

It Takes a Community to Create Change for the Future
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“I think that green is God’s favourite colour.”

“Green? Why green?”

“Just look at the trees and the grass and everything. Green is everywhere! Green has to be God’s favourite colour.”

Children have a way of looking at the world with fresh eyes and active imaginations, and of opening our eyes to new possibilities. I didn’t know much about this little girl, the one who looked outside and saw something that I didn’t; I did know, however, that her home life may not have been what we would hope for every child to have. She may not have always eaten breakfast before school, she may not always have had a clean, safe environment to go home to, and she may not have always had proper clothes to wear. She will remain in my memory as the child that represents all of the children who aren’t getting the nutrition, protection, or enrichment that they need to build healthy and strong lives. It’s a sad loss when children, each with a world of potential, do not get the support that they need from their parents or their communities to build their vivacious imaginations into sturdy minds; a loss not only unto themselves, but also a loss to the future of our community. What we do now, as a community, to account for every child and to protect their potential, will determine the strength of the foundation we are building for the future. Our actions will ultimately determine the quality of life and strength of economy and social structure for future generations, which, at our choosing, can be better or worse than our own. If we choose “better,” we need to realize that it takes a community to create change for the future.

There are programs already in place within our community that help young children and their parents, which deserve and need our support. Programs that, first of all, ensure that children have their basic needs met. Social Services, particularly as part of the BC Ministry of Children and Family Development, provides a large portion of the reinforcement that struggling families need. Programs like the BC Family Bonus (as part of the Canada Child Tax Benefit) make sure that parents with dependent children are getting extra financial support when they really need it. Further Ministry of Children and Family Development programs ensure that children are getting adequate dental and vision care. Elsewhere in the

community, many breakfast programs are in place to see that children are being fed well before school, in order to do well in studies and in play. Another group of programs within our community serve to enrich the lives of children. Free programs at our public library invite children into the world of reading and education. Leisure and arts programs are in place to teach children how to swim or to make crafts, and consequently teach them how to stay active and healthy and how to express themselves.

Our community has an abundance of programs to enrich and protect young children, but we may lack in areas of public support. Programs need substantial financial support from the public in order to keep operating. Some programs need donations in the form of food, books or toys, to offer to children. Many more need caring volunteers to help in various areas of the program. There are many opportunities to support essential services that our community has in place for children, and they need to be taken so that we can continue to protect the future of our community and the quality of these young people's lives. Together, we are responsible for the lives of young children, and collectively, we are able to create the changes in their lives that will result in a better future for this generation and the generations to come.

I will always remember that little girl for the goofy, precious thing she said that day, and for the life she was leading. Let her be the last child in our community to ever do without, by participating in and supporting the programs that have been set up to protect and enrich the lives of young children. It takes a community to raise a child, and it takes a community to create change for the future.