



Children Without Poverty (CWP) monthly newsletter: April 2008, ed. 24. Please do your part.

Working locally (Calgary, Alberta) to stop the cycle of poverty for the children.

www.childrenwithoutpoverty.com

“We find comfort among those who agree with us – growth among those who don’t.”
Frank A. Clark

Did you know?

On any given night, more than 3,400 Calgarians sleep in shelters, under bridges, on the streets or in their cars. More than 58,000 Calgarians are living only 1 pay cheque or 1 crisis away from homelessness.

Calgary’s 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness

Aspen Family & Community Network Society

Homelessness in Calgary has spiked over the past decade. So has homelessness for families. Jeff St. John is the manager of the Family Homelessness & Poverty Portfolio at Aspen. We met over coffee and discussed what was happening in his corner of Calgary.

His portfolio includes a number of programs including: ‘The Other 12 Hours’, ‘FIT’ (families in transition), ‘ISACC’ (pilot project – Integrated Services Assessment and Case Coordination), and ‘Empowering Families’ (pilot project). The pilot projects are interesting as there is much activity happening around collaboration with other non profit agencies.

St. John explains, “Now that the 10-year plan is here, the landscape will shift and I am most excited about this new landscape. There is such high community involvement in the sector right now and the political awareness will allow for creativity and openness to solve this issue. Innovation is now!”

“At Aspen, everything we do is around family poverty and homelessness prevention.” St. John continues to explain how Aspen is also the largest family based non-profit in the city.

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St. John has always been rooted in helping. Through his career as a pastor working with youth and re-educating himself, he realized his passion had always been around poverty and justice. After re-educating he worked with such organizations as: Big Brothers & Big Sisters, Momentum and the Calgary Rent Bank.

Over a year ago, Jeff became a co-chair for the Family sector, co-chairing with Marina Giacomini from Calgary Urban Projects Society (CUPS) on the Community Action Committee (CAC) a subcommittee of the Calgary Homeless Foundation (the facilitator/implementers of the Calgary 10-year Plan to End Homelessness).

He finds himself exactly where he needs to be today. I was interested in the programs that St. John manages, and asked him to explain them.

The Other 12 Hours is a program that is a partnership with Inn From the Cold (IFTC). The program provides families a place to spend the other 12 hours – that is the 12 hours not provided by sleeping accommodations. It is a 6-month program while families are homeless. The program offers a place to stay during the day, transportation, living skills classes, counseling, recreational events and childcare. The staff have graduate degrees and work with the families to assist in graduating from the program.

The FIT program works with families who have graduated from the Other 12 Hours program and assists them in the community via a family support worker with a Bachelor's of Social Work. Aspen works closely with families who are referred to them often by CUPS and families who have lost their housing or are 'at risk' of losing their housing.

ISACC – a Tri-Agency pilot – started in the summer of 2007 when the government allocated 16 million dollars to new and innovative projects. Seven cities (Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, Edmonton, Calgary, Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie and Red Deer) received funding. In Calgary, the Rapid Exit Program was started with CUPS and CWES (Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter). Jeff explains that ISACC addresses what the 10 year plan talks about: rapid re-housing (through the Rapid Exit Program); case coordination/wraparound services; manage the systems for the family – stabilize the housing situation and align the agencies to help the family move forward.

There are instances where agencies have systemic policy that requires change to facilitate agencies working together. Families may be involved in many agencies – like Child Welfare, Addictions Services, Police, Shelters, and/or Calgary Housing. A family who has become homeless and is on the road to recovery can face many agency policies that make it difficult to be successful. ISACC's core deliverable is to identify these policies and change them to help solve poverty/homelessness.

Tired, just plain tired of the 'hands in your pockets' wanting your money, and the people at your door wanting your time?

You cannot make a difference through a single action. So commit yourself to a consistent policy of actions over the duration of your life.

Jared Diamond

To have people added/removed from the distribution list or to provide feedback, please respond to: Richelle@childrenwithoutpoverty.com.