



# Chebucto Family Centre

A Service of the Home of the Guardian Angel



**Annual General Report**  
**April 1, 2014 – March 31, 2015**



## Executive Director and President's Report

It is amazing to report that in 2015 the **Home of the Guardian Angel** completed 127 years of service. It has been another year filled with meaningful work and growth within the Centre. We continue to follow the lead from our community, providing participant-driven programs and services for all.

A funding increase from the Department of Community Services this year enabled us to develop the **Family Wellness Program**. Through this initiative, gaps in accessing support in the areas of community referrals, linkages and advocacy were addressed, as well as allowing us to provide a variety of participant-driven programs and workshops within our community.

In the Spring of 2014, the Centre facilitated a community youth outreach project involving staff, students, partners and community members. A common theme emerged; a lack of opportunities and activities for our Spryfield youth (grades 6-12). **Youth Night** was developed to afford opportunities for our young people to engage in a variety of social and recreational activities. To our delight, this group has proven to be a huge success and the group continues to grow. At last count we have 25 participants.

This past year we have been working towards and collaborating with community members and organizations in the development of a mural that captures the essence and work of our Centre. We are anticipating the unveiling of the completed project for the summer of 2015. **The Mural** will further enhance our footprint in the community of Spryfield.

We continue our work with community partners to better serve our clients and community as a whole. Our active **partnerships** include: *The Echo Hub, The Spryfield Family Task Force, J. L. Ilsley High School, The Community Health Team, and the Rockingstone Early Years Centre*. In addition to sitting on the *Rockingstone Hub Committee*, staff from our Centre and the *Early Years Centre*, in pursuit of greater community engagement, have joined forces to facilitate and deliver programming at each site,

In closing, we wish to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to the staff, board and volunteers for their commitment and dedication this past year. Thank you to our funders: the *Department of Community Services, United Way of Halifax, Health Canada, IWK and Nova Scotia District Health Authority* for their continued support. Most importantly, a warm thank you to all of the families and community members that have walked through our doors and engaged in our Centre's programs, services, activities and events this past year.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tammy Turple  
Executive Director

Respectfully Submitted,

Eileen Pelham  
President

## **Finance Committee Report**

As per the unaudited financial statements, the Home of the Guardian Angel (HGA) came in slightly above budget this past 2014-2015 fiscal year.

Annual revenue came in over budget by \$10K. This was primarily driven by an increase in Fundraising. Special thanks to the Executive Director and staff of the HGA who diligently pursued all available options for funding.

Annual expenses came in over budget by \$5K. Additional expenses were offset by relief in other areas. There is nothing out of the ordinary to report regarding expenses.

At the end of the year, HGA broke even, beating the \$4K deficit which was budgeted. HGA is in a strong position to continue its growth with community programs and support. The budget for the upcoming year has been prepared based on trends we saw this past year, along with adjustments to changes in funding that are expected (decrease in FHDC funding based on number of homes we currently have, and increase in Community Home Visitor funding due to program requirements).

The 2015-16 budget has been completed and approved by the Board of Directors.

Respectfully submitted,

Lucas Rowicki, MBA, CMA  
Chair, Finance Committee

## **Personnel and Management Committee**

The focus of the Committee's work this year was to update the Personnel Policy Manual of the Agency. The purpose of the review was to ensure the policies were up to date, and in keeping with current legislative requirements and employment practices.

The completed draft of the updated policy has now been provided to the Board for final review and feedback.

From the Committee,

Dale Darling, Chair

Members:

Karen Burke

Carol Fardy

Tammy Turple

## **Fundraising Committee Report 2014 - 2015**

The Fundraising Committee for 2014/15 was comprised of seven members from our Board of Directors to include:

Jim Evans (chair)  
Coleen Logan  
Pat Lefebvre  
Erin Bleasdale  
Eileen Pelham  
Tammy Turple (ex officio)

The goal of our Committee was to work on the development and the implementation of the Comedy for Community event which took place on May 15, 2014. This year our event featured world touring L. A. Comedians, James Uloth and Lamont Ferguson, in a night of standup, stories and serious laughter.

A Wine and Cheese Reception and Silent Auction was held in conjunction with the performance. As well, Scotia Bank volunteers supported the event through a toy basket raffle and assistance with the auction. We are pleased to report that the event's net proceeds were \$8,816.

I would like to thank the Bella Rose Arts Centre, our sponsors, Scotia Bank and the Chebucto Family Centre staff and board members' hard work and dedication; ensuring another great fundraising event.

Respectfully submitted,  
Committee chair  
Jim Evans

## **By-laws and Nominating Committee 2014-15**

The members of the committee were: Karen Burke, Alyson Hillier, Rena Maguire, Eileen Pelham, Tammy Turple and S. Lorraine d'Entremont, Chair.

### **Updating of by-laws:**

No by-law changes were made this past year. However, Alyson Hillier and Lorraine d'Entremont continued work on editing the By-laws to incorporate the several changes made in the previous three years, and to create an electronic document for future use. This task was completed in fall 2014. Special thanks to Alyson, who did all the typing. The electronic version is kept at the Centre.

### **Board membership:**

Board membership has been stable this past year. There was one vacant position, due to a 2014 nominee withdrawing from the Board. Four members completed a first three-year term in 2015. Three of these, Dale Darling, Eileen Pelham and Tammy Moffatt, have accepted to serve another term, and we are grateful for this. Carol Fardy will be leaving the Board to focus her energies at her son's school. We thank her for her fine contribution during her term. Our loss will be the school's gain.

At the time of this report, two Board positions for the coming year are vacant, one to be appointed by the Board, and the other by Sisters of Charity. The committee is searching for two new members.

Respectfully submitted,  
S. Lorraine d'Entremont, Committee Chair

**Home the Guardian Angel  
Board of Directors  
2014 - 2015**

Eileen Pelham - **President**  
Pat Lefebvre – **Vice -President**  
Lucas Rowicki – **Treasurer**  
Tammy Moffatt – **Secretary**  
Karen Burke – **Past President**  
Sister Lorraine d’Entremont – **Ex-Officio**  
Tammy Turple - **Director**  
Rena Maguire                      Coleen Logan                      Dale Darling  
Carol Fardy                         Jim Evans                             Erin Bleasdale  
Alyson Hillier

**Executive Committee**

Eileen Pelham (Chair)  
Pat Lefebvre ( Vice Chair)  
Karen Burke (Past-President)  
Tammy Moffatt ( Secretary )  
Lucas Rowicki ( Treasurer)  
Sister Lorraine d-Entremont (Ex-Officio)  
Tammy Turple (Director)

**Finance Committee**

Lucas Rowicki(Chair)  
Tammy Moffatt  
Erin Bleasdale  
Karen Burke  
Tammy Turple

**Fundraising/PR Committee**

Jim Evans (Chair)  
Coleen Logan  
Erin Bleasdale  
Pat Lefebvre  
Eileen Pelham  
Tammy Turple

**Management/Personnel**

Dale Darling (Chair)  
Carol Fardy  
Karen Burke  
Eileen Pelham  
Tammy Turple

**Nominating/By-Laws Committee**

Sister Lorraine d’Entremont ( Chair )  
Karen Burke  
Eileen Pelham  
Rena Maguire  
Alyson Hillier  
Tammy Turple

**Doula Steering Committee**

Carol Fardy  
Pat LeFebvre  
Tammy Turple

**Home of the Guardian Angel/Chebucto Family Centre Staff  
2014– 2015**

Nicole Clarke	Family Wellness Coordinator
Theresa Rex Banks	Community Home Visitor
Sarah Hicks	Community Home Visitor
Erin Fair	Volunteer Doula Program Coordinator
Jessie Harold	Volunteer Doula Program Coordinator
Whitney Cruikshank	Volunteer Doula Program Assistant
Jane Hall	Family Home Daycare Consultant
Erinn Baille	Program Assistant
Megan Finlay	Program Assistant
Ginny Hennigar	Playroom Facilitator (Current)
Deborah Hutchinson	Office Administrator
Andrea Hutchinson	Centre Coordinator
Crystal John	Parenting Educator
Kira Kelly	Parenting Educator
Trena Slaunwhite-Gallant	Prenatal/Postnatal Support Worker
Tammy Turple	Executive Director
Sylvia Sullivan	Volunteer

***Thanks to all the staff, volunteers and students for their hard work and dedication.***



## **Early Childhood Program AGM Report 2014-2015**

The early childhood program at Chebucto Family Centre exists both as a support for other programs and as a service to the community. Throughout the course of each week, free childcare and a nutritious snack are provided to families who attend parenting courses and wellness events at the centre. Infants, toddlers, preschoolers and school aged children are welcomed into the playroom where they are cared for, nurtured, and engaged in playful learning experiences with trained staff, students and volunteers. During the Monday morning drop-in program, families come together to play, socialize and get to know the caregivers. This is especially important for new families to build a trusting relationship.

Throughout the spring, fall and winter seasons, families who have limited access to group care experiences for their children are invited to apply for a space in the early learning programs designed for 3-4 yr. olds, ("Playschool") and 4-5 yr. olds school readiness program ("Pre-school"). All of these programs have been full to capacity. They are designed and led by the playroom facilitator and assisted by support staff &/or practicum students.

We are fortunate to have the help of Andrea Townsend (program coordinator), Erinn Bailey /Megan Finlay (program support). Many thanks to them and to other centre staff for their quick response when another set of arms is needed.

A big component of our community based service work is providing practicum positions for post-secondary education students. This year we had 6 MSVU students successfully complete their practicum with us. Students are given the opportunity to practice their professional childcare skills as well as become aware of the many ways our organization works to provide a diversity of services to the community.

A huge thank you goes out to our dedicated volunteer, Sylvia Sullivan. Sylvia has been a positive presence in the playroom every week for more than two years. She is usually available during our morning fitness programs when the playroom is full of infants and toddlers. Because of her help, we are able to reduce the number of times we need to call on staff assistance. Occasionally we enjoy her delicious and nutritious homemade baked goods. We are truly grateful when a box of sugar cookies arrives – all ready to be decorated by the children during special events like Halloween, Christmas and Easter parties. This year, Sylvia has extended her volunteer commitment to provide childcare during the monthly Volunteer Doula In-services.

The childcare staff plays an integral role during special events at the centre. We team up with the rest of the staff to provide activities and/or childcare during seasonal activities like our annual back to school party (BBQ), Halloween party, Christmas programs, Valentine's Day, Easter Party, Ice Cream Social to name a few. The playroom is made available to support the evening Incredible Years program for parents with school aged children. Arrangements were made to accommodate a family needing supervised visitation during the winter – so the playroom was made available 2 afternoons a week. Except during winter months, our fenced play yard is available during regular business hours for families to use.

Literacy and language development continues to be an integral part of everyday play at CFC. We sing, talk, dance, read stories, tell stories, "write" stories, say rhymes, act out finger plays,

draw, color, paint, etc.. We have 9 “circle time” activity boxes (Tote Tales), as well as a wide selection of children’s books, a binder of flannel board stories and poems, and puzzles for every age group. Staff participates in the annual community Book Bonanza held at the Captain William Spry Community Centre in May. Children in the preschool class are invited to borrow a Book Buddies bag weekly, and families are beginning to use this locally produced resource. This year we purchased several new children’s books by local authors and with local content (Canadian /Maritime) .

Goals for this past year included upgrades to the outdoor play yard, better storage for toys and equipment, increased capacity for physical activity programs for young children, and consistent staffing. 3 out of the 4 goals have been met and further plans for upgrading the play yard are in progress.

A storage barn, built by a local community member, was purchased. Tom Rex volunteered his time and talent to position it inside the play yard. Gravel was purchased at cost from Rough Ground Contracting. The gate and fencing was removed and replaced by Dennis Ryan at a very reasonable cost. The students at J.L.Ilsley made 2 wooden sandboxes with lids. Sand was donated by Ocean contractors.

Thanks to Jane Hall who agreed to co-facilitate, we were able to offer a modified version of “Tumblebugs” for the winter playschool class. Because the playground was inaccessible for most of the winter, Tumblebugs provided an avenue for physical movement and skill development.

The children and parents appear to be comfortable with the current childcare team. Ginny Hennigar has been in the playroom facilitator position consistently for 17 months. With the assistance of the program support staff, Centre Coordinator, and a familiar and experienced volunteer, we are able to meet the childcare needs. Only occasionally do we need to ask for additional help from other staff – usually during special events.

The main goal for the 2015-2016 year is to upgrade the outdoor play area to provide year-round accessibility and egress (fire escape route), and attractive for a wider range of age groups, thus increasing the opportunities for physical play. A source of funding has been identified, and a 3 stage plan is being developed with input from staff.

Thank you to Tammy Turple, E.D. and the Board of Directors, and the Sisters of Charity for your ongoing support and dedication to the families we serve.

Sincerely,

Ginny Hennigar, BA; ECE Level 3  
Playroom Facilitator

## **Family Wellness AGM Report**

This past Fiscal Year saw the formation of a new Position at The Chebucto Family Centre. The initial vision for the role of the Family Wellness Coordinator was to provide a full-time presence where community members could access a consistent platform of support by way of advocacy, community linkages and referrals, information sharing and other services in the name of wellness. Service delivery is done using a strength-based approach in an effort to assist people to overcome personal and lifestyle barriers.

The first part of the Fiscal Year served developing the job description and building resources, while the practical implementation of the services began in September 2015, and has been evolving ever since. Over 100 services were delivered, ranging from basic needs support, to mental health and family dynamics. The most common services solicited were concerning practical support around food security and housing. In addition to the aforementioned, common service requests were assistance with transportation to significant appointments and other community resources, form filling, presence at court attendance, and support concerning family dynamics and relationships. These services were delivered at times to people who were transient, in crisis, and/or became part of a case management.

In addition to such above services, I also facilitated programs in partnership with our Parenting Educator; rotating between Parenting and Wellness themed series and at times; workshops. The workshops varied based on feedback from what the community wanted. To highlight a few; there were workshops on Forgiveness, Letting Go of Anger and Setting Intentions and Mapping out Goals. The highlight of the Wellness series was a program called: H.O.P.E.- Healing Our Past Experiences. This was an 11 week program based on Doctor Susan Covington's; Beyond Trauma; A Healing Journey for Women curriculum. It was truly the most rewarding experiencing of my career to see the strength, resiliency and transformation of women sharing their stories, and truly embracing healing in their lives. As a certified Yoga Instructor and Reiki Practitioner; I am also privileged to offer both services under the Wellness Umbrella at The Chebucto Family Centre.

Partnerships and working relationships with other community agencies is an important way to foster and build community and enhance services for its' members. This year, I was able to work with the Early Learning Years Centre at Rockingstone and held programs such as yoga on their site. It is our hope to continue with such as time goes on; and I would like to connect and create with other agencies as well.

I am truly grateful for employment with the Chebucto Family Centre and to the people I share my work space with. I am also grateful for the opportunity the Family Wellness role provides me to hold space for other people to have their own experiences, and to be of service to an amazing community. Someone wise beyond his years once said; "You can only keep what you have by giving it away". I believe that to be true. I don't have to go to work; I get to.

Sincerely,

Nicole Clarke  
Family Wellness Coordinator

## Parenting Program Report 2014-15

It has been an exciting and full year for the Parenting program here at the Centre. When I began this year, I had great hopes for the work that is done at the Centre. I have continued to be inspired by the impact of programs and services on the lives of the parents I serve. It has been a pleasure and honor to work alongside women who manage to provide unconditional support to those who most need it.

After the success of Women of Wonder and community demand we ran another successful session in the spring of 2014. During the summer months I piloted a program called Girl Talk. Recognizing the need and desire for more emotional wellness information and awareness programming for parents this program provided a platform for women to discuss broader issues in our world and explore the impact it has on them and their ability to parent. Because of the success of this pilot we have delivered this program twice a month on Wednesday mornings in the Autumn and Winter sessions and have received very positive feedback and increased attendance. In the fall we began another round of the Incredible Years for Toddlers. With this evidence based program, parents are able to learn some valuable skills that continue with them through the school age years as well.

We continue to partner with a variety of organizations and community members in order to best meet the needs of families and the greater community. In efforts to enhance and expand our connections I have co-facilitated Making the Most of your Food Dollar as well as Intro to assertiveness workshops with the Chebucto Community Health Team, this collaboration helps to broaden the community reach and introduce newcomers to the centre. The CFC continues to be a key organizer in some very successful community initiatives (e.g. Tote Tales, Book Bonanza, and Parenting Fair).

The Centre continues to facilitate post placement exchanges for parents and families that are connected to the Home of the Guardian Angel through the past Adoption Program. In 2014-15, there were 54 post placement exchanges.

I also continue to provide individual support, counseling, and advocacy to a wide variety of families. Parents come to me with diverse needs around areas such as: emotional support, discipline, child development, relationship issues, child protection involvement, family court, anger management, grief, and referrals to community resources. I have been able to provide support to the parents while teaching them to advocate for themselves. As the growing need for parenting skills increases, I have increased the number of one on one parenting support to parents. I meet parents at the CFC, do home visits, telephone calls, attend court proceedings, accompany them to appointments, help them in sourcing adequate housing or a combination of the above depending on the needs of the family and my availability.

Respectfully submitted,  
Crystal John

## **Prenatal/Postnatal Support Programs**

The past year has been a busy one for both Prenatal and Postnatal Support, which is great news for our centre. We continue to offer individual support and education, group programs, and referrals to programs within our centre as well as to other services within our community.

Interest in our prenatal classes has grown, partially due to growing awareness through word of mouth and community partnerships, but also because Public Health is no longer offering Prenatal Education. We have also seen an increase in the diversity of participants, particularly the number of young mothers and newcomers accessing services and attending classes. It's possible that we will have to consider offering additional classes throughout the year to meet the growing need.

The partnership with Dalhousie Family Medicine continues to be a very positive addition to our program, as we are seeing a growing number of families accessing Centre services that we otherwise may not have had the opportunity to meet. Additionally, we are receiving referrals for Postnatal and Breastfeeding Support directly from the Physicians.

Rock and Rhyme and Infant Massage continue to remain very popular with new families, with many reporting that they look forward to meeting other new families, having access to information and support, and just having a place to go with their babies. There are always numerous comments on the end of class evaluations about our fantastic snacks 😊

One exciting new partnership that is underway is with Burnside Correctional Facility. A group of individuals have come together to ensure that women who are incarcerated have access to education and information around women's wellness, stress management, reproductive wellness, Prenatal and Postnatal Education, Doula Support, and transitioning back into the community when they have completed their sentence. This will be done through individual support, as well as classes offered at the facility.

Last but not least is our breastfeeding support program, which remains in high demand at the individual level, but is still in low attendance for group support. It is our goal to try to understand why this is the case, and to make necessary changes and improvements so we can increase group attendance.

We look forward to another year of growth, as we continue to offer support to the many wonderful families who access our services.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Trena Slaunwhite Gallant

## **TRULY THANKFUL.**

All the way from a country in Africa, I arrived Halifax Nova Scotia in January 2015 for some professional certification in my field of practise.

I was an expectant "MOM" who was faced with some challenges which got me devastated because my condition then. This caused me to search online for where help might come from.

I put an online message to the Chebucto family center , never new or heard about them before in my life.

Fortunately I, received a phone call from the Family Wellness Co-ordinator: Nicole CLARK who arrived with the the Pre/Post -Natal Co-ordinator to meet with me where I was.

The family wellness Co-ordinator made adequate efforts to see that my accommodation issues where solved, all appointments are meet down town accurately , in fact , the words she said to me then" THERE IS HOPE" was actually fulfilled by her.

The Pre/Post -Natal Co-ordinator: Trena Slaunwhite- Gallant worked immeasurably to see that I had a successful arrival of my new baby, offered to Volunteer as my Doula, provided the link support to other Medical practitioners who did assisted me wholeheartedly. How grateful I AM.

Initially I was in doubt and fear if the supports were for real, but you proved me wrong and allayed my fears. You provided realistic plans, material needs as well as wanting to know what options where available to me.

Your gift of time, expertise, encouragement in my challenging moments meant so much to my emotions positively.

You truly and sincerely helped right when I needed help most. Your support made me a stronger person, raised my hope and felt not alone in the trying times I faced.

How proud I am courtesy the Chebucto Family Center that my baby FELICE arrived safely through your help support.

I didn't expect so much instead you gave me most,

You did not discriminate my colour or race because am black from AFRICA.

YOU showered my new baby with gift of all items.

I appreciate your support and say a BIG THANK YOU to you TRENA and NICOLE, staff of chebucto family center , you are TRULY FANTASTIC!!!

FROM SUSAN...

## **Family Home Daycare Agency 2014/15**

In Sept of 2013 the Chebucto Centre Family was approved as a Family Home Day Care Agency which allowed our agency to recruit, approve and monitor care providers interested in providing child care to families in their own community. Through our agency care providers receive the help they need to run a family day home that meets their needs as well as the family's needs. Families have the assurance that the care provider and their home have met all requirements determined by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD). They take comfort in knowing that there are processes in place to allow monitoring of the home and that both care providers and families have a resource for support, questions and/or concerns.

The care providers are a group of keen, interested loving people who are dedicated to the program they offer, the children and their families, to each other and to the agency and I am proud to be involved with them. We have built a strong, supportive network to relieve the isolation that comes with providing child care in your home. The agency planted the seeds for the network but the care providers have come together many times and have continued to support one another on their own outside the scope of the agency. They share programming and nutritional ideas, plan play dates and help each other in any way they can so they are constantly improving upon the care they offer. Current Care Providers are doing very well; all have several children and are offering great programs. Many families, including those who qualify for the NS Child Care Subsidy program, are able to access family day homes and are enjoying the benefits of the program.

Since our original approval we have been growing slowly but steadily and currently have 5 approved Family Day Homes however we did not meet our optimistic goal of 12 homes by March 2015. We are hopeful that we will continue growing and increasing our support to care providers and families recognizing that it takes time and hard work to increase our reach and build community awareness.

Since the change over from the Department of Community Service to Department of Education and Early Childhood Development there has been a complete review of the licensed child care community and the new department is looking to improve and revamp the system to provide a fair and more supportive process to meet the needs of families and the needs of the child care community. Once the department completes the review and implements the new system we are looking forward to an increase in approved homes through our agency.

This strong base that has been started by the agency and supported and carried on by the care providers themselves will help to form the strong foundation of the agency and we believe it will ultimately result in a strong and flourishing program that will meet our goals for the program and help to serve the needs of this community and others for both care providers and families.

Respectfully submitted  
Family Home Consultant  
Jane Hall

The Chebucto Family Centre Home Daycare Agency has helped me in so many ways. They offered help and support with everything from materials and equipment which allowed me to get started and set up to offering support and information when dealing with difficult situations or issues with parents or children. I would not be where I am today as my own owner and operator of my own in-home daycare business!

Thank you!

Jennifer Newcombe

ECE



## Community Programs

Spry Cafe continues to be a great way to promote community engagement. We hosted 9 dinners over this past year. Thank you to Armbrae Academy, Uncle Buck's, Corporate Research, 'Chickmas', MSVU Residence Life Team and our Board of Directors for volunteering their time to such an important community event.

Special events – Earth Day Celebration, Ice Cream Social, Bowling outings, Santa Parade, Mother's Day Celebration, Walk n Talk, Sleepy Head Breakfast, and the Christmas Bazaar were a few of the neighborhood events that took place this past year.

Regular Programs and opportunities that provide a chance for people in the community to gather together and make connections are - Weekly Community Drop-in and Girl talk; where we offer a safe space to share experiences, coffee, tea and a snack. Our doors are open daily for drop –in, to grab a cup of coffee or simply chat. During the spring and summer seasons, we open the play yard for community use.

Regular Services that we continue to provide the space for – Dal Legal Aid on a monthly basis and Income tax Clinics during the months of March and April. We also have a meeting space available for people to book, to use for outside appointments with community and social service providers. This allows greater accessibility to essential appointments and meetings right here in their own community.

The kitchen can sometimes offer up the best space for casual sharing and connection. We encourage this through our Community Kitchen Program, where people come and prepare a meal together and take home enough for supper that night and our 'Food for Thought' Focus Group, where we heard from community members and users of the centre about what they would like to see offered.

We aim to encourage the best in people not just emotionally and via support, but also their best physical self. We do this via our fitness programs. We offer both yoga and Zumba; which are well attended and continue to gain popularity. So much so that we now offer 2 classes back to back in order to accommodate all those interested.

As a centre we also understand that although our goal is to empower our clients and to encourage independence, the sharing and building of skills and assets, there are times when people need practical support in the form of basic needs. Whether it's formula and diapers to get them through a rough week, a bus ticket to get them to an important appointment or some food items or prepared meals to help them get through until their next pay cheque. We maintain a well- stocked supply of these items for times like these.

As always, we continue to have people drop-in for the Tradin' Cupboard and Clothing Cupboard. People can fill a bag of clothing – free of charge from our Clothing Cupboard, or come exchange personal/ household items they no longer need or use for items that they do.

New this year, is our Youth Night program that is headed by Sarah Hicks and Erinn Baille. The program stems from a community outreach project, where it was suggested there was need for more youth-focused activities within the community of Spryfield. The first youth night was held on February 27, 2015. The two hour long drop-in was attended by 10 youth, and our numbers

continue to grow, as many returning youth are bringing along new friends. We intend on building our programming around ideas put forth by the youth who attend the drop-in evenings. As well, our community outreach will extend to additional Spryfield schools this coming year.

Another exciting project is our Community Art Mural. The project involves youth from Rockingstone and J.I Ilesley High, community members and partners alike. The initial step, was to hold a community focus group, where we invited people to share their ideas, images and thoughts surrounding what the community of Spryfield means to them. We are hoping to unveil the finished mural in the summer of 2015.

Thank you to the many volunteers that help our centre run; from helping in the playroom to preparing meals for our freezer. It is all much appreciated and it is because of you that we are able to offer many of the services and resources that we do.

Respectfully submitted,  
Andrea Townsend  
Centre Coordinator

## **AGM Report 2015 – Volunteer Doula Program**

Returning to work after my second maternity leave in early November, I was reminded just how fantastic and yet how extremely busy this program is. Some of this business is attributed to the transition of not only my return and Jess's departure, but also from welcoming a new staff to the VDP - administrative assistant, Whitney Cruikshank - who began in October (a month before my return to work), and who is now also off work to welcome another child to her own family. Erin Baillie has kindly stepped in as the new Administrative Assistant in the VDP. I work Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, with Erinn working Tuesdays and overlapping with me on Thursdays. This serves the volunteers and moms well; with having someone in the office 4 days/week, and me available by email, phone, and text every other day that I am not working. It has been a juggle trying to squeeze in a full-time position into 3 days a week; but juggling has always been a part of this profession, so I am getting better at it, day by day...

The end of 2014 presented us with the completed formal evaluation of the VDP, and its resulting recommendations. We have unveiled those recommendations to our volunteers and our community partners and we have begun to implement them. We have a 5-year timeframe, in place, for the implementation of all of the recommendations; and with the continued support of a very active and engaged Doula Steering Committee (DSC), we will likely see these recommendations implemented long before our target dates. Many of the recommendations were a long time coming in the VDP, and we are embracing them whole-heartedly. Change can be difficult, but change is good. Change means growth. It has been most welcoming to see how the implementation of these recommendations have helped make the VDP more efficient and streamline – making it more current, manageable, and attractive. I believe our community partners, our volunteers, and the families who have a volunteer doula, will all benefit greatly.

One recommendation in particular that I feel is noteworthy, is streamlining our list-serve of over 200 doulas. We began this process in February and March by delivering a self-identifying survey tool to every volunteer on the existing list-serve, and by April, we had 3 distinct categories of VDP doulas: active doulas, supportive volunteers, and inactive volunteers. The spill-off of implementing this recommendation has been overwhelming in so many ways, and so well-received by all involved. It has also had the ripple-effect of improving collaboration with our major stakeholders and although a time-consuming task, it was no doubt a worthy one.

For the first time in 20 years, we decided to not host a VDP new doula training in the springtime, but instead, chose to focus on the existing membership of active volunteers: focusing on the quality of our current roster and not on quantity. Although, through private local doula trainings, we managed to acquire 7 newly trained doulas to the VDP.

This spring, we decided to show our existing membership how much we appreciate their 'labour of love', we hosted a Volunteer Appreciation Tea at the new downtown Central Library during National Volunteer Week. It was very well-received and even from those who could not attend the event; they expressed their gratitude at simply being honored.

Our annual 'end of year' summer BBQ is fast approaching which is held at my house in early July. As many doulas are not able to attend the monthly Wednesday evening VDP In-Services at the CFC, new to this year, we will be hosting a joint-professional development event + potluck, alongside the Nova Scotia Doula Association, and the Birth Unit staff at the IWK. Continued professional development and education in maternal health are a significant part of our new 'active doula' criteria, and so our hope is that for folks who cannot attend the monthly

in-services due to family or work commitments, that they, too, will have a chance to attend this soon-to-be annual event. We will be showing plenary sessions from the 2015 DONA Virtual Conference.

After all of these years, our data-base has finally had enough. In actual fact, we have had difficulties with it for many years. Administrative Assistant Erinn is going to take on this task of exploring all of our options to have a new database designed. On a positive note, we can see through our annual statistics that we are reaching our intended target groups (newcomers, students, teen moms, single moms, low-income families) and are breastfeeding rates continue to be extremely high; both in initiation and in duration rates.

Speaking of 'years', next July (2016), will mark the 20 year anniversary of the VDP! A working group has already been formed to begin planning for this special celebration. The IWK has offered to host and cater this event, and we will celebrate everything 'Doula'!

As many of you will recall, roughly three years ago, another VDP doula and I started a committee (now coined the Perinatal Support in Corrections Committee). I am very proud to announce that that committee has now grown significantly, and we have been successful in securing doula support and midwifery services to the women inmates in Burnside Correctional Facility. In addition, we are also offering Well-Women clinics and workshops on a monthly basis to the inmates. There are 6 of us who have clearance to offer this internal support. We are very excited by the collaboration built with this organization.

The VDP has also collaborated with Genetic Counselling at the IWK; wherein our doulas are now offered Bereavement Doula support to families who are experiencing pregnancy loss or the loss of a newborn. We are constantly reminded how vital the support is that a doula offers – regardless of the outcome of the pregnancy.

This is a re-certifying year with DONA for me as a Birth Doula, for the fourth time, and as well, I will be 'attending' the DONA Virtual Conference again this year.

I became a certified CIMI Infant Massage trainer this year and so as I can squeeze in classes to audit, I hopefully will begin the rotation of teaching at the CFC by this fall.

I became a member of the Volunteer Professional Management of Nova Scotia this year and of its sister-group Volunteer Professional Management of Canada; which is made up of volunteer managers all over the province/country. We meet on a monthly basis. I am very excited to be a part of this group.

A wish of mine is to end one of my AGM Annual Reports on a more positive note, but the reality is that the VDP still faces an uncertain future with a significant lack of sustainable funding. This unfortunate reality makes it extremely difficult to grow this program in the many directions that it is capable of; if funding were not an issue. There are so many possibilities for the expanse of the VDP, and yet, we cannot even discuss them without having more resources at our disposal. For now, we can just dream and hope that one day, funding will be more secure.

Respectfully submitted by  
Erin Fair, Coordinator of the VDP

## **Enhanced Home Visiting Program 2014-2015**

The Enhanced Home Visiting Program (EHV) is a voluntary program offered to families who screen in via a public health nurse after giving birth to a new baby. The support of a Community Home Visitor begins shortly after birth and may continue until the child is three years of age. As part of a multi-disciplinary team, the Home Visitor focuses on providing support to parents, promoting healthy parent-child relationships, fostering optimal child development and linking families with community resources. This year there have been changes in the EHV Program to ensure consistency in delivery of the program by all EHV's across the province. These changes include an increase in training and increased contact with other EHV team members to build more cohesion within the team so we can continue to offer the best program possible.

Theresa Banks-Rex and Sarah Hicks are the Enhanced Home Visitors here at the Centre. Theresa continues in her role since last reporting period, (starting at the Centre in October 2012) and Sarah began in her position in May, 2014. As of March 31, 2015 there is a combined caseload of 29 families, with ongoing new referrals coming from Public Health. The Home Visitors continue to participate in prenatal classes in a supportive role and also interact with families attending the Centre. A budget is provided for EHV's to do additional training throughout the year to keep skills and knowledge current based on professional development plans and interest. Through following the parent's lead and using a strength-based approach we aim to assist families in recognizing their own strengths and achieving their goals.

*Hello, my name is Sarah Hicks. I first came to the Chebucto Family Centre in 2011 as a practicum student through Mount Saint Vincent University's Child and Youth studies program. I was pleased to accept the position of Enhanced Home Visitor in May, 2014. I have a Bachelor of Arts with a Psychology Concentration, and a Bachelor of Applied Arts in Child and Youth Studies. I spent several years working in licensed child care centres, working primarily in inclusion with children who were disadvantaged or had special needs. I enjoy working with families and being able to help them with enhancing their knowledge and skills related to parenting and advocating for services that they need. It is my hope that the families I have the pleasure of working with will gain valuable knowledge and in turn pass that on to others.*

Respectfully Submitted,  
Sarah Hicks  
Theresa Rex Banks  
Enhanced Community Home Visitors



**WE WISH TO THANK AND ACKNOWLEDGE OUR FUNDERS, DONORS AND BENEFACTORS FOR THEIR SUPPORT THIS YEAR!**

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***Our Mission Statement –***

*To nurture and enhance the quality of life of families through the delivery of community based programs and services.*

