

Welcome to the first edition of *The Beacon*, your new employee newsletter! Feedback from the 2019 Employee Engagement Survey called for more opportunities to hear about what's happening across the agency, and so each quarter *The Beacon* will provide you with agency updates, reflections from our CEO, success stories, and more – right to your employee email.

Want to help shape future editions of *The Beacon*?

Take this two question survey (<https://bit.ly/cssbeacon1>) or send your feedback and ideas to communications@cssalberta.ca.

Congratulations to Elaine Roche, Program Manager for CFCS, for naming our newsletter! The Beacon is a nod to each of our 1,800 staff who, whether front line or administrative, act as beacons of hope for our clients and pillars of light within the 12 communities we serve.

Thank you for all that you do.

The Burning Bush

Troy Davies, CEO



In the Hebrew Scriptures Moses encounters God in the form of a burning bush on Mount Horeb. God bellows out from the bush, saying to Moses, “Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place you stand is holy ground.”

For some reason this story always left an impression on me, but even more so since coming to Catholic Social Services over two years ago.

You see, as CEO, I have the frequent fortune to visit our many sites – women’s shelters, group homes, pregnancy centres, language assessment centres, counselling suites, and more. And, when I visit these places I, too, feel like I am standing on holy ground.

Whether you know it or not, you, the staff, are like the burning bush, and reveal the presence of God, Love, or whichever name for the Divine Mystery you prefer. In your words, actions and demeanor, you consistently show God’s heart to be tender, inclusive, and compassionate.

Indeed, CSS is privileged to be a place where people are invited to see things to their depth, and in doing so, encounter the entire world around them as sacred. But the sacred doesn’t typically come across in showy and flashy ways, more commonly, it

is revealed in the discreet and quiet corners of our lives and through the very ordinary pieces of our day-to-day work together.



The beauty of CSS’ work is that when you draw really close to it you begin to fathom just how enchanted with soul our work truly is, in fact you can’t miss it... it gleams a glowing radiance that calls out, “this is what the face of Love looks like.”

I hope you enjoy this first edition of our new staff newsletter and I thank you for being the face of Love to a world that needs to be repeatedly reminded of its loveliness, especially during these unprecedented times.

*In gratitude,
Troy*

CSS SPOTLIGHT

Morning Star & Central Region

Each quarter, we'll spotlight some of the incredible work staff are doing in our 90+ programs throughout the Agency.

First up, we spoke with Jill Lanz, Service Coordinator, about our newest program: Morning Star. Jill shares how Morning Star has adapted programming in response to COVID-19 to continue supporting vulnerable women in Red Deer.

FOR STAFF WHO AREN'T FAMILIAR, WHAT IS OUR MORNING STAR PROGRAM?

We're a program based out of Red Deer that provides support to vulnerable, at risk, or exploited women in the community. We began providing outreach services in June 2019, and on November 13, 2019 we officially opened our drop-in centre.

WHAT NEEDS DO YOU HELP YOUR CLIENTS MEET, AND HOW HAVE THEIR NEEDS CHANGED DUE TO COVID-19?

Our drop-in centre is a secure location where vulnerable women can come and access different resources (laundry, showers, coffee, snacks, internet) for free. Drop-in centre and outreach staff also act as a connecting point to different services, helping the women find housing, counselling, addictions treatment, or other

community supports based on their self-identified needs.

COVID-19 has greatly impacted the women Morning Star serves. Many agencies the women relied on before have had to modify service or completely shut down, and feelings of isolation and fear are certainly magnified for people who don't always have a safe place to be or have their basic needs met.

HOW HAS MORNING STAR ADAPTED TO CONTINUE MEETING WOMEN'S NEEDS DURING THE PANDEMIC?

We have been able to put additional safety protocols in place to keep everyone involved safer while remaining open. We have reduced our drop-in hours, but continue to offer all drop-in services two days per week and offer support by phone or online when we're not open. Staff are

also doing outreach through things like phone calls and distanced check-ins. We've worked hard to ensure the women we serve know that we are committed to walking alongside them and that they are not alone through this.

ANYTHING ELSE YOU WANT TO ADD?

I think it's important to say that we're funded by Sign of Hope, so the program runs on donations. What's amazing is that a lot of our in-kind donations actually come from staff, who are incredibly generous and provide a lot of the supplies (shampoo, conditioner, towels, laundry detergent) Morning Star needs every day.

Want to see your program in an upcoming CSS Spotlight?

Email: communications@cssalberta.ca

Our Response to COVID-19

Since COVID-19 first entered our communities, our staff have been on the front lines, continuing to provide care to individuals who are most at-risk of experiencing severe impacts of the pandemic. We want to ensure you have the necessary tools to keep yourself and those we serve safe, which is why we've launched a COVID-19 staff website.

On the site, you'll find up-to-date information on provincial recommendations and requirements, updates from our CEO, and resources to help you navigate through the coming weeks and months. Access the COVID-19 website through the quick links section on Portal.

If you have questions relating to COVID-19, please email cssstaffquestions@cssalberta.ca. Please send your prayer intentions to prayers@cssalberta.ca.

UPCOMING EVENTS

For the safety and well-being of our staff, clients, and supporters, all agency events scheduled prior to September 1, 2020 have been cancelled.



CSS IN THE NEWS

Check out the links below to see recent news!

Edmonton settlement workers helping new immigrants, refugees through COVID-19 pandemic
<https://bit.ly/CSSCBC>

Home support providers needed in Blackfalds, Lacombe
<https://bit.ly/CSSLacombe>

Seniors find ways to cope with challenges of pandemic restrictions
<https://bit.ly/CSSGrandin1>

Refugees flee conflict only to find dream destination locked down
<https://bit.ly/CSSGrandin2>

77-year-old Alberta 'baby whisperer' fosters dozens of children in care
<https://bit.ly/CSSGlobal>



Healing the Healers

On February 4 and 5, 2020, 63 staff gathered at Providence Renewal Centre for Catholic Social Services' first "Healing the Healers" session. The session included lessons, reflections, journalling, videos, movement, and more to shift focus towards healing those who are typically in healing roles. Sister Mary Clare Stack, a member of our Spiritual Care Team, graciously offered her reflections on her experience at Healing the Healers:



"Catholic Social Services has as its mission "to care for people of all faiths and cultures with humility, compassion, and respect." Being involved in the Healing the Healers retreat meant that the tables were turned. As participants, we needed to give ourselves permission to be cared for by compassionate, skilled, respectful professionals and by our colleagues. Looking back, I can honestly say I feel deeply blessed and profoundly grateful for the opportunity to participate.



When I arrived on February 4th, however, my feelings were very different. I felt very anxious – why did I say yes to this? What masks would be removed, vulnerabilities exposed?

Much to my relief, I discovered that Richard and Debbie, our facilitators, skillfully created a climate of trust and insight. Although it took a while to feel comfortable enough to share with those in my groups, I slowly found myself letting go of masks and entrusting myself to my "Circle of Trust."

I look forward, in hope, to future retreats."

**Have an idea you'd like to see in an upcoming edition of The Beacon?
Submit your ideas to communications@cssalberta.ca!**

IT Moment

Susan Rizzuto, CAO

Cyber Protection Starts with You!

Share with Care! Never enter personal or Agency information in response to an email, pop up webpage, or any other form of communication you didn't initiate.

Don't Fall for Fake! Look at the "From" address to see where the email is actually coming from. Don't click on links or open attachments that you weren't expecting. Watch out for emails or texts that have a time pressure asking you to act quickly before thinking. Don't plug in a memory stick or a charger cord that wasn't provided to you by the Agency.

When in Doubt, Talk It Out! Report any suspicious emails to ReportSuspiciousEmails@cssalberta.ca or call HelpDesk at 780-433-6557.

Signs of Hope

Do you know an agency staff member who is a Sign of Hope for others? We want to hear their story!

Over the coming weeks and months, we will be rolling out an online #SignOfHope campaign, recognizing the incredible people working on the front lines and behind the scenes at CSS.

Please send your nominations to communications@cssalberta.ca and watch for additional information on #SignOfHope on Portal.