



## Saskatchewan Fetal Alcohol Support Network

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# Network News November 2005, Issue 9



## **A Note to Readers**

By Beverly Palibroda

Here we are... November, the season of frosty days, mittens, pink cheeks, and busy, busy schedules. For many of us November and December are indeed busy times; both in our private and public lives. We must prepare for the holiday season, connect with family, friends, and coworkers, attend festive activities in our schools and communities, as well as get the day to day work completed.



The Network office is humming with activity. In this issue of Network News, I will share some information about the projects and activities related to FASD that are underway in our province. You may have heard about a new Government Initiative called the *Action Plan for Citizens with Cognitive Disabilities*. On page 3 you will find an overview of the plan to help you understand this new strategy. We have also included some strategies that you can use in your daily life over the holiday season as you strive to make this world a better place for persons with FASD. We wish you all the best throughout the coming days of this busy season.

## **Did You Know???**

### **Regional FASD Committee Meetings**

Meetings are in 10 Regions throughout Saskatchewan. This is a great way to get involved and work toward improved lives for persons with FASD. Please call the Network office for contact information for a committee in your region.

### **Parent Support Groups in Regina and Saskatoon**

New Sessions beginning in January 2006. See story on page 4.

### **FASD Workshops**

Supported Housing Project for Persons with FASD  
January 16-17 Justice, January 19-20 Addictions and Mental Health, February 6-7  
Supported Employment,  
February 8-9 Social Services. Call Eunice at 975-0896 for more information.

### **we CARES Community Trainers**

Skilled community trainers are available to provide FASD educational events in your community.

For individuals **providing support in Regina** FASD Workshops are being held: November 16-18, January 18-20 and February 22-24. For detailed information call Dave Wiebe (306) 751-2730.

Call the Network for more information about the events.

### **Canada Northwest Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Partnership Conference**

May 17-19, 2006 Queensbury Convention Centre  
Regina, Saskatchewan



## ***FASD Hope:How to Maintain Peace and Calm in the Holiday Season***

By Beverly Palibroda with the help of members of the Network board and staff

The days are growing colder and we know that winter is just around the corner. With the holiday season fast approaching we at the Network would like to share some thoughts and ideas about how peace and calm can be maintained amidst all the hype and excess of the holiday season. You might wonder “Is even possible to remain calm and peaceful?” Well, I imagine that we have to accept some excitement at this time of year. Sometimes even with our best efforts, things do get chaotic, but maybe, by trying some of these suggestions, your home and family can be a calmer and happier place this holiday season. Here are a few tips for the holidays...

### **Keep Life Simple**

One parent has made a great suggestion reminding us to keep life simple. She has suggested that instead of lighting the lights, baking the cookies, and playing the holiday music all beginning on November 1st and carrying on until chaos takes over (Oh by about December 15th), begin to prepare for the holidays about one week in advance. The long time period of extra excitement can lead to problems and is just too much for some children. In addition, keep decorations simple, the music low, and just a few lights; this will avoid over-stimulation.

### **Choose Gifts Wisely**

Give gifts that are one piece only. They are easier to pick up than Lego sets, Tinker Toys and 1000 piece puzzles. Give gifts that do not require batteries. They are usually quieter and do not have flashing lights. Stress that this is a time of peace, giving and family. Focus on what each child can give to help others, rather than the gifts they will get.

### **Plan the Gift Opening**

Opening gifts can be really exciting! Don't put the gifts out too early to avoid impulsive actions. It is a good idea for children to eat before gift opening. This helps to calm everyone down and helps to keep the regular daily routine. Once gift opening has begun, have the children take turns. And just to slow things down a little more how about a stretch break or a drink break about halfway through? Another parent likes the idea of spreading the gift opening over a few days.



### **Create Holiday Routines**

A number of families with lots of collective wisdom have suggested that you create holiday routines. Holiday routines help to build memories. For example, one family decorates the tree and then reads the Christmas story from the Bible. They have something special to eat to complete the routine. They serve the same foods at special meals, and take part in the same activities such as a church service and gift opening. This helps with kids with FASD because they know exactly what to expect year after year. This creates feelings of safety and comfort. The mother of the family says it beautifully “Nothing unique and exciting-just a sweet sameness that everyone seems to appreciate...” What a good reminder that change can be hard for persons with FASD. Another parent has suggested family projects that teach about helping others, such as a Jesse tree, taking gifts to a shelter, giving to the food bank, or adopting a family. Children should choose the activity and be involved. Another fun family routine that many of us enjoy is an evening in the car looking at the festive lights.

### **Involve each family member**

It is important that each family member be a part of the holiday celebrations. Reading special stories or playing board games are good ways of involving all family members, even grandparents and extended family members. Sometimes activities may be too stressful, so it might be a good idea for each person to take some time on their own. The family can wear off some extra energy by going outdoors: sledding, skiing, snowboarding, snow shoeing or skating are great choices.

### **Spend Quiet Time with a Few Special People**

We all know how difficult it is not to get caught up in the frenzy, it seems so fun filled and glamorous. Another parent has shared the idea of taking time with immediate family. Many families like to spend time with extended family members, neighbours, and friends. With all the coming and going, cooking, entertaining, and busy-ness happening, Christmas can go by with little interaction with your children and closest loved ones. This is a sure strategy to slow down the hectic pace.



## ***Important Information for Parents and Caregivers of Persons with FASD***

### ***An Overview of Saskatchewan's Action Plan for Citizens with Cognitive Disabilities***

In September of 2005, the Saskatchewan Government released information concerning a new initiative committed to providing better support for children and youth with cognitive disabilities, such as Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. Families and individuals affected by FASD may be eligible for services offered through this project. A sum of 1.65 million dollars has been budgeted to build upon ongoing activities and develop new initiatives for persons with cognitive disabilities. The vision of the Action Plan for Citizens with Cognitive Disabilities is a community that supports persons with cognitive disabilities so that each individual is able to participate and contribute as a full citizen in the economic and social life in Saskatchewan. The following goals will help to reach this vision:

1. Develop and increase family, community, and professional ability to support persons with cognitive disabilities.
  2. Assist individuals with cognitive disabilities to become independent and self sufficient to the best of their abilities.
- Prevent FASD through reduction and elimination of alcohol consumption during pregnancy.

Children and youth with cognitive disabilities have complex behavioral and developmental challenges. They will require, and have a right to, lifelong supports. The resources now available are not meeting the needs of children, youth, and families affected by FASD. Many children and youth with cognitive

disabilities do not experience success in schools and communities. Families, teachers, and professionals often do not have the necessary resources to promote safety and health for their children and themselves. This lack of support, time, energy, and money for additional resources results in many children and youth experiencing secondary disabilities such as addictions, mental health issues, difficulty with relationships, and homelessness.

The Action Plan is a step in the right direction for persons with FASD and their families. Consultants have been hired in 4 regions of the province: Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, and La Ronge. The consultants will be available to help families, individuals, and organizations to determine how to best support persons with cognitive disabilities. The plan will build on existing services and has indicated a desire to partner with the Saskatchewan Fetal Alcohol Support Network, the regional FASD committees, as well as the Saskatchewan Prevention Institute. In addition, a flexible funding pool is available so individuals and families with unmet needs can access funds to improve their quality of life. The services will be based on individual needs and may include home support staff, respite care, or assistance with independent living.

[http://www.health.gov.sk.ca/fs\\_cognitive\\_disabilities.pdf](http://www.health.gov.sk.ca/fs_cognitive_disabilities.pdf)  
Communities Working Together: Saskatchewan's Action Plan for Citizens with Cognitive Disabilities  
Accessed October 6, 2005.

**The Network would like to help community members learn more about this strategy.  
For information about the Action Plan for Citizens with Cognitive Disabilities  
please contact:**

**Saskatchewan Fetal Alcohol Support Network at  
1-866-673- (FASN) 3276  
or in Saskatoon 975-0884.**



## Parent Support Groups

By Shelley Kolisnek

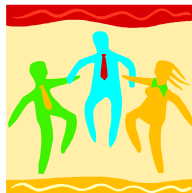
Facilitator/Parent Educator

Coming together with other parents who know the joys and the challenges of caring for and loving children with FASD has always been a positive experience for families. Sharing the “Do’s and Don’ts” the “Ups and Downs” and the small successes that we are just so darn proud of, has been a rewarding experience for myself as the facilitator/parent educator, and for the members of the parent support group.

Nine parents attended each of the first 4 gatherings. They brought their wisdom to share with the other parents, along with a willingness to learn from the other parents. Members of the support group include birth parents, family members, and caregivers. All members share a common interest in making the lives of their loved ones better.

Each meeting includes time for an educational piece and time for a support piece. Educational topics covered so far have been:

- FASD - the basics
- Changing perspectives
- Environmental changes
- Visual strategies
- Positive thinking
- Record keeping



In the next few meetings, the group will explore topics such as sensory issues, self-care, and community supports and resources.

The group also had the opportunity to take part in a Parent Focus Group. We looked at and gave our opinions about one of the upcoming pictorial FASD Tips for Parents and Caregivers. This was a unique experience for the attending parents to be a part of the development of materials that will benefit other families affected by FASD.

New sessions of the Parent Support Groups begin in Regina and Saskatoon in January 2006. Call the Network Office for details.



Does your child need help making decisions?



How to help a child with a Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

## New Pictorial FASD Tips Coming Soon!!

The Network has a variety of informational materials and resources available to the public. A resource that we are very proud of is the set of 3 Pictorial FASD Tips in a handy brochure format. These Tips combine great ideas with easily understood and eye catching pictures. We will have **7 new pictorial FASD Tips** available in the new year.

Call the Network office to request copies of the new pictorial FASD Tips, or other materials and resources that you may need.  
1-866-673-3276(FASN) Toll Free  
975-0884 in Saskatoon.



Does your child need help making friends?



How to help a child with a Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

### We Need Your Support

Throughout the years, the Network has put forth great energy toward the vision that individuals with FASD and their families can be accepted by and understood within their communities.

The behind the scenes work done in our office is vital to reaching this vision. The Network has grown considerably and we now require additional staff, office space, and necessary office equipment.

We are requesting financial support for the purchase of a new computer and software. Tax receipts will be issued for all donations. Thank you for considering this request. Please see contact information on pg 1.

**Never doubt that a small, group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.**

**Margaret Mead**

