



Supporting children, teens and families through major life transitions—your go-to hub for resources and programs.

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A Message From Your Program Director

Greetings from Starfish Family Resources, our first newsletter under our new name. Check us out at www.starfishfamilyresources.org



We wish to extend a warm welcome to Wainwright, our newest Rainbows host. Wainwright is

We are looking forward to serving you even better, as we continue to build and improve our resources and programs for families going through transition.

a shining example of how a community can come together to bring support to children experiencing loss.

We are delighted to report over 1000 children and 100 adults participated in RAINBOWS programs at some 40 Sites during the 2010/2011 school year.

Christina Harvey of the Military Family Resource Centre is the spearhead behind no less than seven different agencies that are cooperating in this endeavour.

We held another rewarding teleconference for Rainbows Coordinators on November 1st, allowing exchange of useful ideas about the successes and challenges we all face with RAINBOWS.

We are also delighted to welcome Jonathan Piska as our newest Rainbows Registered Director. Jonathan joins Melody Knutson and me as part of our training team. We will now generally have two trainers for our Edmonton workshops to enhance participant experience.

In particular, we discussed program promotion in our schools and communities, as well as how we obtain and utilize our resources.

Finally, as always, we welcome and encourage your ideas about how to improve our website and invite you to share your ideas, stories and any links to resources you have found useful. We can learn a lot from each other!

Victor Dorian



SFR provides facilitator training several times a year.

For more info contact:
Victor Dorian,
Rainbows Registered
Program Director

info@starfishfamilyresources.org

Tel 780-448-1180
Toll-free 1-800-416-4673

Quick Tips ~ For Parents

- * **Simplify.** Maybe you have moved to a smaller place; you have less money; or less time if you have returned to work. Take a look at your priorities and simplify.
- * **Budget** Don't try to buy love or loyalty. Gifts of time and attention are more meaningful.
- * **Be patient.** Grieve your losses and remember that this time can help you find new meaning, deeper connections and richer joys that you might have missed if this loss had not happened.



Reduce Holiday Anxiety for Your Kids



Barb Hepperle

We all know how much kids love Christmas, but your children may struggle emotionally when both parents are no longer together. This time of year can be incredibly tough on everyone, particularly if it is your first Christmas on your own. Here are some simple tips to help both you and your children get through the holidays.

As a parent, if you are stressed, you can bet your kids will be stressed as well, so take good care of yourself first. The less stress you feel, the more relaxed your children will be.

Let your children know that it is OK and normal to feel and express their sadness. Being available and willing to listen and validate their feelings will relieve a great deal of the sadness and anxiety your child may be experiencing.

Your attitude toward your ex during this important time of the year will play a crucial role in the amount of

stress your child will feel. Parents who get along give their children the most important gift they will ever receive—the gift of hope that their parents can at least be friends. So, step up and take the high road for your children's sake.

Involve your child in some of the holiday decisions. This will lessen their anxiety of feeling out of control when they have had no voice in whether or not their parents stay together and everything feels out of control. Allow your children to plan how they spend some of their time with each parent—especially older children. Perhaps they could bring a friend along or plan activities with friends during their time with you.

For younger children, allow them to pack a favourite toy or blanket when going to spend time with the other parent. A little bit of home can foster a feeling of security.

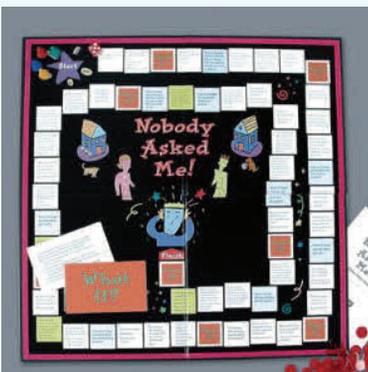
Create new memories. Children rarely remember much about the

gifts they received but they keep their memories. What type of memories do you want to give to your children—skating in the park, snuggled under a blanket watching family movies, a cosy fire sipping hot chocolate? You are limited only by your imagination.

Work out a fair and flexible parenting schedule well in advance of the holidays. Having Mom “present” and Dad “present” could very well be the very best present you can give your kids. Putting your children ahead of your own hurt, anger and sadness through the post divorce holiday season is truly a gift from the heart that will last long after the holidays pass.



Did you know?



Nearly half of all children in North America will experience parental divorce before they turn 18. For a child, this event can be confusing, chaotic and scary. **Nobody Asked Me!** is a board game developed by Western Psychological Services (Torrance, CA) that helps children cope with divorce by providing them with an outlet to express and cope with such feelings.

As players move around the game board, they are asked questions regarding their feelings toward their parents and how their lives have changed following divorce. The game cards address hypothetical situations, including moving to a new neighbourhood, financial hardship, parental dating, and remarriage. By considering these issues, children become better prepared for situations they may encounter in the future.

Nobody Asked Me! gives children a voice by asking how they feel about a situation in which they had no say, that greatly affects their lives. Suitable for children ages 8 to 15. Price: \$48.50 U.S. <http://portal.wpspublish.com>



WAY TO GO ST. JOSEPH CATHOLIC SCHOOL!

SPRUCE GROVE



Over the last 10 years nearly 100 children per year, from kindergarten through to grade 4, from St Joseph Catholic School in Spruce Grove, have been participating in the Rainbows program.

This is an absolutely amazing accomplishment! I asked long time Coordinator Gwen Guimond about the secrets to their success - other than her own passion and dedication of course – and will share her insights with you here.

Strong support for the Rainbows program has come from both the School Parents' Council and the

school staff thanks to the dedication and energy exerted by Gwen and her colleagues. Rainbows has become such a part of the school's and community's culture that sessions often run for up to 18 weeks. The weekly sessions, which are offered over lunch time, start with each child being given the opportunity to share a "Brag and a Drag", to encourage them to get into the Rainbows spirit. As at other Rainbows sites, activities are sometimes modified to better suit the children's needs. Congratulations Gwen and colleagues, and thank you for inspiring us!

Winter RAINBOWS Sessions in the Edmonton region

Alberta Parenting for the Future, Stony Plain; tel 780-963-0549 ext 227 Coordinator: Candace Fehr

YWCA Edmonton, 10350 124 St, tel 780-423-9922 Ext 222; 10 week Monday evening sessions. Next session will start in January 2012.

Coordinator: Pam Schellenberger

WECA (West Edmonton Christian Assembly), 6315 199 St, tel 780-489-2579; 13 week Tuesday evening sessions. Next session starts in September, 2012. Coordinator: Nancy Allen

MWFRC (Millwoods Family Resource Centre) 1733 Millwoods Road, tel 780-413-4521; 10 week Monday evening sessions. Next session will start in January. Coordinator: Debbie Gregg

Kids on Track, 15671 96 Ave, tel 780-481-2942; 6 week, Wednesday evening sessions, 1.5 hours each – next one will start mid-February 2012. Coordinators: Linda Roussell and Gisela McKerracher

North Pointe Community Church, 14025 167 Ave, tel 780-452-5566; 13 week Tuesday evening sessions. Next session will start in September 2012. Coordinator: Michael Voll

Leduc FCSS, Nisku and region, tel 780-955-6421
Coordinator: Judy Dumont

Boys & Girls Club, Fort Saskatchewan, tel 780-992-0103
Coordinator: Amanda Prima

Leduc Rainbows, tel 780-980-8429
Coordinator: Charlene Schatz

Rainbows Facilitator Training

Edmonton YWCA, 10350 124 St Friday, January 27, 630-830 pm; Saturday, January 28, 2012, 9 am-4 pm

Sylvan Lake Community Partner's Association
Saturday, January 14, 2012, 830 am to 5 pm tel 403-887-9989

Directions: From Calgary or Edmonton: take Highway 2, turn west towards Sylvan Lake on Highway 11, right @ lights on Highway 20, left @ lights on 47 Ave, right @ lights on 50th street, go over the tracks then make an immediate right turn on 50th Ave. The Sylvan Lake and Area Community Partners Association is two doors down at 4936 50th Ave.

Alternatively, take Highway 2 and turn west towards Sylvan Lake on Highway 11A, go half way through the roundabout on lakeshore drive, turn left on 50th Ave, follow through 4 way stop until 4936 50th Ave.



SFR is a non-profit, registered charitable organization that is dedicated to helping children, adolescents and adults in understanding, accepting, healing and moving forward after a loss due to death, divorce, separation, abandonment or other painful family transition
www.starfishfamilyresources.org

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FALL TELECONFERENCE

Our third semi-annual teleconference in November consisted of a fruitful dialogue among its 5 participants, from 4 communities: one each from Wainwright, Leduc and Spruce Grove, as well as two from Edmonton. We discussed our Rainbows successes and challenges, with special attention to program promotion and resource allocation.

The new Wainwright Rainbows Site inspired us with their ability to bring together a coalition of 7 different local agencies for initiating RAINBOWS. Although they each focus on different areas, they share the common vision of healthier families. The agencies are: Military Family Resource Centre (MFRC), Catholic Social Services, the Alberta Mental Health Capacity Project, Parent Link (Alberta Children and Youth Services), Early Intervention (Alberta Health Services), AADAC and the Family-School Liaison Program.

Teleconference participants shared the many different effective ways for promoting Rainbows in their communities, including newsletters, in-service for staff and parents, city program guides, school open houses,



parent-teacher interview nights, strong links with school principals, community leaders and agencies and Court Liaison workers.

Resource availability and optimum use is always a challenge for schools and agencies. Committed staff and volunteers, creative fundraising and attracting and inspiring volunteers go a long way in making a program such as Rainbows successful. Some of the most effective and enthusiastic Rainbows Facilitators are parents whose children have been through the program. Many local or Alberta wide businesses are glad to donate resources to agencies which look out for the well-being of children and families. For example, Shaw Cable donates boxes of their white bears for children across Alberta – all you have to do is ask them to give bears to the Rainbows children.

We would like to invite you to share your thoughts with us by contributing to our Newsletter and participating in future teleconferences.

We welcome articles, new tools from your “bag of tricks”, quick tips, testimonials, beefs & bouquets, links to information for parents or Coordinators, recognition of volunteers, etc.



Stepping forward into change doesn't mean huge leaps... but you can take a tiny step each and every day. Each step changes the view allowing you to see new possibilities.