



# Closer to Home

## COMMUNITY SERVICES

*Uniting vulnerable children, youth & families*

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### Dear Friends of Closer To Home,

Summer is almost over already, the sun goes down a little sooner, kids are coming home from camp and getting ready to go back to school. In this edition of the Closer to Home quarterly newsletter, you can read about SCIP, the summer camp put on in part by Closer to Home and the backpack program sponsored by the generosity of the City of Calgary and Staples Business Depot. We will also tell you all about our Homework Club Program, and how you can volunteer to be a Homework Club Tutor as the program resumes in September!

We hope you will join us for Closer to Home's Annual General Meeting (AGM) in October. Please check our website at [www.closetohome.com](http://www.closetohome.com) in September for AGM date, time and location. We hope to see you there!

### Hope in a Bag By Simone Brown

As September draws closer and school season approaches, parents and kids are starting to load up shopping carts with back to school supplies. In the aisles of Wal-mart, 10 year olds are busy deciding between the Justin Beiber and Hannah Montana backpack while others are hunting for the coolest new pen on the market. For some kids, however, the sad reality is that the cost of purchasing a new backpack means having to forgo a more basic need like food or clothing.

Thanks to the generosity of the City of Calgary and Staples Business Depot, Closer to Home has the opportunity to distribute hope to hundreds of kids in need. By the end of this summer, the "Stuff a Backpack for Kids" campaign will enable Closer to Home to hand out 500 backpacks filled with supplies like pens, erasers, and folders. Beyond the crayons and markers however, lies much more.



"This program is also about reaching out to families in need," says Minoush Rafie, West Central Resource Centre Program Coordinator. "When we give a child a backpack, it's an opportunity to share information about our programs and services such as Homework Club. This is a free program that assists at-risk children to boost their grades. Many families don't know that such help is out there."

Although the backpack program serves children from Grades 1-12, Closer to Home's current need is for backpacks and supplies for high school students. We are urgently seeking items like graphing calculators. Minoush also emphasizes the tremendous value of donations like gift cards.

"If we can give the family a gift card, it allows the parents to take their children shopping like other families would do," she says. "More importantly, it is an amazing opportunity for parents and children to bond and build healthy relationships."

*(continued on page 2)*



### Coming Soon: A Makeover for AP2

Coming up this fall, Closer to Home will be welcoming a crew of enthusiastic volunteers from ExxonMobil and Imperial Oil through the United Way's Days of Caring program. The volunteers will be putting in some long hours at Achievement Place 2, one of our community teaching homes, to spruce up the interior and exterior of the home, making it more comfortable for its youth residents. Watch the fall edition of this newsletter to see photos of the transformation

Closer to Home would love to double our goal and reach out to 1,000 kids next year. This will require a great deal of community support and the kindness of business organizations like Staples and the City of Calgary. We are still hoping to reach our goal of 500 for 2012, but we need helping hands to donate, assemble and distribute backpacks.

***If you would like to volunteer or donate to the Backpack program, please contact Minoush Rafie at 403-543-0555 ext 224 or email [westcentralcrc@closerthome.com](mailto:westcentralcrc@closerthome.com)***

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## **Homework Club - Helping At-risk Kids Make the Grade**

**By Rebekah Sharrock**

Closer to Home runs programs such as, Homework Club, that teach children social and life skills helping them achieve success in their daily life. The well-established club has been helping children for the past 15 years and has three locations in the city, Shaganappi Village, Lincoln Park, and Glenbrook.

Katie McArthur, who runs the program at Shaganappi Village, explained the goal of the program: "We are trying to improve social skills and help the children generalize these skills so they can use them at home, in school, and out in the community."



Starting in September, every Wednesday night after school between 25 and 30 children attend the program at Shaganappi Library. In addition to receiving tutoring on their homework, the children learn and practice social and basic skills to develop their communication and interaction with others, such as asking permission, following instructions, etc. Points are rewarded for practicing the skills and children can redeem them for rewards once a month.

Katie added: "We teach them self determination by allowing them to spend the points they earned." Katie runs the group with the help of volunteers, many of whom are young people who grew up with the club and have returned to help younger participants with one on one tutoring. Homework club works in partnership with local community schools to ensure the quality of the program is in line with the school's curriculum.

The program is for children from grades one to six coming from 10 different local schools. Katie said: "A challenge is the growing number of participants each week and limited volunteers to assist with preparation, social and recreational activities, and materials. Volunteers are essential to support students overcome language and cultural barriers to learning and keep them engaged in schoolwork."

The program, and its counterparts in Glenbrook and Lincoln Park, provide a vital link for families and children to connect to community resources. The understanding of their cultures and viewpoints sets up a firm basis of trust which motivates the students to learn.

***If you would like to volunteer please email [info@closerthome.com](mailto:info@closerthome.com) for more details  
If you would like to join any of the Homework Clubs call West Central Resource Centre for information at 403-543-0555 or email [westcentralcrc@closerthome.com](mailto:westcentralcrc@closerthome.com)***

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## **Camp is Just a Hop, SCIP and a Jump Away**

**By Rohan Somers**

The Spruce Cliff Interagency Program (SCIP) Summer Day Camp is operated out of the Shaganappi Village housing complex each July and August. The camp offers children between the ages of six and 12 a chance to engage in their community while learning, meeting friends, developing positive social skills and having fun in a safe environment.

The program began as a partnership between Closer to Home Community Services, Aspen, the City of Calgary and Alberta Health Services as a way to introduce community activities to youth in the area. It continues to provide campers with the opportunity to experience activities they might not otherwise have a chance to try.

Program Manager Kandi Santerno says the lack of activities in the area was the motivation to create a camp for local youth. "We were trying to find a way to get these kids engaged in community activities, and to help them get to know their neighborhood," said Santerno. "We introduce these kids to local libraries and art centers so they are more likely to go to those places throughout the year. We also engage the community in supporting the youth and we teach youth social skills and friendship skills."  
***(continued on page 3)***



Typically, each camp has a theme around which the activities are organized, such as a trip to the science centre for a science themed week, or a trip to Prince's Island Park or the Zoo for a great outdoors themed week. These trips offer campers a chance to experience some of the locations they may not have had a chance to visit in the past. "I know the campers had a lot of fun this year at the zoo," said Santerno. "They got to see the penguins. There was only one in the group of 26 there who had actually been able to see the penguins before, so that was really exciting for them."

One of the major strengths of the program lies in its ability to provide youth in the community with a structured routine and a safe place to go in the critical hours after school and during summer months. Santerno credits supportive partnerships and donations with helping to create a solid camp program, such as the Calgary Food bank, whose partnership helped the camp coordinators to introduce a breakfast program in the mornings for hungry campers.

While the camps are run by camp leaders and supervised by the camp coordinator, they are also supported by youth volunteers. Often these volunteers are graduates of the camp and other Closer to Home after-school programs such as Homework Club and Girl Talk, who volunteer for those programs during the school year as well.

***Once again this year, young campers made new friends, experienced fun in their community and learned more about themselves and their community – another successful SCIP season!***



## **Pekewe Reunification Home Marks Aboriginal Week With Celebrations**

**By Mahmoud Rahim**

The week of June 21 is Aboriginal Awareness Week, a time of cultural events and other celebrations that highlight the history of Canada's First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples.

During Aboriginal Awareness Week, Closer to Home hosted an open house at Pekewe, our reunification home where families can live together in a supportive environment. The parents of Pekewe aim to acquire knowledge and tools to help them build their parenting skills.

Henri Giroux, a home visitor with Closer to Home's Healthy Families program, took an active role in the open house at Pekewe and provided tours, answered questions, and treated visitors to homemade soup and bannock.

"Allowing people to see the work we do with our reunification home and putting a face on some of the hardships that parents and children endure to become a family shows that there is still hope," says Henri.

Currently, statistics show that more than half of all children in foster care are of Aboriginal ethnic origin. "If we can help reduce that number, it not only helps to unite families, it helps society as a whole. Being a part of community events like Aboriginal Awareness Week allows us to see what kind of programs are out there and to get our message across to other agencies."

Also during Aboriginal Awareness Week, Closer to Home hosted a children's craft corner at the family event at Shaw Millennium Park. This free family event included live entertainment, vendors, crafts, face painting and games for children. It ended with a pow wow, which is always a special treat regardless of whether you are young, or young at heart.

As a supporter of National Aboriginal Day and Aboriginal Awareness Week, Closer to Home continues to highlight the culture and traditions of Aboriginal peoples and emphasize the importance of Aboriginal values like family unity as well as child and adult education.





# CTH Annual Stampede Breakfast 2012 a Hit!

By Tina Chapman

Closer to Home held our Annual Stampede Breakfast on July 5. The weather was great and the turnout was even bigger than last year with an estimated 300 attendees! We would like to extend a huge thank you to everyone who helped with this event and those who came out to enjoy it. Special thanks to The Batter Boys who grilled up those delicious pancakes and sausages, Greco Pizza for supplying the sausages, and Crystal Glass for their help with storage and set up. Music was provided this year by our very own incredibly talented Nathan Wettlaufer on the guitar and piano as well as a brilliant violinist, Eileen Kosasih, from our community. We had face

painting for the kids and beautiful henna for everyone. Of course, no Stampede Breakfast is complete without a visit from Harry the Horse!



Without these businesses, individuals, and the Closer to Home volunteers and staff, we would not be able to put on such terrific events every year for our clients, community members and colleagues.

*Thanks again to everyone who came out to kick off the 100th Anniversary of the Calgary Stampede with us; we hope to see you next year!*



## Donor Appreciation

Closer to home would like to recognize our supporters from the last quarter

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- Kids Up Front
- Linda Kolner
- Minoush Rafie
- Stacy Wynnyczenko
- Tina Chapman

## Please Make a Donation

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