



# Your Gift at Work



SUCCESS IN SCHOOL

July 2017



Families & Schools Together



Louise Dean Centre



Never Too Late

We believe in the power of education to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty.

In fact, our research shows that evidence-based, preventative programs emphasizing education do just that.

Imagine how important education would be to you if you were:

- A parent looking for closer connections within your child's school community.
- A teen parent striving to juggle a baby and books; or
- An older adult wanting to earn your high school diploma.

Through three community-based programs – Families & Schools Together (F&ST), the Louise Dean Centre and Never Too Late – Catholic Family Service provides support to Calgarians of all ages who seek a better life through success in school.

In this issue of *Your Gift at Work*, we are honoured to share some program highlights with you – because without your leadership, volunteer support and financial gifts, this success would not be possible.

## FAMILIES & SCHOOLS TOGETHER: EXPANDING THE VILLAGE

Research shows that only 54% of Calgarians feel that they 'belong' in Calgary, 67% say they only know 'a few' people in their neighbourhoods, and 14% say they have no one they know well enough in their neighbourhoods to ask for a favour.

In 2016, Families & Schools Together (F&ST) offered eight programs in six schools designed to address this very issue. Ninety-nine families participated in F&ST last year.

Our program evaluations revealed that:

- 55% of families reported increased participation in their neighbourhood.
- Family relationships and family bonds improved by 84%.
- Parents reported that their children's interpersonal skills increased by 61% overall.

We were the first in Canada to offer F&ST for Kindergarten in 2015. Over the past school year we continued this focus, welcoming 34 Kindergarten students and their families into their school communities and building relationships that will last



throughout their school years. In Fall 2016, our staff worked with Indigenous families within one of the schools to include some of the traditions that were meaningful to them.

In partnership with the Calgary Board of Education and the Calgary Catholic School District, we will continue to respond to the needs of all families participating in this internationally-renowned family skills program.



*I saw the F&ST flyer at the school and, as a single mom, thought, "Oh, I wouldn't have to cook dinner one night a week!" It ended up being way more than that. The boys were in Grades 2, 3 and 5 that year. We have a very chaotic life, so for one night a week we just focused on the four of us. I have always believed that it takes a village to raise a child; well, with F&ST I expanded my village. I can't go to Walmart without seeing someone we have met through this program.* // - F&ST Participant

### F&ST BY THE NUMBERS

- 1,428 individuals participated in 2016 – 626 in F&ST and 802 in F&STWORKS, a program that encourages families to transition to monthly parent-led groups in the community for up to one year.
- 74 volunteers contributed 1,899 hours to the F&ST program in 2016.



# Your Gift At Work



## LOUISE DEAN CENTRE: SUPPORT WHEN IT'S NEEDED MOST

Thirty-two young women from Louise Dean Centre crossed the stage as high school graduates on June 28, 2017. While we celebrated their academic success – and graduating is no small achievement for a teen mom – we also acknowledged the remarkable team of teachers, social workers, health care professionals and other staff and volunteers who supported these grads every step of the way.

And while they are still too young to realize it, the babies born to these young moms will be more likely to enjoy their own success in school – and in life – because their mothers received wrap-around services and support when they needed it most.

### Research has shown that:

- Maternal mental health is an important factor in a child's development.
- Positive father involvement is associated with lower levels of family conflict and violence, increasing the chance that children grow up in an emotionally and physically safe environment.
- Adverse childhood experiences such as exposure to domestic violence, addictions, maltreatment and poverty can negatively affect children's development and predispose them to lifelong problems.

As well as providing concrete supports to meet basic needs in the first crucial months or years of life, our programs at Louise Dean Centre are designed to enhance parent resilience, parent/child attachment, and social connections for parents and children.



The Parent Child Learning Centre at Louise Dean Centre was named one of 22 Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Centres by the Government of Alberta in April 2017.

To be selected as an ELCC, we were tasked with making improvements that go above and beyond other child care programs. Our program uses an evidence-based child care curriculum framework developed by early learning and child care educators, early childhood academics, government, and professionals working in related fields. It is designed to improve early childhood development outcomes so children can get the best possible start to life.

### LOUISE DEAN CENTRE BY THE NUMBERS

- In 2016, we served 267 pregnant and parenting teenagers who were attending high school classes at Louise Dean Centre or enrolled in our transitional program.
- Last year, 118 babies were nurtured in the Parent Child Learning Centre while their moms went to class.
- In 2016, 60 volunteers – 59 baby cuddlers and one shopper – contributed 1,560 volunteer hours to the Parent Child Learning Centre.
- Since 2015, 31 teen dads have participated in the Fathers Moving Forward program through co-parenting, being a dad and financial literacy groups.
- Social workers at Louise Dean Centre provided over 2,900 individual counselling sessions to teen parents in 2016.

## NEVER TOO LATE: SUPPORT WHERE IT'S NEEDED MOST

Alberta has one of the highest school drop-out rates in Canada – 10.4% compared to the Canadian average of 8.4%. For some Calgary communities the rate is higher. For example, in Bowness the drop-out rate is 25.4%.

Catholic Family Service's Never Too Late program, which provides no-cost academic, social and emotional support to adult learners who want to complete their GED (General Education Development or high school equivalency), has been operating in the Bowness community for more than eight years. Last year, we announced an expansion to the Greater Forest Lawn area, another community with a demonstrated need for adult learner support.

We are thrilled with the success of the program so far in Greater Forest Lawn, thanks to the hard work of our staff and community partners to establish Never Too Late in south-east Calgary.



There were many challenges, the biggest being my ADHD and juggling work and studying. But I could see the light at the end of the tunnel. In the beginning, it was nothing more than a pinprick but now I had something to shoot for. Receiving encouragement helped that light grow tremendously. Now that I have graduated, I am asked for interviews for the type of jobs that I have always looked for. Previously I would not have even been considered for such positions. That in itself was a victory. Never Too Late boosted my confidence to keep going down this new road, leaving behind the ditch of self-doubt. // - NTL Graduate

### NEVER TOO LATE BY THE NUMBERS

- In 2016-2017, Never Too Late welcomed 92 adult learners into the program at our two locations.
- 53% of participants in 2016-2017 finished the 40-week program and registered to write the GED exams.
- 82% of those who wrote the exams passed.
- In 2016, participants reported a 47% increase in reading and doing homework with their children and a 31% increase in talking with their child's school.



The Unlocking Potential (UP) Foundation is the fundraising arm of Catholic Family Service of Calgary. UP connects the giving hearts in our community with high-impact programs that are building strong families. For more information, please contact Patricia Jones, CEO, UP Foundation | 403.205.5200 | patricia.jones@cfs-ab.org