

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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With Commencement of B.C. Child and Youth in Care Week, SOS Children's Village B.C. Brings Caregiver Training into the Limelight

Surrey, British Columbia Children in foster care face challenges that most young people could never imagine. They endure crises, family breakdown, and perhaps see people they love and depend on abusing drugs and/or alcohol or suffering mental health problems. Maybe they have been abused themselves, physically, mentally, or sexually, and their childhood has been a living nightmare.

Now, imagine what it's like for a foster parent. Caregivers absolutely need training and support in order to nurture these youth, to help them heal from their past, and to set them on the right track to becoming caring and self-reliant adults.

In British Columbia, the first full week of every June is Child and Youth in Care Week, and SOS Children's Village B.C. is pleased to be a national trailblazer in advancing a more effective model of care for foster children and youth. Indeed, British Columbia is home to the only SOS Village in all of Canada. With shocking news articles being published virtually every week about what critics are calling a 'broken' foster care system, SOS Children's Village B.C. envisions a better way. British Columbians have said "Yes to the Village, No to the Streets!" through their passionate support of the charity's two year capital campaign for transition suites.

The five timely topics for this year's B.C. Child and Youth in Care Week are: caregiver training; the therapeutic & interactive SOS Village; transitioning to adulthood; the grand opening of suites for youth aging out of care; and a new Cirque du Soleil program – SOS Children's Village B.C. will be the second SOS Village in the world to launch it.

Caregiver training has been overlooked to a dangerous degree in this province. Healthy, happy foster children need foster parents who have the support and encouragement to succeed at a truly challenging job. It is important to support these parents to ensure that they are healthy, stable, and able to care for the traumatized children in their homes.

The long-established position of prior Provincial Governments is that foster parents are caring individuals who do it for love and minor compensation, whereas SOS Children's Village B.C. maintains that it is a vital occupation. Globally, the SOS model demonstrates the effectiveness of the 'foster parent as occupation' approach. A professional 'Mom' or 'Dad' leads a household in a supportive village environment, with an SOS team who provide the coordination as well as the wraparound therapeutic services.

SOS Children's Village B.C. strongly believes this role should be a trained professional, **and foster parenting should be recognized as a 'professional' activity receiving both the financial compensation and professional education necessary.**

Clinical Lead Rachel Madu - who was introduced to the SOS Village in Surrey in 2015 - is growing the organization's Caregiver Support Program (www.sosbc.org/our-programs) to make a bigger impact with the foster parents involved in the village and in the community. In the past year, SOS B.C. has moved its focus to group & support meetings on a bi-monthly basis. **Rachel builds the meetings around trauma informed practice and strategies to help the SOS Parents care for foster children who have a number of challenges due to trauma and development, such as Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder.**

Caregiver training and support encompasses on-site support, emergency or crisis support, and advocacy through working with various foster care agencies. All SOS Caregivers are able to receive support from the charity's clinical and program departments.

About SOS Children's Village BC

SOS Children's Villages is the world's largest non-governmental, non-denominational child development organization for orphaned and abandoned children. It has existed for over 65 years with presence in 134 countries and 568 Villages. British Columbia is home to the only SOS Children's Village in Canada. SOS Children's Village BC provides stable homes, a supportive and healing Village environment, and community-based family care programs to help foster children and youth in need grow into caring, self-reliant adults.

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We hope that you will be inspired to pick up our 'Say Yes to the Village, No to the Streets!' press release series over B.C. Child and Youth in Care Week.

For more information please contact:

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