

Changing lives together

Dear North Shore Community,

To say the past few months have been challenging is an understatement. Covid-19 turned our world upside down and left all of us without our normal ways of connecting. This is why we created this newsletter for you.

In this inaugural issue, we have advice for parents as kids head back to school, stories of lives positively impacted by our work, and ways that you and your family can volunteer with us.

Our connection with you makes our work possible. Your support, involvement, and care for our community is why we have been able to serve over **4,000 people** since the crisis began. We know you will be proud of what we have accomplished together, and we know you want to understand where we're going.

During this time, our expertise and dedication have been critical to the health of our community – and we have **responded**. We established a free counselling support line for people affected by Covid-19. Our volunteers immediately reached out to our isolated seniors and Christmas Bureau clients, and we continue to support women and children affected by trauma and abuse, who are even more vulnerable right now.

When disaster strikes, communities must come together to heal. We're not all on the front lines, but still we have the power to change lives – and maintaining our caring connections will help us all through this crisis. This is a challenging time, but by working together, we will emerge stronger, healthier, and more resilient.

Thank you for your **support** and your **commitment** to help those who are struggling the most. It means a lot to so many.

With gratitude,



Julia Staub-French
Executive Director



We are **facilitating strong and caring connections** between people throughout our community.

We are **understanding and responding to the needs of the most vulnerable** people in our community.

We are **developing new and innovative ways to approach mental health services**.




Family
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Our moment TO ACT

Back in March, we became acutely aware that those living with poverty, housing instability, chronic health conditions, and without family support or financial means would be struggling the most. Systemic inequities are amplified in these times.

It was our moment to act and we moved swiftly. Volunteers began calling to say, "how can we help?" They knew the **1,000+ families and seniors** we support at the Christmas Bureau each year, who make an average of \$16,000 per year, would need help. With our volunteers, we created an outreach call strategy. Volunteers continue to make calls daily and to date, they have connected with **2,100 of our most vulnerable neighbours** by giving over **1,500 hours** of their time. Every call has been an opportunity to connect and ensure people can access mental health services, food security, and other support systems.

Through a range of partnerships, including dedicated volunteer **Alison Sawers and team, Cause We Care Foundation, Columbus Farm Market, North Shore Neighbourhood House, and Silver Harbour Seniors Centre**, we have secured and delivered over **650 bags of groceries** to local families and provided over **900 pre-made meals** for isolated seniors. Together we have also provided families with over **40 computers and devices** so kids could connect to their schools and classes.



Alison Sawers and team collecting donations for handmade masks and hearts.

We still need your help

If you're interested in volunteering, delivering groceries, or supporting the Christmas Bureau, please contact Michele Varley - Manager, Volunteer and Community Engagement, at varley@familyservices.bc.ca

MEET THE PEOPLE WHO BRING OUR PROGRAMS *to life*



In each issue, we will introduce you to the dedicated staff behind our programs. Meet **Valerie Dolgin**, a registered clinical counsellor who has been with the Agency for 10 years.

Val supports children, youth, and adults to address a wide variety of issues, including stress, anxiety, depression, parenting challenges, isolation, grief, and more. Val has a unique ability to understand and translate children's behaviours in ways that parents can apply to their daily lives. We hope her wisdom and clinical expertise will be helpful for your family.

Q: *What are you hearing from parents about how Covid-19 has affected them?*

A: There are a few different parent groups, all of whom have found the pandemic incredibly difficult in different ways.

- Parents who are already out of work continue to struggle financially and may feel completely overwhelmed. It is this group of parents that the pandemic impacts the most.
- Parents who are now working from home full-time struggle to balance caring for their children while also providing financial stability.
- Parents who lost their economic stability now find themselves at home and feel burdened with full-time parenting, along with the extra stresses of how to make ends meet.

Parents should know they are not alone. Be kind to yourself and patient with your children. Keeping focused on children's self esteem and feelings about themselves is critical right now.

Q: What are you hearing from youth in our community?

A: There have been a couple of different responses.

- Some children and teens say they are enjoying the safety of being at home, as the experience of school is challenging. They also have more opportunities to connect with their families than before.
- Others have expressed sadness and anxiety from the lack of social interaction. Some youth who struggle with depression or trauma found being at school or attending social gatherings a positive in their lives. Unfortunately, virtual interactions do not make up for physically being with people.
- There is a population of youth who are in traumatic home environments and for those children, this can be the toughest time. We are working hard to find creative ways to reach children and youth, we know we can't wait for them to find us.

Q: How can parents help their children feel safe and secure during this time of uncertainty, especially with going back to school in September?

A: Here are some tips:

- Start the conversation early around the unknowns. Children feed off parents' energy, so try to remain confident and positive.
- For younger children, stick to a routine and provide structure. This consistency helps to maintain a sense of security.
- For teens, give them their own space at home, but be present and listen when they come to you.
- Encourage children and youth to ask questions and give them age-appropriate answers and information.



We encourage anyone on the North Shore who is struggling, who has been affected by Covid-19 in any way, or who needs mental health and/or parenting support to reach out to us via our website www.familyservices.bc.ca or by phone at **604.988.5281**.



BACK TO SCHOOL:



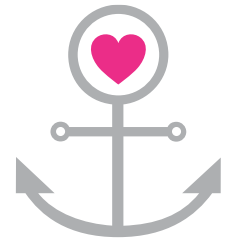
- Acknowledge that school will look different, though each school will have clear rules and policies in place to keep everyone safe.
- Explain that it's okay and natural to feel awkward in some situations and social gatherings and remind them everyone has a different comfort level.
- Most importantly, let them know we are all experiencing similar feelings of concern and unease, though we will work through this together.



Thank you

UPDATE ON COMMUNITY support

Due to Covid-19 and physical distancing measures outlined by the province, it became clear that Family Services of the North Shore would have to cancel **Beer by the Pier** for 2020. However, we still raised a glass to support our community and local breweries, while social distancing with friends and family.



We would like to thank: long-time supporter, **Bohdan Bodnar**, who matched donations to double the impact, **Bridge Brewing Company**, who donated partial proceeds from food and beverage sales, and our corporate sponsors – **Dekker Hewett Group at Canaccord Genuity Corporation, City Wide Mortgage Services, DLO Move Support Services Ltd., PC Urban Properties Corp.** – who reallocated their event support to our programs.

With the **outpouring of support** from you, we have:

- Helped North Shore residents struggling through this crisis by creating a dedicated counselling phone line for those affected by Covid-19.
- Connected with **2,100+** isolated seniors and Christmas Bureau clients on a weekly basis, enabling us to assess their needs.
- Given **900+** hours of virtual and phone counselling to people in crisis.
- Provided **700+** families with virtual services including breastfeeding and parenting support groups, and online Circle Time stories and songs on an ongoing basis.

We are truly grateful to the community partners that supported our Covid-19 Response Program: **Coast Capital Savings, Neptune Terminals, TELUS Friendly Future Foundation and TELUS Vancouver Community Board, the Government of Canada's Emergency Community Support Fund, West Vancouver Foundation, and Western Stevedoring.** Because of their generosity, we have been able to reach even more vulnerable members of our local community.

Connect with us. Contact the development team:

Lucy Isham-Turner, Director of Development:
isham-turner@familyservices.bc.ca or 604-831-1223

Amy Lynn Taylor, Senior Manager of Development:
taylor@familyservices.bc.ca or 778-318-3683

“ A community is only as strong as the support it receives from those who live in it. I believe we all have a duty to sustain and protect everyone, especially those who are the most vulnerable and especially now, during the Covid-19 crisis. That is why I believe in Family Services of the North Shore and why I am honoured to be able to make a contribution right now to the invaluable work they are doing.
– **Robin Pascoe**, Leadership Circle donor and long-time supporter

If you would like to contribute to your community, please click

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