



RANCH EHRLO SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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Family ties at Matheson

Even when our youth are no longer living at Ranch Ehrlo, they know they always have a place to return to.

No story illustrates the bond between youth and staff better than that of Becki*, who spent five and a half years at Ranch Ehrlo Society in Prince Albert; beginning at Alex Guy House and transitioning to Matheson House where she lived until last month.

“Becki is still very much a part of the extended family at Matheson House,” said caseworker Marissa Lafelle.

Matheson House is somewhat unique in that many of the youth who live there don’t have family discharge options – they often stay at Matheson until, like Becki, a plan is developed to help them transition into a more independent living situation.

“The staff becomes like their family,” Lafelle explained, adding that most youth stay in the Prince Albert area, so the small community and ease of access to former staff allow the relationships to continue to flourish after youth have discharged.

This is very true for Becki, who said that one of the biggest challenges in moving on was leaving her Matheson House family.

“It made me sad, but I know I’m leaving them for a good reason,” she said.

Though Becki has transitioned to living in her own apartment through the YWCA Homeward Bound Oakdale program in

Ranch staff (l to r) Shayne Logan (emergency receiving unit manager), Andrea Brittin (CEO), and Randy O’Shaughnessy (residential director) were pleased to host Saskatchewan Minister of Social Services, Paul Merriman, at our Pilot Butte campus.



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

Prince Albert, Marissa and Matheson House unit manager Ron Schlamp often head over to visit her in new apartment, and Becki has a standing invite to Ranch Ehrlo events like Winterfest and Awards Night.

Oakdale provides a safe and supportive living environment for young adults transitioning towards independence. The goal is to provide life skills and opportunities for youth to grow in areas of hygiene, cooking, budgeting, education, employment and connecting to community resources. Youth will have access to staff 24/7, opportunities to set goals and work on case-management.

Ranch CEO Andrea Brittin concluded, “Thank you to all of you who have worked alongside Becki to see her off to this new stage in life. I believe that the single most important key to success when youth are transitioning is to have people available who they trust to call up and talk to, find support, or perhaps provide a shoulder to cry on when they need it.”

**name changed*

CARE in self-expression

What happens when you don't feel safe to express who you truly are?

Many of us are fortunate and will never know. But Casey*, one of Ranch Ehrlo's long-standing clients in our Programs for Persons with Developmental Disabilities, has recently helped us to understand just a little bit of what goes on when you finally feel safe enough to be who you are.

Having an ecologically orientated space that suits the needs of our clients and helps them to develop and grow is one of the six guiding principles followed by the agency. This model called CARE, Children And Residential Experiences: Creating Conditions for Change, was developed by Cornell University to improve services for people in care.

Casey has lived at Ranch Ehrlo for over 20 years. For almost that entire time, she was known by staff, housemates, and coworkers as he. There were small signs that she was experiencing some issues with her gender identity but paired with her cognitive difficulties (in both understanding and expressing what was going on with her), they were easy to dismiss.

“It's been a bit of a journey to get to this point,” said clinical consultant Holli Holmes, who has worked with Casey and everyone around her to help ease the transition.

Recently, Casey ordered women's clothing online, and when they arrived at the house, questions arose.

“Through these conversations, it came out that Casey identifies as female

“It's been a bit of a shift, and there have been a lot of questions from both staff and participants, but everyone is doing a great job.”
-Holli Holmes clinical consultant

and would like to dress as a female,” Holmes explained. “It's been a bit of a shift, and there have been a lot of questions from both staff and participants, but everyone is doing a great job. They've really continued working to make both home and work a safe place for her.”

The staff of Casey's home – formerly an all-male home – have stepped up and learned skills like hairdressing and fingernail painting to continue to help Casey in the best way they can. Her housemates have taken it in stride, as well.

Outside of the home, Casey spends her days at the Ranch's Supported Employment Program (SEP), the vocational program is managed by John



Spring has finally arrived along with clean-up at the Pilot Butte campus.



Fraser. Though Casey's transition was a surprise to Fraser and his staff, they immediately knew what they needed to do.

"We want to make sure that she felt safe enough to come in, and we're providing a safe outlet and a safe place to come, and we wanted to make sure the rest of the clients understood as well," Fraser explained.

Shortly after Casey began expressing her identity outwardly by dressing as a woman full time, Holmes came in to speak with Fraser, his staff, and all SEP's clients. The clients had an opportunity to ask questions, and Casey had the chance to explain what was going on with her.

"The group of participants was so accepting and asked some really good questions and kind of left it with a 'well, you're still our friend; no matter how you choose to dress,'" Holmes added.

"Within our Ranch walls, we can make a safe place and we can support caregivers and participants," Holmes said. "Without that safety, we wouldn't have got this true expression of herself," she added.

**name changed*

Surprised and honoured



Ehrlo Counselling's Shelley Tamaki has spent six years providing outreach services to the community of Pheasant Rump Nakota First Nation, located approximately two hours southeast of Regina.

“I believe we could all benefit from attending at least two Indigenous cultural ceremonies a year to have more cultural awareness and humility in service to our Indigenous clients.”

-Shelley Tamaki, registered psychologist

"Outreach counselling is important because there are situations where people simply are unable to come into our offices," she explained. "There are so many obstacles that can prevent someone from getting the help they need – communication issues such as having no phones or Internet, having no transportation, time constraints, or issues with day-to-day coping that simply make it impossible for someone to physically come to the office."

Knowing this, Tamaki has made it part of her career to bring counselling services to areas such as Pheasant Rump.

Earlier this month, her contract came to an end. She was surprised and honoured by the reaction received to the news she wouldn't be renewing.

"I told them in the morning I wouldn't be renewing my contract, and by the afternoon they had flowers, food, and many gifts – a handmade shawl, a smudge bowl, sage, tobacco, an Indigenous mug, a blanket, and some hand and foot cream. One woman gave me her smudge bowl wrap that was handmade by her sister," Tamaki recalled. "I've never seen so many people at the band office – I felt so undeserving and very honoured."

As an advocate for First Nations decolonization and truth, Tamaki's time at Pheasant Rump was very meaningful to her.

"I believe we could all benefit from attending at least two Indigenous cultural ceremonies a year to have more cultural awareness and humility in service to our Indigenous clients;" she continued, "providing these services is a way of practicing personal reconciliation," she concluded.

Clinical director, Natasha Schoenroth, noted what an amazing tribute to the beautiful work that Shelley has done with Pheasant

“It’s a true testament to the CARE principles with which Ranch Ehrlo Society operates from. Shelley has always sought to be flexible and creative in providing treatment to the clients and families with whom she works. This is just another testament of the great work that Shelley does.”

Washington Park Place sale

Last year, Ranch Ehrlo board of directors agreed to the sale of Ehrlo Housing’s Washington Park Place. The building, which Ranch Ehrlo managed since 2002, held 12 affordable housing unit for single mothers.

A growing vacancy rate, dwindling referrals, and a predominance of one-bedroom units that were not suitable for single-parent families were the main reasons for the sale. The building was sold to a First Nation non-profit to provide services to its clientele.

Ehrlo Housing staff have moved their offices to the Lakeshore apartments in Regina. All contact information remains the same. Possession of the property was effective March 1, 2019.

Schaller’s global soup cook-off



Our judges

On March 22nd Schaller’s Liski Gymnasium hosted 10 competing soups from classes at Schaller, the Transition Centre, and the in-city Regina elementary classrooms.

The theme of the competition was soups based on cultural diversity from around the world. The judges had tough choices but came up with three winning soups. Third place went to a Chinese wonton soup, second place was awarded an Italian wedding soup, and the first-place championship went to a tasty English potato soup. The students’ choice award was a clear landslide win for the Mexican taco soup.

Rock your socks



Our clinical assessment team encouraged people to pick up some footwear and rock their socks for World Down Syndrome Day on March 21st.

Southern Winterfest



Our staff came out to volunteer for our southern Winterfest pancake breakfast. (L to r) Janet Miller, Andrea Rhodes, Bree Fiissel, and CEO Andrea Brittin.

Lacrosse equipment



Jeff Shattler #77 with the Saskatchewan Rush Lacrosse team stopped by Sport Venture. Jeff was on his way for a week long lacrosse camp in Standing Buffalo and needed to borrow some gear for the kids from manager Amanda McConnell.

Saving babies lives



EELC W.F. Ready did a great job presenting the \$2,530.60 they raised in support of the neonatal intensive care unit on behalf of all our Ehrlo Early Learning Centres at the Z99 radio-thon!

MasterChef Canada



One of our own appeared on CTV’s MasterChef Canada! Congratulations, unit manager Josh Miller! (middle blue shirt)