



RANCH EHRLO SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

Issue 109 May 2020

COVID-19 and Ranch Ehrlo's response

Ranch Ehrlo Society continues to closely monitor the situation regarding COVID-19 and make changes to mitigate the pandemic's impact on the agency. While some things may have temporarily changed, our commitment to transparency for our stakeholders has not. In this edition of our newsletter, we'll be sharing with you some of the things we've been doing in this unusual time.

Pandemic policy and plan

We have adopted an in-depth pandemic policy and plan to guide us in this unprecedented time. The plan is a combined effort of our senior leaders, with input from various levels of the agency. We have also taken direction from reputable sources including the Saskatchewan Health Authority, Government of Canada, and the World Health Organization (WHO).

To read the plan and policy, visit ehrlo.com.

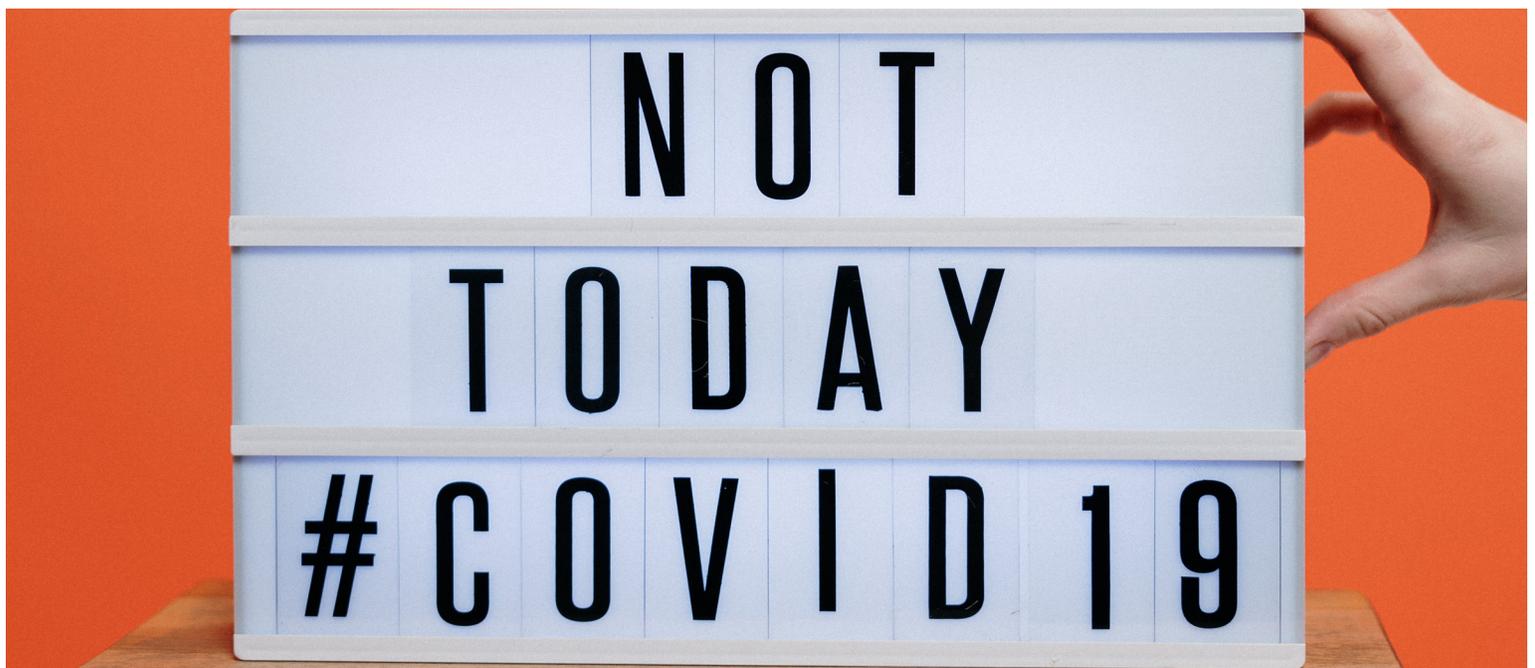
Pay it forward box

As social distancing measures have been put in place, our youth and staff have continually found creative ways to maintain their physical distance without sacrificing emotional connections.

The most recent initiative, started by Dalla-Vincenza House, is a pay-it-forward box that has been making its rounds throughout our homes in the southern programs.

Youth care leader Victoria Chupa came up with the idea.

"I really just wanted to find a way to keep up our sense of community," she explained.



We are guided by the CARE, Children And Residential Experiences: Creating Conditions for Change, multi-level model. We work to improve services for our clients through six practice principles:

developmentally
focused

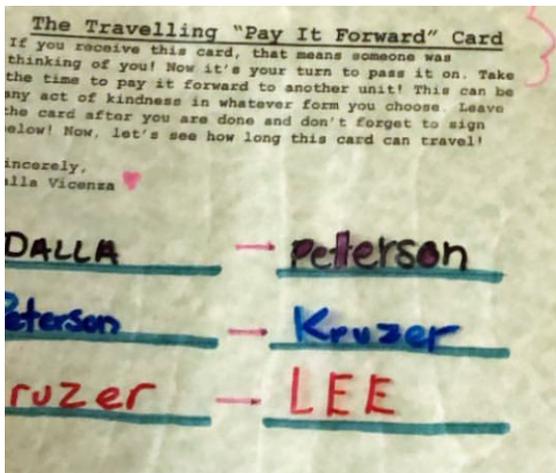
family involved

relationship based

trauma informed

competence centred

ecologically oriented



“Many of our youth and staff have built meaningful relationships, not only within our units but with staff and kids from units all around the agency. Our kids miss their teachers, old staff, friends from school and previous placements.”

Knowing that the youth at Dalla weren’t the only ones feeling that way, Chupa wanted to find a way to let staff and participants in other units know that someone was thinking of them.

“It was amazing to see how quickly the pay-it-forward box caught on,” said Dalla unit manager Mike Farrow. “It made it to three other units in less than 24 hours, which was more than we anticipated!”

Smooth42 donates to Ranch Ehrlo

Thanks to a distillery located in Brownlee, SK, Ranch Ehrlo has been provided with hand sanitizer to help keep our programs safe.

With sanitizer hard to find in stores, many distilleries in the province have been changing their process in order to make hand sanitizer for essential frontline workers, which our employees are designated. However, many were only providing the product to police, fire departments, and EMS.



Smooth42 Craft Distillery in Brownlee, Saskatchewan was the exception.

“After explaining the size and nature of our organization and our willingness to purchase the product to Smooth42 co-owner Sacha Elez, he agreed that they would supply us with sanitizer free of charge,” explained northern facilities manager Chris Shynkaruk.

It was determined we would require 1200 litres to be able to distribute to all the programs and services in the province. Even after being asked for such a large quantity, Smooth42 insisted they wouldn’t accept payment.

All Smooth42 has asked in return is that we share their GoFundMe campaign, created to keep the program providing free sanitizer to essential frontline services going as long as possible. All proceeds raised are going toward increasing their production capacity of hand sanitizer and rubbing alcohol, which will continue to be donated to those who need it most. That link can be found here: www.gofundme.com/f/CRE8-vs-COVID19

We are grateful to Smooth42 for their generosity in these difficult times!

Creativity shines in foster care

Children all over the country are out of school for the foreseeable future, meaning a lot more time at home! This includes Ranch Ehrlo’s Treatment Foster Care (TFC) program, a specialized, accredited foster care program for children with complex needs who respond best in a family setting.

TFC parents Brittanie and Sam Park have been using creativity and flexibility in their routine to adjust to the change.

“It took a few days just to even wrap my head around it and gear up for what I need to do,” Brittanie said. “But it’s been helping to have a routine. Not a super rigid routine by any means, but just kind of making sure we are done our morning routine by 9 a.m. and at the table ready to learn something. We still take our breaks, and in the afternoon, we do an art project or have free time.”

One of those art projects can be seen in the Park family basement. Brittanie and



Sam painted one wall in their basement black, then let the children use coloured house paint to create a huge work of art.

Beyond their art projects, the Parks have been taking advantage of the added time with the children to start practicing life skills such as making their own lunches and preparing their own snacks.

There are of course challenges that come with a sudden change in routine. All the kids have had to adjust to not being able to see their teachers and friends.

“Our foster daughter struggles with being focused, so it can kind of throw a wrench into things when you are in close proximity to each other all the time. It can get a little wearing. So that’s why we do kind of have to be a little flexible with the schedule,” Brittanie explained.

For others in the same situation, Brittanie has simple advice.

“We’re all just trying to figure this out. It’s super intense, and it’s been very sudden. Just, have some grace for yourself and for each other.”

A new tool to tackle issues

Hilsden House recently received an upgrade.

A sensory room was created for the boys at Hilsden, who range in age from eight to 12. Many of them have delays in gross and fine motor skills, and several have been diagnosed with Attention Deficient Hyperactive Disorder.

The room is designed to provide another tool to tackle these issues.



“It’s new and we’re trying to figure out how to work it with staff, but right now we’re finding that it’s really beneficial as a proactive intervention rather than reactive,” explained caseworker Sydney Campbell.

Caseworkers are a valuable part of the treatment team at Ranch Ehrlo, providing clinical assessments, counselling, treatment plans, advocacy, team training, case management, group, and family work.

The boys have scheduled time in the room, which includes a swing, a climbing wall, a peg board, and various differently shaped and textured objects to work on balance and coordination. There is also a swing and fibre optic lights for tactile and visual stimulation. While not every youth requires occupational therapy, many do – so we have occupational therapists available to help address those needs.

“The occupational therapist, Louise, was consulted during the design phase of the build,” Campbell added. “She was able to speak to where the youth were developmentally in terms of their motor skills, so we made sure to touch base with her and get her input from the assessments to understand what would be the most beneficial.”

More than just a space to burn off energy and build motor skills, the sensory room is also space where caseworkers can take the youth to talk. The distractions provided often allow them to open up more freely than they would in a traditional office setting.

“Our guys don’t really respond the best to talk therapy, so we can come in here and have a session just focusing on building those skills rather than focusing on stuff that might be a dialogue,” Campbell said.

Changes to community services

Our community services are still functioning but in different ways.

The Ehrlo Early Learning Centres closed and then reopened and were re-purposed to provide childcare for staff of essential services.

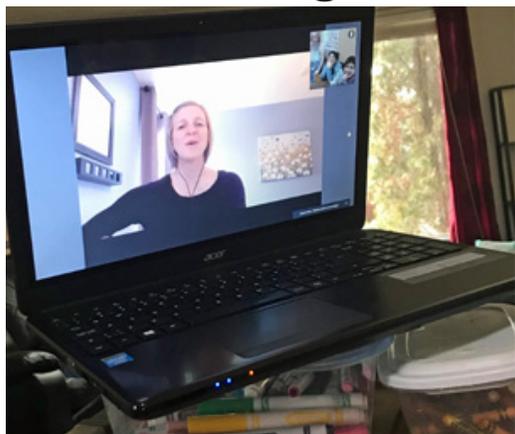
Ehrlo Counselling Services continues to provide counselling services to clients through online services or by telephone.

Ehrlo Housing is continuing to serve its housing

clients, paying close attention to social distancing measures.

Finally Ehrlo Sport Venture had to cancel its outdoor hockey tournament and basketball season and continues to lend equipment by appointment.

And the beat goes on



Music is a universal connector, and in times like these we need connection more than ever – so we have found ways to make sure the music has continued in our alternative education programs.

While music therapist Melanie McDonald hasn't been able to interact with participants in her usual way, she has begun holding online sessions. Staff at the programs have adapted as well, playing a bigger part in music therapy than they have in the past by receiving songs and pictures ahead of the session, both to help prepare the clients and to keep them engaged in the unusual format. Many staff have brought picture songbooks from the participants' homes that have been used in previous sessions, which allows consistency but also encourages choice making on the part of the participant.

"All direct care workers and managers have been so supportive, resilient, and creative in trying to maintain normalcy, joy, and consistency for our participants in a time that is anything but normal!" McDonald said. "The consensus seems to be that even though the electronic format is not perfect, any glitches that have occurred seemed insignificant compared to the joy and engagement participants experienced."

"This is a great example of some of the outstanding work going on at the agency. I'm very proud of the direct care workers for being so adaptable and creative in order to maintain some sort of normalcy during these hard times," said AVEP program manager Monique Boyko.

Wildlife visit



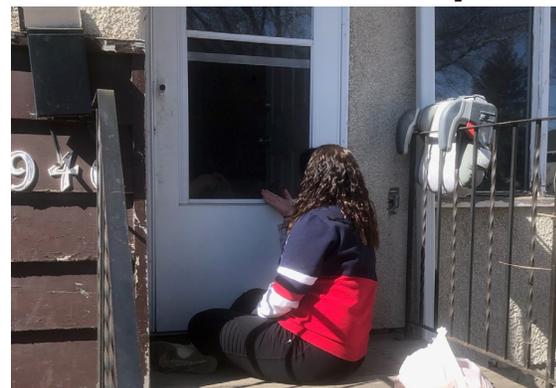
Feeding the elk has become part of the Alternative Vocational Education Program weekly programming since social distancing measures have come into place. It allows the group to get out for some fresh air.

#heartsofyqr



Our early learning centres joined the #heartsofyqr, decorating windows with homemade hearts as a way to stay connected. EELC is currently providing childcare to essential service workers.

Different kind of family visit



Here is an example of how programs are being creative with staying connected to families. A young lady in our program is waiting for some homemade bannock from mom.

Sibling care packages



Social distancing doesn't mean connections are severed. Dalla-Vincenza House youth recently made care packages for their siblings - hugs in the form of some treats and a note.

Old fashion letters



Social distancing can be a lonely time. Youth at Lee House hoped to help ease some of that with letters and cards to residents of local elderly care homes.