

# CONNECTIONS

HELPING PARENTS BE THE BEST THEY CAN BE

MAY 2012



## Families Together

*We've ramped up group activities as a comfortable way for our families to become joiners. Building on our summer picnic and our Christmas party, we added a Cooking Club at a client family's home, a container garden on our office balcony, participation in the Calgary Women's Run (where we are the charity recipient), potluck dinners, and a craft session.*

## To our Extended Family:

*2011 was a year of many, positive changes for Connections and the organization is in a better place because of the efforts of many. More families are stronger and more stable as a result.*

On National Disability Day in the US, a young man was given the honour of singing the national anthem at Fenway Park in Boston

before the baseball game. A video clip on YouTube shows him proudly on the pitcher's mound, microphone

in hand, singing haltingly and off-key. It's difficult to tell whether the crowd will laugh or boo or simply wait it out impatiently. But then, it starts. The crowd begins to sing along and soon the

support of the crowd makes the anthem sound great.

The singer is a lot like

Connections' families. With just a bit of support -- support that doesn't take over or take the lead -- our families develop good parenting instincts and keep their families' daily lives stable and on track.



***We continually look at more and better ways to support our families -- to be the chorus behind them.***

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***We exist to empower, strengthen and support:***

- *Parents with intellectual disabilities;*
  - *Children who have a family member with a disability; and*
  - *Families and caregivers*
- by providing long term programs, counselling and education.*

***Connections Counselling and Consulting Foundation is a registered charity, BN# 890700347RR0001.***

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## NUMBERS SHOW THE DIFFERENCE WE'RE MAKING

Most important, in 2012 so far, we are providing parenting support to **57 families and counselling for 23 people**. The total number of individuals in the families add to 239. We anticipate these numbers to increase through the second half of the year with additions to our front-line team. In 2011, we served 40 families through the year, meeting our target, and further expanding to 50 families by year end.

Behind these numbers is a swirl of activity. Like everyone's family life, our days are filled with planning and high-level activity, phone calls and paperwork, and everything in between. One week, we're hosting a potluck for clients at our office and the next we're responding to changes in government policy.

## GETTING BETTER AND BETTER

Over the past year, much has been accomplished:

- ◆ we developed new programs during a team retreat,
- ◆ overhauled our strategic plan to envision our next five years,
- ◆ updated and rearranged our offices,

- ◆ tightened up a number of information management processes,
- ◆ increased two funding contracts,
- ◆ attended courses and training to bring new resources and skills to our families and
- ◆ hired five front-line team members and one administrative person.

Each of these represents incremental changes – we're not doing anything new or different – but each accomplishment represents significant resources of time and money. It's not only taken time, but **a great attitude, rolling up of sleeves and embracing of change from our team**. There is never a moment that each person isn't putting a client and Connections' interests first. The genuine support and camaraderie are delightful.

These changes were also made possible with the support of funders who back Connections with dollars and impressive responsiveness. **Connections is having a substantially greater impact on more families and in the community today than a year ago – or ever in our 22-year history**. That impact is shared by funders – difference-makers who help us support families who would otherwise 'fall through the cracks.'

*Erin Waite, Agency Director  
June 6, 2012*

### *Board of Directors*

*Peter Cheung, President  
Ian Gray-Donald, Treasurer  
Tennille Boessenkool  
Loralie Johnson  
Daryl Pamplin  
Susan Plesuk  
Michelle Wolfe*

### *Thank you to our funders*

Calgary Foundation  
United Way of Calgary  
Humphrey Family Foundation  
Westin/QR77 Children's Foundation  
Committee of 10,000  
Alberta Government:  
Casino Funds  
Community Initiatives Program Grant

### *Thank you to our service partners*

Alberta Government -  
Persons with Developmental  
Disabilities

Calgary and Area Child and  
Family Services

*And to many individuals for  
their support*

# A Great Team and Supportive Partners

*There are many new initiatives in Alberta's social services from an umbrella guideline called the Social Policy Framework to extensive process and service changes within Persons with Developmental Disabilities to an outcomes-based mandate for Child and Family Services.*

All of the changes underway have the potential to improve service delivery and all have the potential to be a risk to services for Connections clients. It's important that Connections stays involved with all of these change initiatives to ensure that our clients' rights and choices are protected.



**Strengthening Partnerships** Connections continues to build on its solid relationships with Persons with Developmental Disabilities and Child and Family Services. These two government agencies fund a significant portion of our In-Home team support to client families as well as a

portion of our counselling provided to our clients and their family members.

We enjoy partnering with both agencies who are always supportive of our efforts and offer great teamwork to do the best for clients.

Our relationship with Child and Family Services has grown dramatically over the past two years. Notably, client referrals numbered 14 for all of 2010, 17 for 2011 and 22 in the first quarter of 2012. That strengthened relationship has given us the opportunity to counter the sometimes imbedded biases against the parents we support. Once we start to show parents successfully managing, we see a more supportive and optimistic attitude from caseworkers whose role is tremendously difficult and stressful.

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## Thank-you to our Team

It is so difficult to convey how much we value the people who support our families: *Lauren Raymore, Donna Cashin, Tracy Collyer, Pat Corbett, Amy Davidson (pictured, left), Kate Duncan, Victoria Fagan, Pam Goll, Jude Heyland (below, on left), Carrie Lawson, Melanie MacPherson, Jan Mason, Lorna Selig, Lisa Tuptin and Donna Waroway.*

## Tremendously Talented and Passionate

It is the best thing in the world to mention the Connections team to other agencies or funders, knowing that I am representing the most capable and respected team in the social services sector. I learn everyday from this group.

*From the bottom of my heart -- thank-you.*

*Erin, Agency Director*



## All families need a helping hand

The complexity of our families' lives and situations results in our In-Home team and counsellor needing to know their way around every system in Calgary. From transportation to medical specialists, from mental health to housing and from AISH to discount movie passes, our team can finesse their way through anything.

## 2011 built on so many strengths

If you want to be impressed by the small but mighty team that is Connections, just look at what was accomplished last year:

- ◆ Added a Cooking Club
- ◆ Participated in Calgary Women's Run with clients, Board and other volunteers and the entire staff
- ◆ Hosted our Christmas party and provided hampers to some families
- ◆ Trained the trainer with the PATH program that makes personal and family goals visual
- ◆ Took the staff on retreat to plan new programs, now implemented
- ◆ Clients attended a "Healthy Relationships" seminar
- ◆ Trained the trainer with Momentum's financial planning curriculum for the fall

- ◆ Sibshops program completed another season and has begun a summer review – a new venue (Centre St. Church) and a new schedule are set with a goal of doubling enrollment
- ◆ Trained more parent-child Mother Goose facilitators to add a second location plus a summer Mother-Goose-in-the-Park
- ◆ Completed a robust strategic planning session by staff and approved by the Board
- ◆ Served on the Executive for the Service Provider Council
- ◆ Participated in the Transition Fair that helps families negotiate services for children with disabilities to adults

## 2011 SUMMARY RESULTS

AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS ARE ON CONNECTIONS' WEBSITE	2011	2010	% chg.
No. of clients / Total in family	<b>44 / 136</b>	37/124	19
Hours of In-Home	<b>6,091</b>	4,039	50
Hours of Counselling	<b>620</b>	608	2
Revenue (\$000)	<b>\$492</b>	\$477	3
Front-line team & programs (\$000)	<b>\$337</b>	\$362	-7
% revenue that is Fee-for-Service	<b>51</b>	40	26

**OUTLOOK** In 2012, we will support between **65 and 70 families** which will require a budget of \$600,000. Approximately 45% of that budget will come from the support of the community -- foundations, corporations and individuals.

