



# Foot Steps

... navigating change step by step



ISSUE I

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## Foundation for Families in Transformation (FFIT)

*Our Mission is to assist children, teens and families with moving forward through major life transitions, by supporting appropriate programs and acting as a hub for related resources.*

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## A Message From Your Program Coordinator

**W**elcome to our first newsletter.

Not unlike our RAINBOWS families, FFIT is experiencing positive renewal, with several exciting changes and initiatives. We welcomed several new and keen Board members, updated our bylaws, conducted strategic planning and ran a successful teleconference in October.

Expanding our focus, we have revised our Mission and Vision and plan to become a comprehensive resource focal point for Rainbows Facilitators as well as families in transition. Finally, watch for our new logo and name, as well as a redesigned and improved website!

**T**he year in summary.

Our 60 plus partner sites, from Crossfield to Peace River, helped over 1200 children cope better with painful transitions through Rainbows, Sunbeams or Spectrum support groups while some 125 parents participated in the Prism program.



We helped establish eight new RAINBOWS sites and trained over 100 new Facilitators in six Alberta communities, from as far south as Rimbey to as far north as Fox Creek.

We are pleased that awareness about RAINBOWS

continues to improve every year, particularly among helping professionals, teachers and divorce lawyers.

Information on the RAINBOWS program is available to parents through PAS - the 6 hour Court-mandated **Parenting After Separation Seminar**. PAS is offered in numerous locations throughout Alberta and connecting with your local PAS program organizer may help increase RAINBOWS awareness in your community.

**L**ooking forward. We are pleased to offer improved support and services towards achieving your goals related to helping families in painful transition. Working together with you, we anticipate another satisfying year in 2011!

*Victor Dorian*

### Upcoming Rainbows Facilitator and Coordinator Training:

January 15, Carstairs  
January 28/29, Edmonton

info@rainbowsffit.com

Tel 780-448-1180  
Toll-free 1-800-416-4673

Victor Dorian  
FFIT Program Coordinator  
Rainbows Registered Director



### Quick Tips ~ For Busy Parents



- \* Planning ahead can help you cope with changes in holiday rituals and practices.
- \* Break with tradition and make changes in your life that suit you and your children better than the old ways.
- \* Let your children enjoy their holiday with both parents, separately, without guilt.

## Don't Let Your Divorce Become the Christmas Grinch

### Keeping the Holidays Merry for Children of Divorce

By Barb Hepperle



The holiday season that once brought families together, presents,

laughter and the hope of fresh beginnings with the New Year can now be a tough time for children if you are divorcing or divorced, especially if you haven't yet reached an amicable agreement about the parenting schedule.

Generally both parents want to provide the "best holiday" for the kids so how can you ensure that your divorce doesn't become the Christmas Grinch?

Here are some tips for keeping the holidays merry for your children:

- \* Don't try to work out a parenting arrangement with your co-parent at the last minute or worse, to be decided upon in Court. Keep in mind that it is the right of your child to spend time with both parents and having a schedule well in advance

will eliminate a lot of stress.

- \* Maintain or create new rituals with your kids. Rituals represent stability, structure and reassurance in our lives.
- \* Make every attempt to keep your feelings about your ex-spouse to yourself and look for the positive from your child's perspective.
- \* Accept that your co-parent may celebrate differently or do something that goes against your values. Remind yourself that it is just one day out of the year and let go of the "small stuff".
- \* Start your holiday rituals well in advance - baking cookies, making a gingerbread house, reading the Christmas story, etc. Don't try to cram too much into one day, or even worse, into part of a day. And remember, the best gift you can give yourself and your children is the reassurance that the holidays can still be a family-oriented time.

What memories do you want your children to have of the holidays as they grow older? Will they remember this as a time of happiness and celebration or will they come to dread the tension and stress of Christmas even into adulthood?

It's to your children's benefit – both now and in the future – if you find ways to keep the holiday season fun and enjoyable for them. It's more important for them to know that they're loved year-round; there's no need to invest all your emotional time and energy in one day out of the year.



Can you make the holidays merry for your child when you're co-parenting with your ex?

### Did you know?

- \* Leduc Family & Community Support Services (FCSS) offers Sunbeams for 4-7 year olds, as well as a 6 wk "Friendship" mentorship program to help with coping skills"
- \* The Sylvan Lake community provides not only RAINBOWS, but also a *Girl Power* self-esteem program, as well as two mentorship programs, *Moms Mentoring Moms*, and older children mentoring younger children.
- \* West Edmonton Christian Assembly (WECA) RAINBOWS enjoys superb attendance thanks to volunteer cooks who offer participants a meal prior to the evening program; *Spectrum* for teens and *Prism* for adults are also provided.
- \* YWCA provides *Sunbeams*, *Rainbows*, *Spectrum* and *Prism*, as well as counselling and other programs.
- \* Peace River Mental Health provides Rainbows and other services to children/families.





## Celebrating Crossfield School Rainbows

Crossfield School has a very special place among the 30 Alberta communities and some 60 RAINBOWS Sites we support.

Thanks to Adele Gamble, Coordinator extraordinaire, hundreds of children have participated in Rainbows over an amazing 18 years! It is the longest existing RAINBOWS Site in western Canada. Virtually everyone in the Community, including all

the school staff has heard about Rainbows, with children and families asking for it when the need arises. Adele tells me about moving moments such a young man in his twenties crossing her path, and telling her how Rainbows made a difference for his life.

Way to go Adele and Crossfield School!



### YOUR VOICE



**We want to hear from you.**

We want to give you an opportunity to share your thoughts with us.

We followed up a recent survey of our partner Rainbows Sites with a teleconference and we were delighted with the excellent response.

Here are some of the gaps and concerns you identified.

- ★ **communicating with and educating parents**
- ★ **helping children with multiple needs**



- ★ **how to reach teens**
- ★ **providing a supportive atmosphere to children experiencing different types of loss**
- ★ **volunteer recruitment and retention**

*We would like to invite you to share your thoughts with us by contributing to our Newsletter and participating in future teleconferences.*

*We welcome articles, new tools from your "bag of tricks", quick tips, testimonials, beefs & bouquets, links to information for parents or Coordinators, recognition of volunteers, etc.*



Kids Have Stress Too!® (KHST!) helps parents and caregivers understand childhood stress and how to provide children with the tools to deal with stress effectively.



Helping children, teens and families adjust positively to family transitions.

*"The loss of a parent through divorce or death can overwhelm a child with unfamiliar emotions. The RAINBOWS program works to help children through crises with an innovative intervention program devised to teach coping and communication skills. By addressing the needs of children and families before their difficulties become too overwhelming can mean a world of difference to children."*

*Iris Evans, former Minister of Alberta Children's Services*

## FFIT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Melissa Gorrie  
Barb Hepperle  
Michael Oshry

Nancy Allen  
Terence Graw  
Brad McMaster



Foundation for Families in Transformation (FFIT)

## The Foundation for Families in Transformation

The Foundation for Families in Transformation is a not-for-profit, registered charitable organization that is dedicated to helping children, adolescents and adults in understanding, accepting, healing and moving forward after a loss due to death, divorce, separation, abandonment or other painful family transition

New logo & web site coming



## Winter RAINBOWS Sessions in the Edmonton region

- \* Alberta Parenting for the Future Stony Plain, New Site! tel 780-910-5845  
Coordinator: Candace Fehr
- \* YWCA Edmonton, 10350 124 St tel 780-423-9922 Ext 222; 10 Mondays, January 17th - March 28th, 6:30 - 8:00 pm  
Coordinator: Pam Schellenberg
- \* WECA (West Edmonton Christian Assembly) 6315 199 St, tel 780-489-2579; 13 Tuesdays January 25 - April 19, 6-8 pm  
Coordinator: Nancy Allen
- \* MWFC (Millwoods Family Resource Centre) 1733 Millwoods Road, tel 780-413-4521; 10 Tuesdays, January 18 - March 22, 6:30 - 8:00 pm  
Coordinator: Nicole Krompholz
- \* Kids on Track, 15671 96 Ave, tel 780 481-2942; 6 week sessions, 1.5 hours each;  
Coordinator: Gisela McKerracher

Victor Dorian

FFIT Program Coordinator  
Rainbows Registered Director

[info@rainbowsffit.com](mailto:info@rainbowsffit.com)

Tel 780-448-1180  
Toll-free 1-800-416-4673



Melody Knutson provides local training and Site support for Central Alberta Rainbows Sites, from as far south as Crossfield, north to the Red Deer area. Email her at [kifas@telus.net](mailto:kifas@telus.net)

Training is provided four times per year in the Edmonton area and twice a year in Central Alberta.

Stepping forward into change doesn't mean huge leaps... but you can take a tiny step each and every day. Each step changes the view allowing you to see new possibilities.