



SYNERGY

IMPACT REPORT

2020



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ABOUT US

Synergy's mission is to empower youth and community groups to build strong connections through relationships, education, leadership, and programming. Our goal is to provide opportunities for youth to develop healthy relationships and cultivate our community's potential.

OUR STAFF

Patty Sproule

Executive Director

Coralee McIntosh

Community Development
& Operations Manager

Terry Gill

Senior Program Coordinator

Alicea Sproule

Program Coordinator

OUR BOARD

Sheryce Hains

Chair

Megan Despanque

Secretary

Deborah Hitchcock

Director

Radoslav Visotski

Director

Heather Skippen

Vice Chair

Dezi Pereira

Treasurer

Tracy Weicht

Director

Michael Impey

Director



KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

2020 COVID Response

The official word of 2020 was Pivot, and we feel that we were very successful at pivoting as situations and regulations changed throughout the year. When COVID-19 first struck, we moved all our programs online via Zoom without missing even a week of programming. Our staff, volunteers and participants worked together to learn and adapt to this new style of programming.

Throughout the summer months our staff, interns and volunteers pushed their creativity and innovation to new limits when planning and delivering fun and engaging activities for in-person youth programs and community initiatives all while meeting safety guidelines and physical distancing requirements.



We were fortunate to receive additional COVID related funding that allowed us to continue the SHOUT, YELL Youth Council, and Friday Fam programs through the summer months making them year-round programs.

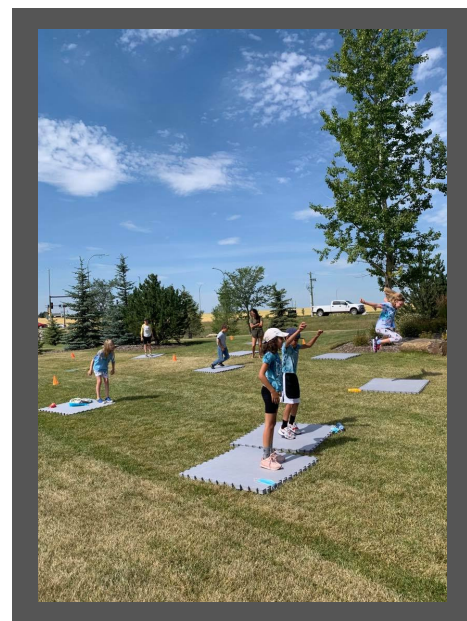
As the second wave hit in the fall, we understood that the desire to attend program online had dwindled and that many of the participants, as well as their parents, were in need of additional wellness supports. This led to the creation of wellness kits for all of our youth participants. The wellness kits included activities youth could complete at home to lessen their anxiety and stress, fidget toys and other items to keep them busy over the winter break. These kits were a welcome gift of healthy activity for many youth and their parents.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

New Synergy Programs

2020 saw the development and implementation of two new pilot programs – Teen SHOUT and the Grand Letters Program. Both programs are rooted in connection and learning.

Teen SHOUT creates a safe space for youth to come together and discuss issues that are affecting them on a personal and/or societal level. Youth continued to meet in person safely with the support of adult mentors. The Grand Letters program was created as an opportunity for youth and seniors to connect and learn from one another. In a year that had people separated, the Grand Letters brought people together and gave them something to look forward to each week. As the holidays approached participants had the opportunity to decorate stockings for each other as a special surprise. We look forward to continuing both programs in 2021.



Connection & Care Program Expansion

Throughout 2020 we experienced an increase in the number of clients accessing the Health Specialist Services through the Connection & Care Program. This increase was a result of the hard work that went into promoting the program in 2019 and throughout 2020, as well as increased referrals through our network in the Mental Health Coalition, many due to complications as a result of the pandemic.

The increase is also due to the adverse effects of the pandemic. We are just starting to see the effects the pandemic is having on youth, families and individuals.

There will undoubtedly be long term effects due to family stress, financial instability, and lack of social connection. Having access to these much-needed services, at no-cost, is invaluable to all clients accessing the program as many would not be able to afford meet with a Counsellor on an on-going basis without this support.

Additionally, the Counsellor is now able to offer EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) to clients as an alternative treatment option to Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and other therapies. These therapies and appointments were, and continue to be, available both in person or online depending on client comfort levels. We were fortunate to receive additional funding for the Connection & Care Program through the Emergency COVID-19 Response Fund provided by United Way Calgary. The funds received supported families and individuals during the last 6 months of 2020.

Connection & Care Program



Angela Normand

Registered Provisional Psychologist

Support for Anxiety,
Stress, Depression,
Family Challenges and
more



Lynette Wohlgemuth

Family Nurse Practitioner

Appointments for
Physical Health and
Mental Health
Concerns

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Final Thoughts

The biggest challenge of 2020 was that we were not able to operate in a traditional manner which impacted how we function as an agency. At Synergy, our normal is to be surrounded by people. Anytime of year we can be found out in the community at an event, hosting workshops at the Centre, or partnering with other organizations on community initiatives such as Halloween Howler.

To not lead or collaborate on those activities was very difficult, for us and everyone else; to stay close to home and keep the number of participants to a minimum. With large events prohibited we were unable to host and/or take part in many annual events such as the Epic Water Fight or the Canada Day Celebrations. This drastically limited our ability to connect with the community and the volunteer opportunities we were able to offer. Community events are an excellent way for YELL Youth Council members and Youth Interns to practice their leadership skills while giving back to the community. In lieu of these opportunities youth volunteers focused on community initiatives such as the YELL Youth Council Affirmation Wall and Youth Wellness Resources listed on the Synergy website.

Wellness Resources are also available thanks in part to the hard work of the Chestermere and Area Mental Health Coalition completing and distributing the Community Mental Wellness Resource. This resource has been widely distributed throughout the community and can be used for self-referral as well as a referral source for professionals such as psychologists, social services, doctors, RCMP, Victim Services, and others. This Resource has been created as a living document and can be easily updated as new resources become available in the community.



The events of 2020 tested our resilience and we, as an agency, feel we have proven our ability to adapt and carry on. We have built stronger partnership with organizations, such as Stepping Stones to Mental Health, and have developed programming partnerships that will support the positive development of youth throughout our service area. The Community Nonprofit COVID-19 Response Meetings have led to stronger connections and increased communication within the nonprofit sector in Chestermere and area. A number of collaborations have resulted from these meetings and we anticipate seeing more, broader collaborations as the conversations continue.

THE NUMBERS

YOUTH PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

YELL Youth Council

15 - Chestermere

3 - SERV

SHOUT (Community)

42 - Chestermere

18 - SERV

2 - Other

SHOUT (Schools)

19 - Chestermere

19 - SERV

Dabble Program & Camp

18 - Chestermere

4 - SERV

4 - Other

Teen SHOUT

22 - Chestermere

2 - SERV

Child Safe

98 - Chestermere

5 - SERV

2 - Other

Friday Fam

2 - Chestermere

19 - SERV

Langdon Drop In

40 - SERV

Youth Interns

7 - Chestermere



THE NUMBERS

COMMUNITY

Total # of People Served (Unique)

1758

Chestermere Participants

566

SERV Participants

Community Partners

48

Chestermere Partners

37

SERV Partners



ENGAGEMENT

General Volunteers

244

Total Volunteers

158

Chestermere Volunteers

48

SERV Volunteers

36

Other

Key Mentors

22

Total Volunteers

18

Chestermere Volunteers

4

SERV Volunteers

Volunteer Hours

4441

Total Hours

3421

Chestermere Hours

1020

SERV Hours

THE NUMBERS

SUPPORT

Connection & Care

28
Chestermere
Participants

8
SERV
Participants

1
Other
Participants

Mental Health Coalition

40
Coalition
Participants

34
Organizations/Departments
Represented

Wellness Support

16
Chestermere
Participants

5
SERV
Participants



Pre-COVID Photo

IMPACT

\$350,186

Synergy's approximate dedicated budget in 2020 for youth and community development



\$6,303,348

Social Return on Investment (SROI)
(The economic value of social and environmental outcomes)*

Volunteer Spotlight

Board of Directors volunteered over

487 hours

and we had one new board member join us

Synergy Program Mentors contributed

836

Volunteer hours

7 Youth Interns completed

856

Volunteer hours



If all Synergy volunteers were paid for their work in 2020, they would have earned

\$141,625 **

SECTOR CONNECTIONS

ECAP Funding Renewal

Synergy was fortunate to receive multi-year funding through the Government of Alberta Enhanced Capacity Advancement Program (ECAP) from 2017-2020. This funding made it possible for Synergy to perform activities which strengthened the internal capacity of the agency as well as increase the capacity of the nonprofit sector of the community.

In 2020, Synergy applied for the next three-year cycle of funding and was successful in securing funds which will be utilized in further broadening connections and developing the capacity of Synergy and the local nonprofit section.

Positive Ticketing

2020 marked the 5th anniversary of the Positive Ticketing Program in Chestermere. The program was established in 2015 by Stepping Stones to Mental Health in partnership with Synergy, Chestermere Addictions and Mental Health, Chestermere RCMP, and Chestermere Public Library. The program has expanded to include Chestermere Peace Officers, Rocky View Schools and Alberta Healthy Services. The goal of the program is to encourage youth to feel connected to the community and build a strong sense of leadership and belonging. It also aids in developing a healthy relationship with the RCMP and Peace Officers. We have been successful in partnering with over 60 local businesses who support the program in the form of gift cards, coupons, monetary donations, and door prizes. Without these generous donations, we would not have been able to award over 1000 positive tickets to youth in our community.



SECTOR CONNECTIONS

Community Conversations

In fall 2020, Synergy initiated conversations between community leaders regarding youth safety. These discussions included representatives from the health, education, recreation, faith, social services, voluntary, business and government sectors. After several constructive dialogues it was determined that more needed to be done to bring awareness to youth safety and the way our adults respond to aggressive behaviour as a symptom of other problems. This led to the Chestermere and Area Community Coalition applying for two funding opportunities – The Alberta Civil Society Fund and the Rural Mental Health Project – which would support conducting a Youth Needs Survey. We are excited to see how this project progresses as we work together to support the youth in our community further.

Community Supports

We are always looking for unique way to give back to the community and support grass roots initiatives. Throughout 2020, Synergy staff and volunteers were happy to have the opportunity to help with a variety of community initiatives and events.

- Food Bank Drive - 500 lbs of food and over \$200 in donations raised for the Chestermere Regional Food Bank
- Christmas Dinner Delivery – 27 Christmas Dinners Delivered to local families and seniors
- Pretty In Pink Campaign – YELL Youth Council Assembly presented in 4 schools in Chestermere and Langdon to over 1300 students



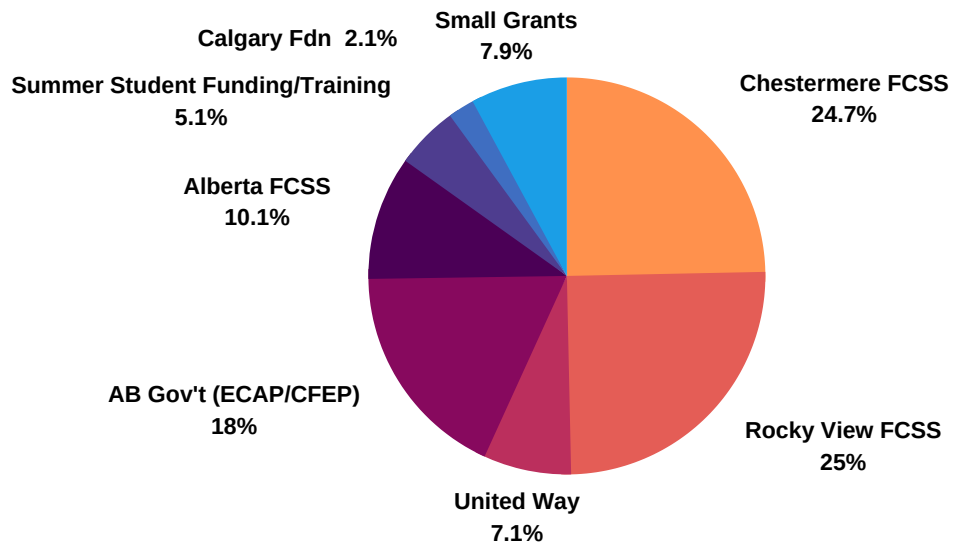
FUNDING



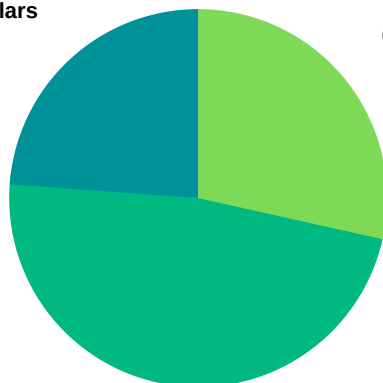
One of Synergy’s most important objectives is to maximize the sustainability of our programs and services. We consistently apply for grants, generate revenue through fundraising efforts, and are fortunate recipients of occasional unsolicited donations.

Grant Funding

Total Grant Funding:
\$ 372,000



Birdies Matching Dollars
23.8%



General Fundraising
28.5%

Fundraising

Total Fundraising:
\$ 32,195

Birdies Fundraising Events
47.7%

TESTIMONIALS

"Thank you to all of you for the hard work you put in this year trying to provide some normalcy for my kids. I know that this year would have been very different (for my kids) if they didn't have their Synergy groups to look forward to. I know first hand that the COVID regulations weren't easy to decipher and even harder to enforce. As a parent I am grateful for Synergy giving my kids a safe and healthy place to have fun and be themselves."
- Synergy Program Parent

"This program is much needed in the community and for my family and others. I found a much stronger sense of confidence for having these relationships and knowing I could go back to them without being judged. I would feel more like a "number" if I had to leave town to get this kind of support."
- Connection & Care Client

"After this past year, I think my kids would be in a very different place without having this building and the wonderful people in it. I am so grateful for the building, the programs and the amazing people who make them happen!"
- Synergy Program Parent



TESTIMONIALS

"This program collects students and mentors from diverse backgrounds in one facility to encourage collaboration on problem solving and conceptual learning. This group engagement instills the ability to experience another person's view point on a problem within participants. Such a simple concept proves to be integral to long term educational and applied success."

- Synergy Volunteer Mentor



Pre-COVID Photo

"I have only been here for 1 day, and yet I feel so good about myself! I wrote this for you because you just cured my anxiety. With my anxiety, I start to get pains. In usually my ribcage or my back... This is just my way of saying thank you! Because I haven't felt a pain ever since that day. I'm so happy to be back! I don't know how I can thank you enough!"

- Synergy Program Participant

"Synergy is amazing!! My son went to the summer drop in program and LOVED going everyday. He willingly gave up sleeping in to go have fun each day."

- Synergy Program Parent

WHAT'S NEXT?

2021 will be another active year of connection and partnership in the community. As part of the Chestermere and Area Community Coalition we are excited to conduct a Youth Needs Survey in Chestermere, Langdon and South East Rocky View. Youth and Youth Serving Professionals will be widely surveyed to ascertain their concerns regarding personal safety, what they believe would make their community more secure and what support they need to become more resilient.

The survey results will be shared with local decision makers and the public, along with actionable recommendations for positive change.

We will also be completing a door to door community engagement project during the summer months. Synergy will be delivery packages containing information resources about local programs and services to each home in Chestermere and Langdon.





2020 IMPACT REPORT