca.

City Hall honours the Street Youth Job Action Program

Family Services' Street Youth Job Action Program (SYJA) was honoured at Vancouver City Hall on June 2nd with a 2009 Access and Inclusion Award. The award, announced by Mayor Gregor Robertson, recognizes organizations and individuals for enhancing accessibility, inclusion, and eliminating barriers that prevent those with disabilities from taking part in society. SYJA, which won in the 'organization' category, was selected by an independent jury based on the program's achievement, efforts, scope, and originality – along with the impact of its activities.

SYJA provides pre-employment training for youth who are homeless, living in at-risk situations, or those facing various barriers to employment. Vancouver City Hall noted the program offers work experience that is 'vital to the development of their self-esteem and work ethic.' The program was praised for providing basic needs, improving the physical and mental health of youth, and fostering involvement, empowerment and creativity. Congratulations to Renata Aebi, Director of Youth & Employment Services, and to the staff and youth who have made SYJA a success!



Ange Myers, (left) Youth Worker/SYJA Alumni and Renata Aebi, Director of Youth & Employment Services, receive the award from Mayor Gregor Robertson. (Photo courtesy of Ming Pao).

Preventing child abuse, aiding victims

The Vancouver Police Union Charitable Foundation's goal is to further serve the community through charitable works. With a key mandate of 'helping to prevent child abuse and aiding its victims', the Foundation has certainly been true to its mission with its ongoing support of Family Services of Greater Vancouver's Respect, Safety, and Violence Prevention Program (RSVP). The Foundation has been a loyal supporter of our child and youth programs for many years beginning with the 'Children Affected by Family Violence Program'. The foundation's recent \$10,000 contribution and ongoing commitment to our cause has a direct positive impact on our program's ability to reach vulnerable children sooner rather than later in their lives.

Economic slowdown hurts social programs

Over the past year there has been significant change in our province. Not only in BC, but across Canada and the world we have experienced the ripple effect of the economic slowdown and market forces beyond our control.

We're keenly aware that many families and individuals have suffered financial and other hardships in the wake of these uncertain times. Like the communities and families we serve, Family Services has also felt the impact of the prevailing economic slowdown.

While the Provincial Government's recent budget has impacted communities throughout BC, the programs in place to deal with families during such challenging times are also facing deep cuts just when they're needed the most. As you may have heard in recent news, some of Family Service's programs have been eliminated due to government cutbacks and there may be more to come.

It is hard to imagine, what would happen if...

Homeless youth had no where to go?

Abused children saw all adults as people who could harm them?

Children who witness violence decided that violence is the only way to solve life's problems?

Adults struggling with addictions never received treatment?

Women in abusive relationships were unable to escape their domestic situation?

In 2008, Family Services:

Served 15,000 meals to homeless youth

Supported 1,621 children and youth with the effects of violence

Helped 1,132 people with addiction issues

Kept over 10,000 individuals and families safe from violence and abuse

For 81 years Family Services, together with partners and donors, has provided social services to children, youth, and families during times of crisis. Our clients struggle daily with financial distress and poverty, homelessness, social isolation, family violence and other challenges beyond their control. For many, Family Services represents a lifeline and turning point in their lives.

The good news is that hopelessness is only one choice. Abused children can learn to trust safe adults, and there are many ways to solve life's problems without using violence. Individuals can receive treatment for addictions and lead healthy and productive lives, as can women and children living in abusive homes. The programs offered by Family Services of Greater Vancouver are focused on supporting and strengthening individuals and families to repair this social fabric.

During an economic recession, having a strong network of social services is more critical than ever. In fact, investing in our social infrastructure is good business.

As we look to the year ahead, the economic climate remains a concern for us all. In times like these – especially during times like these – Family Services has always been there for those in need. And we will continue to do so.



Canucks for Kids Fund helps children score!

Family Services of Greater Vancouver is honoured to receive \$10,000 from the Canucks for Kids Fund for its Respect, Safety and Violence Prevention Program (RSVP) in Metro Vancouver Schools. Canucks for Kids Fund President, Paolo Aquilini, presented the cheque to RSVP Program Manager, Karen Hudson, at a Vancouver Canucks game in March. The Fund's generous contribution will help vulnerable children and youth reduce the risk of becoming involved in abusive relationships. To date, RSVP has worked with more than 5,000 children and youth – many of whom have been exposed to abuse, violence, or neglect.

The Canucks for Kids Fund assists charities that support children's health and wellness, foster the development of grassroots hockey, and facilitate and encourage education in the province. Canucks players and employees take part in a variety of programs, joining with fans and sponsors to raise funds. Most notably, the Canucks for Kids Fund donated \$1.7 million to Canuck Place Children's Hospice from funds raised during the 2007-2008 season.

"This contribution makes a huge difference in improving the lives for vulnerable children in our city," says Hudson. "We're really grateful for this support and hope to continue our partnership with the Canucks for Kids Fund in future years."

LEFT: Canucks for Kids Fund President, Paolo Aquilini, presents a cheque for \$10,000 to Family Services of Greater Vancouver - RSVP Manager, Karen Hudson.

..... *congratulations!*

Distinctive Women at Family Services

We're honoured to announce that three members of our Family Services team were nominated for a YWCA Women of Distinction Award. Chief Executive Officer, Teri Nicholas, was nominated in the 'Non-Profit and Public Service' category. Director of Youth and Employment Services, Renata Aebi, was nominated in the 'Community Building' area, along with Adrienne Montani, Provincial Coordinator, First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition (we are First Call's host agency).

The awards honour, encourage and recognize women whose outstanding activities and achievements contribute to the health and future of the community. This year's nominees and award recipients were honoured at a dinner held at the Westin Bayshore in June.



Changes on our Board of Directors

Family Services welcomes three new members:

Joanne A. Hausch

Joanne is a Chartered Accountant with Deloitte & Touche LLP, who looks forward to providing service to the community, sharing her skills and knowledge, and expanding her involvement with Directions Youth Services. She brings expertise in accounting and finance, business process, and strategic planning to her new role.

Michael Wallberg

As a Portfolio Manager at Phillips, Hager & North Investment Management, Michael has extensive experience in finance and investing along with the enthusiasm and energy to make a difference in the community. A native West Coaster, he brings creativity and strong communications skills to the table along with his past experience on the Alzheimer's Society of B.C.'s Finance Sub-Committee.

Kenneth Werker

Ken is the Managing Partner in the Vancouver office of the executive search firm, Ray & Berndtson. Prior to joining the firm in 2005, he held a series of senior management positions in Western Canada. He has served on the international Board of Directors for the Association of Legal Administrators and currently serves on the Board of Directors for AIDS Vancouver. His wealth of experience in human resources, marketing, business development and leadership will serve our board well.

And, says goodbye to: Ruby Turner

Family Services says a fond farewell to departing Board Member, Ruby Turner. Ruby has been on the Board since 2004, serving on the Facilities Development and Nominating/Governance Committees, as well as the Executive Committee. We thank her for her contributions and generosity of time.

SNAPSHOT

Funders

A number of Family Services programs have received a much needed boost due to the generous contributions of community members. Here are just a few:

The RCMP Family Justice Initiative Fund provided \$75,000, a one-time grant from the RCMP in Ottawa toward the work of the 'Healing Hope and Justice Conference Planning Committee' co-chaired by Family Services Director, Sylvia Tremblay. Funding helped to pay for the research of Family Justice Centres for Victims of Family Violence. **Coast Capital Savings** kindly contributed \$5,000 to this same initiative. The contribution also assisted with the planning of the conference held in Richmond this year. Family Services received \$45,000 this year from the **City of Richmond** – an annual grant the agency has received for a number of years for its Richmond Counselling Program. The **Minister of Public Safety & Solicitor General (MPSSG)** provided funding for a new, three-year contract the agency is embarking on for a Community Based Victim Services Worker in Richmond. The position provides support to victims of power-based crimes – the first time such a program has been offered in Richmond. The funding, the result of a 'request for proposal' allows the worker to operate within the community – out of the 'Caring Place' in Richmond. Family Services currently receives another \$70,000 annually from **MPSSG** to provide similar support to victims of family violence. The initiative is run out of the Richmond RCMP Detachment in partnership with the RCMP Family Violence Unit.

Donor Appreciation Event

Family Services held its Donor Appreciation event at the Royal Vancouver Yacht Club on May 26, welcoming many of the private and corporate donors who make it possible for us to offer our programs and services. Also on hand were staff and former board members – all united in their support for the agency’s mission. Chief Executive Officer, Teri Nicholas, and Board Chair, Anthony Ostler, each thanked the more than 50 people who attended, stressing that donor support has been instrumental in allowing our agency to maintain our services. Since opening our doors in 1928, we’ve received tremendous support from our donors enabling us to touch the lives of more than 25,000 people each year. In 1983, our revenue base was \$671,000. By 2008 – thanks to the wonderful support we receive from the government, our partners and donors – our revenue base increased to \$22 million. Thanks to all those who support our agency. We are forever grateful.



TOP (L TO R): Teri Nicholas, CEO (FSGV), Angela Thiele (former Board member), Barbara Brett (former Executive Director), Gordon & Katherine Keep (former Board member). MIDDLE (L TO R): Annie White & Elizabeth Loughheed Green (Vancity Community Foundation), David LePage (Enterprising NonProfits). BOTTOM: Anthony Ostler (Board Chair) & Victoria Ostler.

Anonymous Giver Helps Programs Thrive

An anonymous, but generous, funder has made a world of difference to Family Services' Respect, Safety, and Violence Prevention program (RSVP) as well as its 'Healthy Connections' initiative. In addition to last year's initial donation to RSVP for \$39,000, a recent three year funding commitment in the amount of \$144,000 has drastically increased this program's availability and impact in local schools. Adds RSVP Manager, Karen Hudson: "The funding helps us to augment the reach we have in Vancouver schools to assist at-risk children. Simply put, it means more group support for students who are struggling either socially, emotionally or behaviourally, in more schools." RSVP is a free, school-based, early intervention and prevention program offered to children and youth. The program fosters the development of healthy relationship skills for students and aims to reduce the risk of these children becoming involved in abusive relationships.

The donor also made a \$27,000 contribution to Healthy Connections, a therapeutic program that helps pregnant women work through trauma-related issues that can interfere with their ability to parent. The prenatal program is designed to begin as early in the pregnancy as possible, with support services continuing for up to three years post-natal. Additional funding allows moms to get off the waitlist to receive help sooner. It also extends the length of time they can take part in the program. The donation also allows for more home outreach services, and provides childcare during sessions with the moms.

Children and families gain hope and strength in 'Children Affected by Family Violence' Program

Throughout her 20's, Rebecca had endured domestic violence with various partners. On one lonely winter evening, she held her son in her arms wondering if they would ever feel safe. As the child grew older, the abuse worsened. Rebecca recalls one time, the three of them were at a beach. Her partner hit her in the face as if he was getting rid of mosquitoes. Somehow, he found it funny and it made their son laugh. "He would smack me and smack me, and they would laugh and laugh."

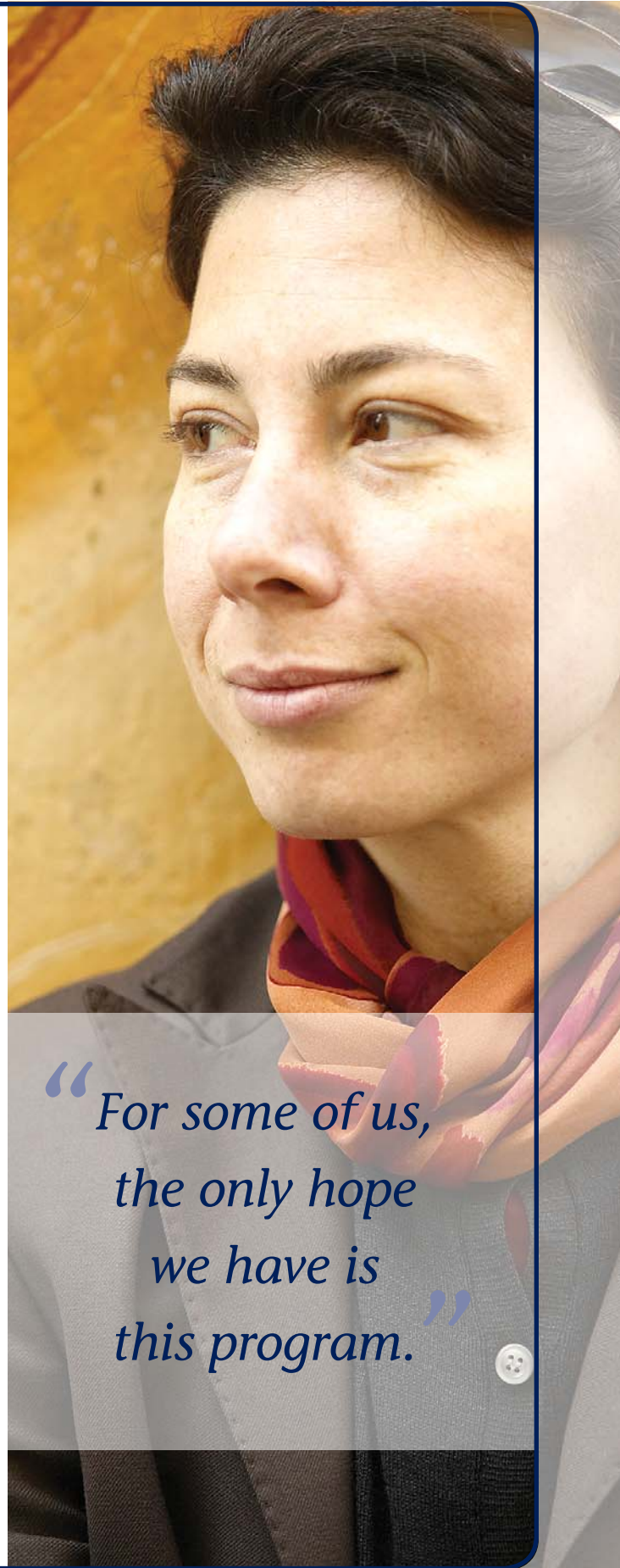
Over the years, she began to worry about her son's behavior. "He was constantly mad at me and bullying other kids. He was rude to me when his dad was around. I was worried he'd turn out like his father." Her child's condition, in addition to her numerous encounters with other abusive partners, prompted Rebecca to seek help from 'Children Affected by Family Violence' (CABFV). Her son benefited from the play and art therapy techniques, which he can easily tap into on a bad day. Says Rebecca: "He likes the play therapy because he gets to do his own thing and sometimes the counsellors play along. He's gotten better and is more equipped to deal with things."

CABFV is a free program available to children and youth between the ages of 3 to 18, who have been exposed to violence in their homes. So far this year, the program has served 192 clients with various backgrounds. One hundred and twenty seven of them are single mothers. Unfortunately, the economic downturn has taken a toll on Family Services' services, particularly the CABFV program. "Our programs are time-limited and rely on funding, so we do what we can with the resources we have," said Frances Soon, the program's only full-time Counsellor.

The program is always looking out for additional funding as the wait list is at least three to four months. Adds Soon: "By the time families reach us, they may have experienced months or even years of abuse. The whole experience of being turned away from a service is disheartening. Some families may not return. For children, it will likely prolong their struggles." Adds one parent: "The program helped me and my children understand the problem of family violence and how it affected us. This program nurtured us, supported us, and made us stronger."

Rebecca calls CABFV a lifesaver. "For some of us, the only hope we have is this program."

The skills that Rebecca learned through CABFV have helped her to move forward both personally and professionally. As an arts program instructor, it has helped her to enhance her work with both youth and families. She has also developed skills and links to other resources and counseling contacts in the community including the school system. Rebecca is now in a loving relationship with another partner.



*“For some of us,
the only hope
we have is
this program.”*

A year into the program, Maria was finally able to open up to Sarah, her Counsellor, about what happened. "After two years in the program, I could talk to my husband. Prior to that, I had huge intimacy issues," she says. "To me, it didn't feel right to have physical contact, even with my own husband."

Maria's intimacy issues also affected her connection with her daughter. "I felt my child was constantly craving my affection, but there was this emptiness inside of me. Part of me simply could not afford to be affectionate," she says. "But, the program, with its complementary components of individual, couple, and group art therapy set me on a path to healing I doubted was possible. Now, it feels more comfortable to be affectionate."

Looking back, she's unable to imagine her life without the program. "My life would have been hell. I would have continued to isolate myself and allowed depression to take over," she says. "Healthy Connections has helped me embrace my past and enjoy a new life."

"Change" by Maria



From left: Sylvia Tremblay, Director of Programs and Services; Teri Nicholas, Chief Executive Officer.

Family Services team honoured in Richmond

Family Services has been named winner of the Community Safety Partner Agency Award as part of the 2009 Richmond Chamber of Commerce 911 Awards. The honour is given to a person or company that has supported community safety organizations or initiatives to serve the City of Richmond at a higher level. The 911 Awards were founded in 2003 by the Richmond Chamber of Commerce to honour all members of the Emergency Services in Richmond. The seventh Annual 911 Awards Dinner and Ceremony were held on April 30th where Family Services (Richmond) was announced a winner in its category. Congratulations to Sylvia Tremblay and her team for their outstanding work!

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

**FAMILY SERVICES OF
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