

From the Chair

There are exciting things happening with the F.O.R.C.E. these days, much of which you will read elsewhere in this newsletter. We have some new members on the board, who bring new ideas and new energy to our rapidly expanding organization.

Our most recent success was the non-Conference held on Friday, October 17th at Children's Hospital. Hard work by Keli Anderson and a dedicated group of volunteers produced an event that exceeded everyone's expectations.

This will most likely be my last report as the Chair of the Board of Directors of the F.O.R.C.E. The F.O.R.C.E. is expanding into new areas of providing support to families in this province who deal with something they did not choose. This will require staff and volunteers with specific skills to deal with new challenges.

It has been a humbling experience for me to be a part of this dynamic organization. The executive Director, Keli Anderson, and her staff and volunteers are some of the most dedicated people I have met, and with Keli's leadership, the F.O.R.C.E. will continue to grow and expand its influence in the community, in the province and Nationally to bring comfort and inclusion to those who need it the most.

I would like to thank the Board for their hard work and support over the past years, and to wish them great success in the future. And to all you amazing parents and volunteers who form the backbone of the F.O.R.C.E., keep up the good work on behalf of those you love to make their life better.

Bon Chance.

Neil Coward

Chairperson

Support

Abbotsford

When: The 1st Monday of each month, 7 - 9 pm (from Sept.-June)
Where: Fraser Valley Child Development Centre, #109-32885 Ventura Ave.
Contact: Paula Jacobs at 604-878-3400 or abbotsfordforce@yahoo.ca

Chilliwack

When: The 1st Monday of each month, 6:30 - 8:30 pm
Where: 8978 School St. (Ministry of Children and Family Development)
Contact: Chris Whiteway at 604-858-8740 or 604-878-3400 or chris.whiteway@shaw.ca

Penticton

When: The 1st Tuesday of each month, 6:30 - 8:30 pm
Where: Penticton Community Centre Meeting, Rm. #3, 325 Power St.
Contact: Jennifer at 250-488-3733 or 250-462-0478 or pentictonforce@gmail.com

Squamish

When: Every 2nd Wednesday, 6:30 - 8:30 pm
Where: Brackendale Elementary School, 42000 Government Rd.
Contact: Leslie Stevens-Cross at 604-878-3400 or squamishforce@gmail.com

Sunshine Coast

Contact: Rebecca Pavitt - rpavitt@dccnet.com

Surrey

When: The 2nd Tuesday of each month, 6:30 - 8:30 pm
Where: Pacific Community Resources (Newton), #114-13479-76th Avenue
Contact: Renee at 604-878-3400 or surreyforce@gmail.com

Tri-Cities

When: The 1st Thursday of each month, 6:30 - 8:30 pm
Where: Tri-Cities East Neighbourhood Centre, 3044 Flint St.
Contact: Jeannie Rohr at 604-878-3400 or 604-944-2500 ext. 317 or tricitiesforce@gmail.com

South Island

When: The 1st Wednesday of each month, 7 - 9 pm
Where: Pearkes Recreation Centre, 3100 Tillicum Rd.
Contact: Lisa Hansen at 250-479-1192 or islandFORCE@shaw.ca

Nanaimo

When: Coming in January 2009
Where: TBA
Contact: Denise at 250-758-8873 or nanaimoforce@gmail.com

Updates & Welcome!

The F.O.R.C.E. has two new staff to assist us in the important work we do for child, youth and family mental health.

Monica Kriese will be our new Support and Resource Coordinator in Salmon Arm and **Renee Boisvert** will be our new Support and Resource Coordinator in Surrey. Like all of our parents, Monica's and Renee's experience and journey with their children have provided them with a wealth of knowledge and expertise that will be invaluable to the parents in their communities who have similar challenges with their children and need support and information that will assist them in supporting and managing their children.

In Nanaimo, **Denise McKibben** is working on the development of a F.O.R.C.E. group for her community. As with our other parents, Denise has a lot to offer and the F.O.R.C.E. will definitely be working to have Denise available in her community to provide support, information and resources to other families.

Welcome to all of you!

The F.O.R.C.E. Society for Kids' Mental Health

'As families, we've been there'



Families Organized for Recognition & Care Equality

www.bckidsmentalhealth.org
theforce@bckidsmentalhealth.org
Phone: 604-878-3400

Newsletter November 2008

Funding provided by:
Ministry of Children & Family Development
& the Provincial Health Services Authority

The F.O.R.C.E. Provides...



Support

Provides families with an opportunity to speak to other families who understand and may be able to offer support or advice on what has worked for them.



Education

Provides families and professionals with information, tools and tips on how to support and assist children with mental health difficulties.



Advocacy

Provides assistance that can help both professionals & families in meeting the mental health needs of children and youth.



Navigation

Provides information that can assist families and professionals in knowing the services available and how to access them.



Education

FRIENDS for Life

Anxiety is the most common mental disorder affecting children and youth. It is conservatively estimated that within the childhood population a minimum of 65,000 British Columbian kids are affected by anxiety in some form. Anxiety disorders impact nearly 7% of children so seriously as to significantly impair their functioning at home, in extra-curricular activities and at school.

Over the past three years, The F.O.R.C.E. Society for Kids' Mental Health, with support from the Ministry of Children and Family Development has brought the parent portion of the FRIENDS for Life program to 45 school districts in the province of BC.

What is FRIENDS for Life?

- An anxiety prevention and resiliency program developed in Australia and designed to help children learn and practice skills that help them cope more effectively with difficult situations and worries
- FRIENDS promotes self-esteem and increases problem-solving skills and psychological resilience through a fun, positive learning experience
- Research shows that FRIENDS significantly increases children's level of self-esteem while reducing worry and sadness. Up to 80% of children who exhibit evidence of anxiety no longer display those signs after completing FRIENDS. This percentage improves when parents receive the same information as their children and implement the principles for anxiety management in the home

FRIENDS for Life program in BC

- FRIENDS is being offered to all grade 4 & 5 students in BC, in support of the *Child and Youth Mental Health Plan for British Columbia*.
- FRIENDS was recently expanded to include a module for delivery to grade 7 & 8 students as well
- FRIENDS materials (student workbooks and leaders manual) are provided (free of charge) by the Ministry of Children and Family Development, Child and Youth Mental Health
- Teachers receive FRIENDS training to prepare them for the classroom delivery of the program enabling them to guide their students through a 10+ week series of activities
- Parent training is provided in partnership with School Districts, Community Mental Health and The F.O.R.C.E Society for Kids' Mental Health

In Fall 2008, The F.O.R.C.E. Society for Kids' Mental Health adopted an improved model of program delivery that streamlined the course content for the parent segment and enhanced program efficiency. The new course offers parents an opportunity to learn the core FRIENDS skills in a single session as opposed to the earlier 2 session model.

In addition to the course improvements, our F.O.R.C.E. team of Parent Support and Resource Coordinators has been engaged to facilitate the parent training in BC communities. Prior to the adoption of this new program model, the FRIENDS parent training was conducted throughout the province by a single individual. With the added strength of a team of eight parent trainers, it is our hope that the new model will increase sustainability of the program and empower more parents to deliver the program.

September provided an occasion for the F.O.R.C.E. Training Team to come together for three days of learning in preparation for their new responsibilities. The team was guided through the FRIENDS course materials, program planning and treated to presentations from experts in the areas of mental health, adult education and group facilitation.

With this keen focus on quality program delivery and the heightened skill level of our FORCE team, we anticipate a very successful rollout of the FRIENDS program in 2008/09.

For more information about FRIENDS parent training please contact our FRIENDS for Life Parent Education Coordinator, Leslie Stevens-Cross at friends.parent.education@gmail.com.



Support

A Youth's Perspective on Anxiety

When we were young, we all faced tough challenges. Mine, happened to be anxiety. Now, I'm very close to my mom. Before, I was so close that she couldn't leave me anywhere without her being there. We ended up going to a psychologist. She helped me look past my struggles and see the light. It gave me a sense of independence that no one could even begin to understand. Realizing that there is hope and ways to cope, is one part that no one can take that away from you. When I was younger I faced medical challenges, my psychologist believed my medical history was the cause of my anxiety. Even though she couldn't erase my past, she could help make it easier to revisit. Parents need to realize that if there's something wrong, let your child tell you. No one knows their own problems better than kids, because they realize it's stopping them from living a normal life. Looking back, I can't believe

anxiety was ever a struggle of mine. I still face anxiety but it's definitely not as severe as it was back when I was little. I try to handle it and calm it down by taking deep breaths. For me, what works best, because I love singing, and I get caught up in my own world of happiness and peace when I sing, I just start singing, or humming when I feel nervous and that calms me down fairly fast. Harnessing your anxiety is all about finding what works for you and running with it. What works for one person doesn't always work for another. I was so insecure when I was young. Nerves are a fact of life. There's no changing that, but you can find ways to work around them. It's all about knowing how you feel comfortable dealing with them. Whether it's a psychologist, school counselor or a doctor, there's always a way. I have come so far from those days; I'm living my life like any normal teenage girl. A final note to the parents reading this: When nothing else seems to work, always remember, there's light at the end of the tunnel, it might be a very long tunnel, but there's always hope waiting at the other side.

Jessica Robertson – 13 yrs old



Navigation & Advocacy

Update: Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC)

Having a member of The F.O.R.C.E., Keli Anderson, on the Mental Health Commission of Canada, specifically the Child & Youth Advisory Committee is a great honour.

Keli feels very humbled by the appointment to the committee and she considers it a privilege to represent the family voice for child & youth mental health. She takes the role very seriously.

Several of the projects recommended by the Child & Youth Advisory Committee have been approved and funded by the MHCC and request for proposals should be forthcoming and announced shortly. Check the MHCC website for updates at www.mentalhealthcommission.ca

The F.O.R.C.E. has expressed interest in being part of several of the projects to ensure that family's needs are considered and represented in future decisions and practices.



Non-Conference on Engaging with Families for Child & Youth Mental Health

October 17th was a very special day for The F.O.R.C.E. as we hosted a day to share advice and experiences on engaging with families for child & youth mental health.

Sandra Spencer, the Executive Director of the Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health in the United States shared her 20 years of getting the Federation going in the States and how it has empowered and strengthened families to be partners in the mental health of their children and how it has also strengthened the people and systems working in child & youth mental health.

Dr. Kellie Leitch, author of Canada's report "Reaching for the Top", on child health in Canada, spoke about the alarming statistics on the health of children in Canada and the critical need for mental health care for our children and youth that goes beyond traditional access points. Please check the FORCE website for a link to her report and to find out how you can help keep her report, and her recommendations alive.

Dr. Charles Huffine, psychiatrist from King County in Washington, shared his extensive experience in working with youth and families and he spoke of the increased strength and outcomes it has provided to the work he does and to those he treats.

The F.O.R.C.E. arranged to have a short 15 minute documentary produced that interviewed some of our parents, a couple of members of the mental health team in Chilliwack and Dr. Jana Davidson from BC Children's Hospital. The video received rave reviews from the participants at the non-conference and many were moved by the honesty and courage of those who graciously agreed to assist us in capturing the essence of family engagement.

All aspects of the non-conference emphasized the need for professionals and families to work as **partners** for child & youth mental health.