

FALL 2007

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ARROW



Ed's Editorial

The human resource crisis in disability services is becoming more serious every day. Our lobby efforts over the past year resulted in a 3% increase in staff wages. While this is a step in the right direction it does very little to address the 30% increase that is needed. The Alberta Council of Disability Services (ACDS) is continuing to provide leadership in keeping this critical issue on the political agenda.

Two major initiatives are currently underway. The ACDS Repositioning Committee has developed a document titled "Community Supports for Adults with Disabilities: The Challenges and Policy Option". This 14-page document describes the current state of disability services in Alberta and



provides a series of policy recommendations. This document has been sent to Premier Stelmach and all MLA's. It will form the basis for meetings that will be held between ACDS and government officials.

The second initiative ACDS is involved in is the "**WHO CARES...WHEN NO ONE IS THERE TO HELP?**" campaign. This campaign involves ACDS and a coalition of 8 other provincial service organizations who are also facing serious human resource challenges. The campaign was launched on

Thursday, August 29 at a well attended media conference in Edmonton. Good coverage of this event was provided by television, radio and major newspapers.

You are asked to get involved in the "**Who Cares**" campaign. Register online at www.whocaresalberta.com. The website will send you updates and provide ways for you to get involved as the campaign unfolds. You are also encouraged to discuss your concerns regarding the staffing crisis in disability services with your MLA. Please sign the enclosed postcard and help send a message to Premier Stelmach. Show you care!

*Ed Riediger
Chief Executive Officer*

Client Corner

The clients are fun, we have outings. We all are team-workers. Paycheques in the bank. Summer is long gone so fast, many people work hard for the money.

Staff are helping the clients do things, like get up in the morning



for the day. Drive them to the Centre, see their friends. We all work together, teamwork

keeps us busy. Enjoyed our life today. We are happy, getting along.

The world is clean today. We all have good times. Fun fall very soon, the weather is changing. Your writer,

*Grant Olesky
Famous Person*



Fundraising Activities

The following is an update on our fund-raising activities since our report in the May issue of the Arrow. Please note this is not an all-inclusive list.

May 2007—Mayor's Walk/Run:

The County has finalized all the monies raised at the 2007 Mayor's Recreation for Life Walk/Run for various local non-profit organizations. As mentioned in May's report, our figures were down considerably. Our thanks to the families, staff and friends of Robin Hood who participated and raised \$5,118.

June 2007—Wes Montgomery Golf Tournament:

Thanks to the CFCW gang who hosted the tournament and slated Robin Hood as one of the two charity beneficiaries. We raised \$3,600 as a result of the client auction that we organized ourselves.

July 2007—RKM Music Sherwoodstock:

Robin Hood was named as the charity for this first annual event. It was an all day outdoor showcase of local musicians. Money was raised through a silent auction. As a result, we received a \$1,200 cheque.

July 2007—Cadworx Neighborhood Capital Ex Party:

Teaming up with our printing company neighbor Cadworx, the first annual neighborhood block party was held to celebrate Capital Ex. It was mainly a reason to have a meet and greet with all of the Broadway Blvd neighbors. Proceeds in the amount of \$1,000 from the sale of hamburgers, pop and ice cream came to Robin Hood. Great fun.

August 2007—Sherwood Park Crusaders Golf Tournament:

Graciously, the Crusaders once again named Robin Hood as the

beneficiary of some of the proceeds from the annual golf tournament. In lieu of our volunteering efforts at the tournament, we received a cheque for \$1,000.

January to August—Grant Applications:

To date we have applied for \$399,000 in grants to various Foundations, Corporations, etc. We are pleased to report that \$92,769 has been granted to date while we await word on a few more.

Therapy and Learning Take on a Whole New Meaning

Therapy, learning and physical activity have taken on a whole new look at Robin Hood. Robin Hood has purchased three *Xperiential Learning* systems (to be used in Fort Saskatchewan, Children's Services and at the Learning Centre) that provide a fun and interactive way for our clientele to experience sport, recreation and learning through a virtual 3D system. Participants can play volleyball, hockey, race cars and learn to count with our new systems. It can equally pit able bodied vs. limited abilities thus increasing the opportunity for social networking.

Thanks to the Alberta Sport Recreation Parks and Wildlife Foundation, and the BMO Fountain of Hope Foundation for assisting with the purchase of two of the systems through grants they generously approved.

Upcoming Events

September 11, 2007—Oilers Alumni Golf Tournament:

Although we have benefited in the past from proceeds of this and other events, the Oilers Alumni have named Robin Hood as their

main charity for the next three years pledging \$25,000 each year. As a result, we will be the main support organizing and hosting this large tournament. Definitely exciting news!

September 24 & 25, 2007—

Camrose Casino: This fundraising event is fast approaching. Thanks to those individuals who volunteered to work this two-day event Your commitment and support is greatly appreciated. Our casinos are now moved to Camrose due to the geographical re-alignment by the Alberta Liquor and Gaming Commission. The bright news is that we can get casinos more frequently than before.

Volunteers at Fundraising Events

In order to make these events a success, we need your support and commitment by volunteering your time and presence as events come up. We have several "regulars" that have been giving their time and support consistently over the years. While it has been a pleasure getting to know them and working with them, it would be great to see some new faces come out and support our fundraising events. Volunteering is a great way to meet new people and form new friendships. Lots of information sharing goes on which many families have found quite useful.

Please don't hesitate to put your name forward the next time we are looking for volunteers. Not only will your son/daughter benefit from the funds raised, you just might form new friendships as well.

~Pattie Mitchell & her assistant Brad Kotowich

Community Access Request

Due to the lack to available staff resources to support community access activities, at times we have had to cancel individual's outings. If there are any family members or friends that would like to volunteer a few hours per week, month or every now and then, we could use your help. Take a look at the Community Access section in the Adult

Services Calendar that your son / daughter received earlier this summer. It can also be viewed on the Robin Hood website: www.robinhoodassoc.com/adult-services.htm.

Most activities would benefit from volunteer support. You can contact Taera LeBlanc, Coordinator,

Community Access at 467-7140 Ext. 277 with your volunteering preferences and/or any questions. Thank you for your support.



Taera LeBlanc
Coordinator, Community Access

Workshop Opportunity

Movement Based Learning for Children Who Have Special Needs

This 16-hour workshop will be taught by Cecilia Koester, M. Ed. You will learn basic developmental movements that stimulate brain function. See dramatic improvements in concentration, organization, reading, writing, physical coordination and speech.

What is Movement Based Learning?

Movement Based Learning is a way for us to begin to understand and apply the concept that movement of the body affects the integration of our brain function. When our brain is in an integrated state (i.e. able to access all parts of the brain), we return to our natural, normal, curious state of learning. It is from this solid foundational space that we can reach our greatest potential.

This two-day course provides:

- An in-depth study of how to use Movement Based Learning
- An excellent application for autism, cerebral palsy, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, speech impairment, brain injuries and impairments caused by strokes.
- Applications to typically functioning children and children with learning disabilities.

When: September 22—23, 2007, 9:00 AM—5:00 PM

Where: Bethel Lutheran Church
298 Bethel Drive
Sherwood Park, AB

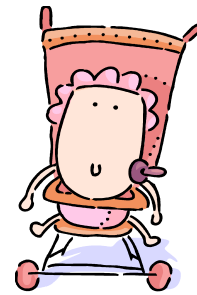
Fee: \$315/person (\$286 tuition, \$29 manual)
\$365 after September 1, 2007 (US funds)

For more information please contact Anita Tougas at 416-1094 or Jennifer Tomc at 417-3858.

Join us for the "Out With the Old" Child and Baby Items Sale!

Saturday, Sept. 29, 2007
9:00 AM—1:00 PM
Robin Hood Learning Centre

Admission by donation



Volunteers
are needed to assist with
advertising, set-up and
clean-up.

For more information or to
volunteer, contact
Carrie at 467-7140 ext. 321
Email:
pattison@robinhoodassoc.com

www.robinhoodassoc.com/news-and-events.htm

Adult Services: The Whole Truth

I am approaching the one year mark from the time I became responsible for the Adult Service Programs. Needless to say, it has been a year of tremendous learning, building new working relationships, celebrating successes and also managing the severe staffing shortage that has hit us hard in the last number of months.

I do not believe the staffing crisis information has been communicated well enough to members of the Association, as I still frequently hear from members that say “is it true we are struggling with filling positions and cancelling programs?” I believe the reason that so many members do not fully understand the severity of the staffing crisis is that we have so many truly dedicated employees that continually go over and above to cover off the many staffing shortfalls and ensure client service is not affected. This is taking a toll on our core staff. They are burning out! Some of the impacts are:

- Increases in overtime costs. The services may be reduced, but the staffing costs are going up.
- Staff are covering many shortfalls, but some programs literally do not have anyone to work.
- The field is struggling due to the lack of a skilled workforce in this province. The skilled workforce we do have is inadequately compensated.
- There are over 70 shifts that are consistently vacant throughout the Association.
- If no immediate action takes place, it will be continually impossible to attract and maintain



qualified people to work in this field.

Our work does make a difference in the lives of people. Making a difference is the most important thing to those of us working in the field. I am tired of trying to advocate for fair compensation of staff and trying to prove the value of the work that we do. It is disgraceful that our field is not valued or considered important enough to fairly compensate the staff who work in it. I believe we are not a large enough community for government to feel our pressures and address our concerns. The field of disability services does not impact all Albertans and as a result, we have a smaller voice and less impact on our elected officials.

Unfortunately, due to staff shortages, programs have been impacted. Closures for residential homes are common. Closures uproot individuals from their homes and force them to be in a different placement, or families are pressured to take individuals home.

A lot of coordination goes into planning supports for individuals to access their community. All too often, plans are cancelled because staff are not available to work or they are needed to cover off in areas that are of higher priority. Priority in the agency is to ensure appropriate coverage for individuals who require more intensive

supports to ensure their basic health and wellness needs are met. This is not our ideal, nor is it the standard we want to accept, but it is our current reality.

With these challenges we have seen an increase in dissatisfaction for some families. This is fair, but in some cases their frustrations have been directed at front line staff. **I cannot stress how important it is to try and work together and not address concerns in an antagonistic way with staff directly.** There should be a willingness to work together to find solutions and this should be done with the Team Leader or Coordinator. Front line staff are not paid enough to deal with difficult and upset people. Consequently, staff are walking out in areas where we have had families that have not been willing to work collaboratively with us.

We no longer have the human resources to work with families who insist on very individualized services or who are not willing to work collaboratively. Families who are unwilling to share resources and work collaboratively will need to make alternative service arrangements.

We are an organization that strives to work together and share our resources so the majority will benefit. In management we speak about the 80/20 rule: we spend 80% of our time dealing with 20% of people who have concerns. I want to personally thank the 80% of our families that do work with us and find solutions to providing the best quality of services. They are not told enough how much we value their support and contributions to the organization. I

Adult Services: The Whole Truth, cont'd.

respectfully ask for ongoing tolerance, support and assistance through these times.

What can you do?

Action is needed!

- Families are encouraged to speak of the issues facing the disabilities field with other family members, friends, neighbors and colleagues. Get involved by calling or arranging to meet with your MLA and

write letters of concern to your MLA, PDD, the Minister of Community Supports and Premier Ed Stelmach.

- You are asked to get involved in the "Who Cares" campaign. Register online at www.whocaresalberta.com
- Ask how you can be a part of the solution, helping to volunteer for activities or community outings to support programs.

- Work collaboratively with staff.
- Join the Robin Hood Association Family Guild and connect with other families. Together you can support one another and band together to make a difference.

Please feel free to contact me for further questions or comments at 467-7140 Ext. 225 or email lepan@robinhoodassoc.com.

Ann Marie LePan
Director, Adult Services

Why Do We Stay?

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

~Margaret Mead

Not everything is doom and gloom! As mentioned in the information above, times are difficult but not hopeless. With challenges, often it forces us to strategize and can even create opportunities or much needed change. I have worked in the field for over 20 years and 18 of them I have had the privilege of working at Robin Hood. I continue to be amazed by so many dedicated and committed staff. When we all truly believe in our mission statement and work together as staff, family and community, we have achieved many successes! I have heard many success stories involving community involvement for individuals in work and at play, making real contributions in their community. I think this is why so many of us stay. We believe in the work we do. We value the people we serve and the families that value our services and work collaboratively with us. These are the reasons why people stay in this field. It is important that in times of difficulty, we continue to consciously support one another.

Just before a much needed break, I had the opportunity on my last day before holidays to share the experience of a retirement party for one of the individuals in Robin Hood's Day Program. Bob Sutter had worked at Remington Tire for over 19 years and he retired on August 17th. This was a very uplifting experience for me and reminded me of how important it is that we continue to advocate for the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in our community. Remington Tire management and staff did more than just a going away party for Bob. He had made real connections, was respected and had developed friendships with the workers there. His party was attended by over 60 people from management, the warehouse and the office. Bob made an impact and a contribution to this company. I overheard a young colleague of Bob's comment that on his return to work on Monday without Bob, his morale was going to drop by 20 points. Bob was showered with gifts, a barbecue in his honor, colleagues promising to

take him out bowling and ensuring they had his phone number and address. When people ask me what I



do and why I work at Robin Hood Association, it is at these times I am reminded. I believe in what this organization stands for and will be very defensive at times to protect our reputation and our staff. This organization was built on the values of families striving for the best for their sons and daughters and I know today, those are still the core values we hold. We will get through these challenges, but only together!

Ann Marie LePan
Director, Adult Services

News from the Family Guild



“Robin Hood staff have worked tirelessly to fill all the empty spaces. Thanks to all of you for those efforts.”

What a glorious July summer it has been. Now in August there is a chill in the air which makes me view summer in the past tense, but I am still holding out for a bit more warmth. Hope that you have

all had wonderful summer vacations and that there is a sense of having had some rest and relaxation in the lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer.

The Family Guild met in June and celebrated the year with some food and wine. We will meet again on Wednesday, September 26 at 7:00 PM at the Robin Hood Centre and kick off the new fall season. Everyone is welcome and we look forward to meeting and once again greeting each other.

It has not been a glorious summer for Robin Hood staff as they have searched tirelessly for people to fill all the empty spaces. Thanks to all of you for those efforts. We as families appreciate your hard work and continue to affirm that there will be ideal people to fill the positions that so desperately need to be filled. We hold to a belief that there will be both

the human and financial resources to provide the kind of support that Robin Hood has always been known for. We are grateful that staff have represented and delivered the highest caliber of service. Over the last year the human resource crisis has made it extra difficult to maintain this level of excellence and we know the strain that this has placed on everyone involved. As families we hold the image of this situation improving. Life is full of cycles and sometimes we have to ride the waves and know that somewhere there is a place of peace and calm where there are enough resources to provide the services with the wonderful Robin Hood excellence. Ed Riediger and the Robin Hood Board have done all they can to find ways to ride the wave and arrive at a place of more stability. Thank you Ed and the Board.

The Guild is planning and organizing an event on October 14, 2007 which will provide an opportunity for clients to honor their siblings. We encourage staff and parents to assist their sons and daughters to get invitations out to their siblings. Invitations are available at the Robin Hood front

desk. The event is called “My Sibling, My Friend”. Pattie Mitchell has designed a fine invitation and we hope this will be an event that recognizes the importance of siblings in the lives of the individuals Robin Hood serves. If an individual’s sibling lives far away, that individual is still invited to come and bring pictures of their siblings. This is a celebration and all are welcome. We ask for an RSVP to Alice by September 20, 2007. Alice Worthington can be reached at 467-7140 Ext. 226 or email worthington@robinhoodassoc.com.

If you have questions, please call Margie Koop at 464-6035 or email rmkoop@shaw.ca.

We are looking forward to another year of friendship and support. We want to be a circle of hands that reach out to one another. We can only do this as we get to know each other and learn about the journeys we are on. It is an interesting ride and I continue to learn and grow from the stories that families share.

Thank you to all who are part of the Guild and who work to extend a hand of friendship to others.

Blessings to all,

*Margie Koop
Family Guild Chair*

Couch Needed:

A lady who lives independently and is served by the Robin Hood Association is looking for a couch. If you have a new or used couch that you are willing to donate, please contact Alice Worthington at 467-7140 Ext. 226.

Thank you!