



Celebrating
20
Years

April 2015



The UVic Family Centre is more than child-care-it's a fun place of connection for families that develops our future leaders. Working with the Family Centre, I've been able to bring Island Savings' own passion, dedication and community spirit to the table to help the Family Centre create a meaningful difference in the lives of student families.

-Kelly Sterk,
Island Savings (Sponsor)



A Special Issue of News and Views

Providing Essential Community Services for Twenty Years

The UVic Family Centre is much more than meets the eye. Beneath the surface of chatting parents and smiling children is a series of programs and innovations that have been serving the community since 1995. The Family Centre still remains true to its original intent: to provide health and community services to student families living on and off campus; to act as a neighbourhood house and outreach facility on behalf of the University; and to serve as a research setting to enrich the experience of faculty and students.

This warm, welcoming Centre runs a variety of programs for adults and children ranging from Early Learning Playgroups to community building events like seasonal celebrations and pancake breakfasts. The Centre has made contributions to the research and academic community through schools of Child and Youth Care, Nursing and Social Work and Camosun College. The UVic Family Centre links students to community resources within UVic and the Greater Victoria area and works to support student families by enhancing both their academic and living experience while here in Victoria.

What many of the stories and quotes in this special edition of the newsletter illustrate is that the Centre makes an important contribution to the University as a whole. It has had a lasting positive impact on families, practitioners, research partners, practicum students and community sponsors.

Over 200 children and 150 adults attend drop-in programs at the Family Centre each month.

"My two school-aged kids are experiencing cultural awareness and a deeper understanding of people with a different language, beliefs and traditions. I think this is an amazing place for the entire family."

-Angie Gray



Some Family Centre History

In 1995 the School of Nursing and Faculty of Human and Social Development proposed establishment of the Family Centre. The original vision was to provide multidisciplinary health services to families who occupied the newly constructed family housing units. The original idea emerged from discussions with Dr. Bill Dyson who was concerned that Student Health Services was unable to provide care to campus residents who were not students. Student Health Services initially provided space. Over time, using a community development approach, we learned that families did not perceive a need for traditional health services. Rather, a wide range of programs were developed and offered with community input and participation. The activities have shifted over time as community needs changed. With increasing demand and activity, the Family Centre was allocated space in a family housing unit in 1998. The opportunity for integrated practice, education, and research for students and faculty members became a reality. Congratulations on 20 years of successful community building and community health care!

-Anita Molzahn, PhD, RN, FCAHS

On average the Family Centre is used by 4000 people each year. 58% of users are children; 42% of users are adults.

"I was the first Early Childhood Educator to join the team and I was very excited about it. The Family Centre is a place where children can socialize and parents can meet new people and share stories, recipes, child rearing tips and friendships. The UVic Family Centre is so rich in diversity; with many different languages spoken, different cultural backgrounds and ethnicities. Everyone appreciated and was respectful of the differences and the sameness of each other. How long will I have memories of everyone I knew at the Centre? A very, very long time."

-Miki McMechan, previous Early Childhood Educator

"I entered the Family Centre community as a practicum student, working toward my BSW. I had very little practical experience and had no idea what to expect. Imagine my relief when I was welcomed into such a warm and friendly environment. One of my happiest memories from the Family Centre was seeing mothers come together to knit. The Family Centre is at the heart of a vibrant and diverse community and I feel very privileged to have had the opportunity to be apart of it during my time at UVic."

- Sarah Nantel, BSW (MSW student, Lakehead University)

Approximately 500 volunteers hours are donated each year to support the Family Centre.



"One of the biggest challenges I have faced since moving across the country from Ontario is the uncertainty of being a new parent without aid of family. The one thing we have really appreciated about of Family Centre is how quickly we became part of a local community. The staff at the Family Centre have always been empathetic and I am grateful for all the support."

-Kush Bubbar, PhD student, Mechanical Engineering

"Thank you for providing the opportunities for my kids to be vaccinated at the Family Centre. All three got "caught up" with their immunization schedules at the Family Centre, and received their seasonal flu vaccines! It was especially helpful when my youngest was under six months; it spared me many stressful and exhausting bus trips to and from the health unit." – Mari Imahori, mother



A Personal Statement

One of the most satisfying involvements I have had during the last 15 years or so has been as a member of the Advisory Group of the Family Centre.

Soon after my wife and I moved to Victoria and I was welcomed into the University of Victoria family, the then President of the University, Dr. David Strong, invited me to lunch. He wanted to know about me -- not only with regard to my previous professional life at the University of Alberta, but also about



my childhood, my teaching and camping experiences, and my ongoing personal interests. I suppose it became clear to him that in addition to my having been a professional school teacher and university academic and administrator, I had the inclination of an amateur child care and social worker. Before the meal ended, David said, "I'm pretty sure you'll be interested in our Family Centre. Like many at our University, I knew nothing about the Family Centre but after a visit to the facility, I was "hooked".

Consequently, when I was invited to be a member of the Family Centre Advisory Group, I agreed -- and I did so enthusiastically. Our responsibility on that committee has been to give advice and to react to proposals of our very competent Director and her committed staff, volunteers and practicum and other students. I hope we have made a positive difference in the lives of our student families and their families. What I know is that among the most enjoyable and meaningful experiences I have had, since joining the University of Victoria community, has been my involvement in this Centre. Thank you, Family Centre, and congratulations on your 20th birthday.

-Myer Horowitz

"I started volunteering at the Family Centre in 2005, during my first year at UVic. I later worked there as a work-study student. The Family Centre was where I first learned to interact with children and their families; it is a place where I had my first real job; it was my home away from home. It played a big part in shaping me into the child and youth care worker I am today. I'm grateful for all the valuable experiences and support I was provided with. Thank you!"

-Maii Eltemtamy, previous Work Study Student/Volunteer

The Family Centre feeds over 600 people a year at their pancake breakfasts, Halloween party, welcome party, end-of-year party and Winter celebration.



"Parenting is a village, it is often said, and sometimes you are lucky enough to find that your parenting village stretches around the world. And so it was when we visited UVic in the summer of 2012. My engineering partner was busy researching and teaching leaving me free to roam with our four year old twins, Archer and Toby.

We'd already found Cadboro Bay to be like a home away from home -- just like our own Island Bay, in Wellington, NZ. And the final piece of the puzzle, adding to our sense of contentment, was the family we found at the aptly-named Family Centre. It reminded me that some things are the same the world over, and parents supporting parents is one of them. All the best for the next 20 years, Family Centre!"

-Nicci, Wyatt, Archer and Toby Page.

The UVic' Family Centre: a place of sharing, listening and kindness, so precious for our family's integration.

Late April, we left Brussels and arrived for a new chapter in live in UVic' Family Housing with our two little ones (nearly 3 years old and 10 months old at that time). Through the UVic' website we knew there was a Family Centre and from then we were convinced the Centre would help us to settle down.

How do you feel when arriving from abroad in an empty house and



with two little ones? We felt lost and with so many questions in need for an answer. We soon got all the answers at the Family Centre where we joined (and still join) the playgroup three times a week. We soon went home with new books to discover, new toys to play with and with new names to remember. The Family Centre is for us a

place to meet people, from all over the world, facing sometimes same challenges; it is a place we all feel fine, where our kids can discover at their own pace, no matter whether they understand English or not a single word

We'll never forget this first display of kindness: A few weeks before our arrival we posted a message on the Family Centre Facebook page asking for help for the first days. Who could help us by lending us some cutlery, a mattress, some dishes and a pan? We immediately got replies and even before leaving Belgium we knew our sons would have something to sleep on and we would have the basic stuff to prepare a meal. And what a surprise when we arrived! We even found a bottle of milk, bread and jam!

—Thierry and Catherine Bodson, parents of Antoine and Félix.



"Have you ever been a stranger in a strange land and received hospitality from the people of that land? Then you know how welcoming our Family Centre is in offering hospitality to the many international and out-of-town families to the strange

land of Canada. Away from home, families need our support. Several years ago I began helping at the Monday night 'Make and Take' partly because of my own experience receiving hospitality during my years of world travel. My life is greatly enriched by those who share their stories and lives and who have accepted the hospitality of our homes. We laugh, we cry, and we knit. Just as we knit a single thread into a wearable garment, we, too, through our sharing and caring for one another, have become a 'close knit' community."

—Angela Wood, UVic Baptist Chaplain



"For 20 years, Campus Security Services has worked together with the UVic Family Centre to promote a sense of welcome and safety on campus. We have always appreciated the Family Centre's efforts to assist us in connecting with the Family Housing Community. Campus Security's Personal Safety Coordinators and the Security Officers have been part of the annual No Foolin' Event in April and the Halloween Party in the Fall. The Monday morning Learn and Share at the Family Centre is also a great opportunity for the Personal Safety Coordinator to come and speak about personal safety on campus, discuss Campus Security's services and programs and answer any questions the community members might have. Congratulations from Campus Security on 20 years of wonderful work in our community!"

—Allison Eddy and Fiona Puszka at Campus Security

Around 100 new families will come to the Family Centre each year, most arriving in either September or January.