

The Burning Bush

Troy Davies, Chief Executive Officer



It has been a busy fall and start to winter for our agency. We launched our annual Sign of Hope fundraising appeal, kicked off our 60th anniversary celebrations, hosted our second virtual Annual Public Meeting, and consolidated two of our Edmonton-based offices into one location – all within a matter of a few short months!

Now, the days are getting shorter and the year is winding down. We have entered the Advent season, and are fast approaching Christmas and the New Year. It's a time for reflection, for gratitude, and for setting intentions for the year to come.

As I reflect on the past year, I am incredibly inspired and humbled by the strength and spirit with which our staff continue to serve. The pandemic has lasted longer than any of us could have predicted. Many of us are tired and weary. In spite of this, you continue to show up each and every day, and put your hearts and souls into your work, because you know our clients are counting on us to do so. For this commitment, I will be forever grateful.

I can't look forward to the future, without first looking back to our humble beginnings, where in 1961, Father Bill Irwin founded Catholic Social Services with just one employee and \$5,000. Today, we are a multi-million-dollar, multi-function social services agency, serving tens of thousands of vulnerable Albertans each year.

My hope is that 60 years from now we will be even stronger than we already are today, as we continue to help create a world filled with humility, compassion, and respect.

To everyone within CSS, I wish you and your loved ones all the joy of the season.

Merry Christmas,

Troy

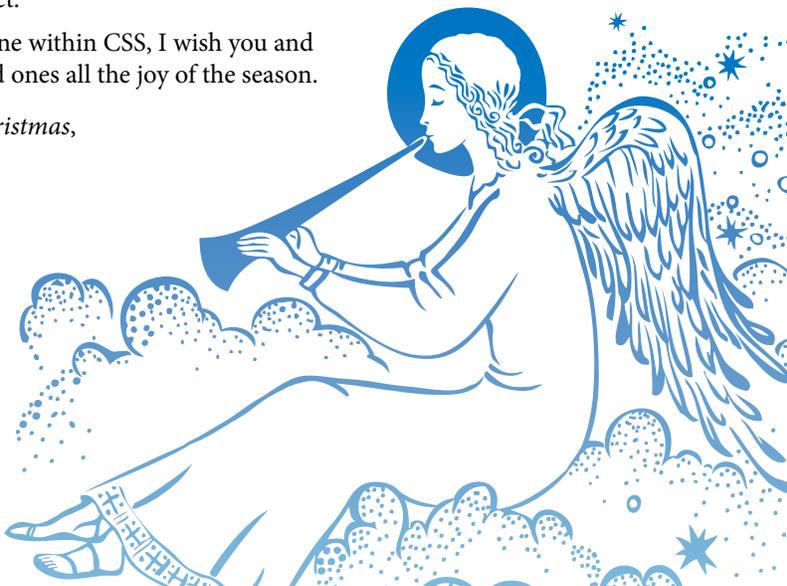


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CSS IN THE NEWS

Check out the links below for recent news stories on our agency's work and our supporters.

Catholic Social Services launch relief fund to assist Afghan refugees settling in Edmonton -
<https://bit.ly/3EBckyr>

Pandemic puts strain on agency settling Afghan refugees in Edmonton -
<https://bit.ly/2ZKky8P>

St. Joseph Catholic School supports Edmonton area homeless -
<https://bit.ly/31sILRU>

Shoppers Drug Mart raising money for Lurana Shelter through Family Violence Prevention month - <https://bit.ly/3rGtCa5>



CSS SPOTLIGHT

Coaching Families

On December 3, 2021, Coaching Families celebrated 20 years of providing service to families and caregivers supporting a youth living with FASD.

In this edition of the Beacon, we sat down with the Coaching Families team (Roxanna Clermont, Miranda Zetsen, Alishah Punjani, Lynne Mullen-Wawryk and Program Supervisor, Denise Davis) to learn more about the program and their work.

FOR THOSE WHO AREN'T FAMILIAR, CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT THE SERVICES OFFERED THROUGH COACHING FAMILIES?

Coaching Families provides support to parents, foster parents, kinship relationships, and/or caregivers who are involved in raising or caring for a child affected by Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). This support may include (but is not limited to), learning what FASD is and what it means for the child, one-on-one coaching with a CSS staff mentor, help securing diagnostic services, and help developing and learning strategies to support a child affected by FASD.

WHAT PART OF THE PROGRAM DO YOU FIND MOST INTERESTING AND REWARDING?

Our days are never the same. Each client has a different situation, and so we need to work with them to find unique solutions, while leaving space in the day to support clients who might be in crisis.

We also help our clients navigate community supports, so they can access additional help and resources. One such support, is animal therapy for the children. Our clients really enjoy this service and it makes a big impact for the children involved!

Overall, we find it rewarding to be working with such a diverse client group, and to find solutions to meet their needs. We are non-judgmental toward everyone we serve. We listen, provide advice and help them move ahead instead of looking back. We take time to provide service for where clients are at, which allows us to build trusting relationships.

Portal Enhancements



The Payroll site, <https://bit.ly/38xygfV>, has everything you need for your questions around pay! Information such as: how to request time off, change your banking information, or upcoming stat holidays can all be found on the site. While there, download and print a copy of the agency's Payroll Calendar, which is updated throughout the year! A new 2022 Payroll Calendar will be available in late December. Be sure to check the site for updates!

WHAT CHALLENGES HAS THE PROGRAM FACED DURING COVID-19?

We've had to change our program to meet health and safety requirements. For example, we previously held support groups in person but have had to transition to a virtual setting. While we miss seeing clients in person, they have said they enjoy meeting virtually!

Since we are no longer doing in-home visits, there is less driving time. This gives us more time in the day to learn and research new ways of supporting our clients, and to grow professionally.

We use a group chat on Teams to stay connected and share lessons learned or new ways of doing things.

HOW ARE YOU CELEBRATING YOUR PROGRAM'S 20TH ANNIVERSARY?

In honour of this milestone, we hosted a live virtual anniversary event on Friday, December 3. The event featured a panel discussion with past and present clients, who shared the positive impact the program has had on them and their children. You can watch the event recording here: <https://bit.ly/31DI6wE>

Want to see your program in an upcoming CSS Spotlight?
Email: communications@cssalberta.ca

Board Update

This year the Catholic Social Services' Board will give a Christmas gift to all agency staff, in recognition of their incredible commitment and work throughout the year. In 2021, staff will receive a pair of CSS mittens, to warm the hands that warm the hearts of our clients. We hope you will wear these proudly throughout the cold winter months, and each time you do, will know how truly valued and celebrated you are.

Gifts will be distributed throughout December.



The McCaffery Centre

The McCaffery Centre (11405 163 Street NW), Catholic Social Services' newest office building, opened in Edmonton in December. Both the Children, Family, and Community Service team (Grovenor Office in Edmonton) and the Community Outreach and Disability Service (Greystone in Edmonton) have relocated to the McCaffery Centre. This move will allow for more opportunities for collaboration and information sharing between Service Areas. Watch Portal for updates, as well as new office resources, such as updated letterhead templates.



DSI Moment

Kirsten Anderson, VP of DSI



Cybersecurity Awareness Month

October was Cybersecurity Awareness Month, during which, our Digital Services and Innovation (DSI) team shared tips on how to stay Cyber Safe on the DSI internal site. Read on for an excerpt below:

Your special moments are meaningful; don't let cybercriminals take advantage of them. When sharing memories with friends and family, always double check the files actually come from someone you know to avoid getting malware on your machine.

It is also good practice to store important work files on a network drive, (not on your desktop or the hard drive of your device), in order to prevent losses from cyberattacks, accidents, or theft.

For more tips, and to learn about staying safe while sharing files, how to back up your data, and what malware is, visit the DSI site at: <https://bit.ly/3GIhaAE>



Do you enjoy working at CSS? Do you want to share your story with others? We want to hear from you! Tell us what you love about working for CSS by January 31, by emailing communications@cssalberta.ca.

One randomly selected winner will receive \$100 prize basket from a local food company, and, your submission might be featured in a future newsletter, social media post, or recruitment campaign!

Faith's Offering

Words to feed your soul

Annunciation

by Denise Levertov

We know the scene: the room, variously furnished, almost always a lectern, a book; always the tall lily.

Arrived on solemn grandeur of great wings, the angelic ambassador, standing or hovering, whom she acknowledges, a guest.

But we are told of meek obedience. No one mentions courage. The engendering Spirit did not enter her without consent.

God waited.

She was free to accept or to refuse, choice integral to humanness.





Stories from the Frontlines: **Morning Star**

This spring, a vulnerably-housed woman came into Morning Star, desperate for help.

She had started her period and had no menstrual products, or money to purchase them. She was bleeding through her only change of clothes, as her backpack - with her spare set of clothing - had been stolen the night before.

She was embarrassed, teary-eyed, and reluctant to ask for help. Staff told her she could use the drop-in centre shower, and while she cleaned up, they quietly washed her clothes and gathered enough menstrual products for the rest of her period.



After she had showered, staff helped her pick out a few new outfits from the drop-in centre's clothing rack. They also replaced her lost toiletries, and helped her call her grandmother, to let her know she was safe, and ready to go to treatment.

Her grandmother, relieved, drove to Morning Star to pick her up and take her to the detox centre in Edmonton.

When the woman was leaving Morning Star's drop-in centre, she cried and thanked staff repeatedly for the safe, welcoming space where she "felt loved and taken care of." She said she left "feeling like a person again."

She met her grandparents outside, for the first time in months, freshly showered, in clean clothes, with her head held high, feeling ready to meet her next challenge.

As a Morning Star staff member said, "the reality of the service we provide for vulnerable woman isn't always neat and tidy. Sometimes it's quietly cleaning menstrual blood off of a chair to protect a woman's dignity, helping get blood stains from her clothes so she doesn't lose the few belongings she has left, and packing a purse full of tampons so she's protected from these things, at least for the rest of this month."

Want to see your work in a future edition of The Beacon?

Email: communications@cssalberta.ca

Summer Photo Contest **WINNER!**

Congratulations to Jim Tompkins for winning the summer photo contest! There were so many fantastic entries, it was hard to pick just one. Thank you to everyone who entered. Be sure to watch this section of the newsletter for our next contest!

VIEW OF THE RED DEER RIVER AT DRY ISLAND
BUFFALO JUMP PROVINCIAL PARK



WORD SEARCH

From September to December 31 each year, CSS campaigns to raise the dollars needed to support more than a dozen Sign of Hope-funded programs. In honour of the 2021 campaign (which is currently underway!) this edition's activity is a Sign of Hope themed Word Search!

S U P P O R T U U H B E X H R
 P E B K T P Y A H X A L S K F
 I L R X R N C D O R Y P P B O
 L N E V H N D M P V D X J S M
 X B Z H I Z Y R E W L E E K E
 M J Z J E C O M K M R C X X E
 I W U Q N V E U R P R M B T Z
 K B R Y I F O U G U R S A F E
 Y E I D L Y U I O W Z N P D W
 N O E N E Z U S E J O S X H D
 U G C U F O E O V D W W H R L
 Q E G V I R E W W Q W J R T D
 F M P T L K B C M W K A Z F T
 P O R Q V F J Q W K C E O I I
 T P I T O M T F B B D A T L N

LIFELINE
 HOPE
 DONATE
 SERVICE
 SUPPORT
 RESOURCES
 LIFT
 PROVIDE
 SAFE

CONTEST!

Submit your completed word search to communications@cssalberta.ca by **December 31** to be entered to win a Sign of Hope *Hopefully Cooking* cookbook! **Answers will be on Portal January 7.**



SAVE THE DATE

Fr. Bill Irwin Book Launch
JANUARY 17, 2022.

Sign of Hope - Campaign wrap up
FEBRUARY 3, 2022

Staff Wellness

A gratitude journal can be a great activity to build into your weekly routine. Taking a few moments to write down what you are grateful for, either big or small, can help build a more positive mindset.

You can capture your gratitude in a notebook, on your phone, or by making a note in your calendar.

Happy journaling!

