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CASA chronicles

Summer 2019

In Conversation with CEO of CASA and CASA Foundation Dr. Denise Milne

With over 150 staff, four local operating sites, multiple treatment and education programs for children, teens and their families, along with dozens of fundraisers, sponsored public lectures and other events annually, CASA is one busy organization.

To help keep staff, donors, community partners, clients and volunteers up to speed on the latest news, CASA Chronicles will feature regular updates from CEO of CASA and CASA Foundation Dr. Denise Milne. We sat down with her recently to catch up. Here's an edited version of our conversation:

Q *I understand you recently met with Alberta's new Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, Jason Luan, who represents the riding of Calgary-Foothills. Can you tell us about that?*

Sure. My colleagues at the meeting included CASA Board Chair Faye Parker, Vice-Chair Dr. David McNeil and Board member Judy Buddle. We met with Associate Minister Luan and his Chief of Staff, Marshall Smith, here at CASA Centre.

Q *And what was the focus of discussion?*

Our focus was really on providing an overview of CASA's activities as well as some historical background on our organization, including CASA Foundation.

Q *Did you touch on any current issues?*

Yes, one was the issue of inadequate government grants to CASA, and the resulting wage disparities that creates. A second was the shortage of child psychiatrists in the system. But we also focused on all of the good things that are happening at CASA, including the new CASA Research Chair in Child and Adolescent Mental Health, which we're launching in conjunction with the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Alberta and Alberta Health Services.



From left: Dr. David McNeil, Vice-Chair, CASA Board; Dr. Denise Milne, CEO of CASA and CASA Foundation; Mr. Jason Luan, Associate Minister, Mental Health & Addictions, Government of Alberta.

Q *Is there any news on that front?*

Yes, in regard to the CASA Research Chair in Child and Adolescent Mental Health, we recently ran a big ad in The Globe & Mail and we now have a couple of qualified applicants for the position. Dr. Andy Greenshaw from the Department of Psychiatry at the U of A is linking with an applicant from Europe and trying to set up an interview with her.

We've also reached out to a broader network of potential candidates through Laverne Smith & Associates Inc., a professional recruiting firm.

Q *Did you discuss anything else with the Associate Minister?*

We talked about CASA's Dr. Roger Bland Lecture Series on Improving Children's Mental Health, the implementation of the FamilySmart® program, and how CASA can provide expertise to the Associate Minister's office regarding children's mental health.

Q *What is the Associate Minister's background?*

His background is in social work and his daughter is actually doing her residency as a pediatrician at the U of A.

Q *What's new with the FamilySmart® program?*

Lori Erickson has started as a Parent-In-Residence (PiR) in our day programs. Lori is a mom with lived experience, and her children were in one of the day programs some time ago. I think she's going to be an absolute asset in helping families access resources in partnership with our clinical staff. Candace Fehr stepped down as the other PiR because it was decided it may conflict with her role as Co-Chair of the CASA Family Advisory Council, so the Institute of Families will be looking for another PiR.

Q *Any news on future events in the Dr. Roger Bland Lecture Series?*

We've signed off on our contract with the Telus World of Science so that's done, and all the dates are now set.

Scott Phillips' Unlikely Career Path Took Him From Oil & Gas to Mental Health

For someone who has barely cracked 40 years of age, Scott Phillips boasts an amazingly rich and varied resume.

Before he became Assistant Chair, Administration in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Alberta, the CASA Foundation Board member held management positions in oil and gas, equipment manufacturing and healthcare.

Along the way he also dipped his toes in venture capital and corporate consulting, after earning a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree from Cornell University.

He's also a Chartered Professional Accountant (CPA), a Certified Management Accountant (CMA) and an accredited Project Management Professional (PMP).

Get the picture? He's a chronic overachiever. Which explains why Avenue Magazine featured Phillips in its 'Top 40 Under 40' rankings last year.

Since he joined the Department of Psychiatry in 2016, Phillips has become a tireless advocate for mental health, working closely with community partners like CASA as well as Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services to improve services in the Edmonton region.

He played a key role in engineering the ground-breaking partnership between the Department of Psychiatry and CASA to launch the new CASA Research Chair in Child and Adolescent Mental Health. He also played a lead role in establishing the new funding model for psychiatry remuneration within the Edmonton Zone, with special emphasis on increasing the critical mass of Child and Adolescent Psychiatrists.



Given that, it's not surprising that he feels very passionate about CASA.

"When CASA began in the early 1990s, it was born out of necessity. CASA was a grassroots organization formed by parents, and they basically jumped into this blue ocean space where help for kids was desperately needed, yet no help was available," he says.

"CASA has since morphed into what it is now: the Cadillac of mental health services for kids. It offers this grand wraparound service so kids aren't going to five different buildings every week. Instead it's all here in one place. I just wish CASA's services were available to everyone."

Phillips tells a personal story that brings that point home. It involves a student at a junior high school in Calgary who disrupted a recent school assembly, and attacked the vice-principal before he was subdued.

"It turns out this child was born to two meth-addicted parents, so this is a kid who lives on the street half the time, but there is no system in place to help him right now. There is no CASA in Calgary," he says.

"So that's one of the big things we have in Edmonton that Calgary doesn't have, and I know a lot of people would love to have a CASA South, if possible," he says. "If for the next two generations we can really figure out how to manage mental health issues appropriately when kids are still young, we can cut it down dramatically in the future."

After Serving Alberta's MLAs for Nearly Three Decades, Dr. David McNeil is Set to Make his Mark at CASA

Ask Dr. David McNeil about his last job as Clerk of the Alberta Legislature – a post he held for 29 years – and his eyes light up like a kid recalling a trip to Disneyland.

"I loved it. It was fantastic. You never knew what was going to happen next. I liked the variety and the challenges," says the affable Vice-Chair of the CASA Board, during an hour-long chat.

In a nutshell, he describes the clerk's role as striving to keep all 87 MLAs in the Alberta Legislature happy by providing them with the services they need to ensure the smooth functioning of the institution.

"When the legislature is in session the focus is on the day-to-day procedural and legal matters and Hansard operations," he explains. "When it's not, you're providing services to MLAs, from security and protocol, HR and IT to finance, library and visitor services."

He also dealt with the media, and still gets calls from journalists like *Calgary Herald* columnist Don Braid. "My philosophy was to provide background information and things like that to the press. But I'd stay out of the way of the politicians, so I was pretty low key," he says, with a wry laugh.

For someone adept at avoiding political potholes, it's surprising to learn that Dr. McNeil began his career as an engineer. After earning an undergraduate degree in chemical engineering at the University of Alberta, he worked as a quality control engineer for Kodak Canada in Toronto.

That's where he first developed an interest in industrial psychology, prompting him to return to school. In 1975 he earned a PhD in Management Science specializing in organizational behaviour at the University of Waterloo.

He returned to Alberta to take a job as an organizational development specialist with Bechtel, the U.S.-based engineering giant, which was then designing the massive Syncrude oilsands operation. He subsequently joined the Alberta government's Personnel Administration Office, performing various roles, and in 1985 he assumed a role in Saskatchewan as an advisor on senior appointments and the organization of government.

Two years later, he was appointed Clerk of Alberta's Legislative Assembly. "When I started (in 1987) I think we had one computer and a budget of about \$12 million. When I retired (in 2016) our budget was \$75 million and we had a staff of about 400 people, so it was a fairly comprehensive operation."

Before he retired in 2016, former CASA Board Chair Gwen Harris – a high school classmate of Dr. McNeil's – asked him if he'd have any interest in joining the CASA Board.



"I had some interest in and knowledge about mental health issues, and I thought the fact that CASA was on the verge of opening CASA Centre and dealing with a lot of significant issues in terms of fundraising and management would present some interesting challenges," he recalls.

"I met some of the people on the board and I was impressed with them and their vision for the organization. I also thought my background was appropriate in some ways in terms of adding to the mix of the people on the board."

Looking ahead, Dr. McNeil says he's excited about CASA's future.

"The organization is really flexible and it can turn on a dime. CASA also has a really broad vision of where children's and adolescents' mental health could go. The new CASA Research Chair also emphasizes the opportunity to use CASA as a lab, if you will. So I think there's a lot of opportunity for CASA to be a resource to the community in a much broader sense."

"I had some interest in and knowledge about mental health issues, and I thought the fact that CASA was on the verge of opening CASA Centre and dealing with a lot of significant issues in terms of fundraising and management would present some interesting challenges."

Dancing the Night Away for CASA

Move over, Justin Bieber. These kids have some amazing moves of their own to show you!

An enthusiastic throng of 80 young, energetic dancers took to the floor at Sherwood Park's Step by Step School of Dance on Saturday June 8th to raise funds for CASA House.

By the time the all-night dance-a-thon ended in the wee hours of Sunday morning, an exhausted but happy crew of performers had raised \$28,000 for CASA's residential treatment facility in Sherwood Park.

"The dancers were as young as 6 and as old as 17. Each of them had to raise a minimum of \$100 to participate in the dance-a-thon," says Ryan Milne, CASA's Finance & Fund Development Officer.

"The event was kind of a sleepover – for any of the kids who eventually passed out – but most of the kids stayed up all night dancing and doing other fun activities. It was fantastic."

Milne is hoping the funds can be used toward expanding and enhancing the backyard amenities at CASA House, including a garden patio and possibly a hockey rink.

"Depending on the cooperation and support we get from Alberta Health Services, we're hoping we can start on it as soon as this summer," he says.



Some of the 80 young dancers from Sherwood Park's Step by Step School of Dance who raised \$28,000 for CASA House on June 8th.

Milne and Zach Riauka, his cycling partner in CASA's recent 2019 Minds Over Mountains cycling tour, planned the fundraiser with big-time help from Riauka's girlfriend Kristy Skoreyko.

Skoreyko, a teacher at the Step by Step School of Dance, supervised the dance-a-thon along with her colleague Kimberley Grenier.

Sherwood Park Quilters Donate to CASA House Kids

Once summer is gone and those chilly, frosty nights return this fall, residents of CASA House can rest assured they'll be warm and snugly under their newly made quilted blankets.

Thanks to volunteers from the Sherwood Park Quilters Guild, roughly 60 new handmade quilts were delivered to CASA House Program Manager Janet Cathro at the Robin Hood Association Learning Centre in mid-June.

"Our charity committee members choose which organization to donate to each year, and what we want to donate," says Monica Phillips-Beck, a committee member.

"Then last September we put it to the Guild and the members agreed we'd donate our quilts to CASA House, so we've been working on these quilts since October. Most of our members have done something, making either quilts or squares for them."

The Guild was established in 2001 and currently has about 65 members, says President Lorna Themelis.



From left: Sherwood Park Quilters Guild President Lorna Themelis, Janet Cathro, and Monica Phillips-Beck.

"In the past we've given quilts to the Zebra Child Protection Centre and Bags of Love. Another year we gave them to firefighters so they could hand them out to kids who have been rescued from burnt out homes. It gives our members a lot of satisfaction knowing we're helping kids in need."

CASA's Office Fun Team is Working Really Hard. Seriously.

Even the most dedicated employees need an occasional break from the daily routine.

Especially when their work involves helping kids and families overcome challenging mental health issues.

That's where Katie Reddick (right) and Rachelle Gibbs (left) come in. Reddick, an Assistant in CASA's Human Resources Department, and Gibbs, CASA's Volunteer Coordinator, are on the office fun team – otherwise known as the Staff Engagement Committee.

Their goal? To generate some smiles, laughter, levity and a bit of entertainment to lighten everyone's mood.

"We try to bring some joy to the tough work that our staff does, along with some excitement," says Reddick, who co-chairs the seven-member committee with Tyler Helm.

"It can be hard for staff sometimes, especially when they're doing therapy and dealing with really difficult cases. Our job is to give them a chance to lighten up and share some fun."

CASA's annual staff appreciation day – a paid day of social fun with colleagues every March at Edmonton's Derrick Golf & Winter Club – is one of the highlights of the year.



"This year we encouraged staff to wear beach attire – appropriate beach attire," says Reddick, with a chuckle. "In our photo booth we had different beach themed props like a tiki bar and flamingos, and the band played beach music throughout the day."

"We were crying while we were laughing because the entertainment was so funny," says Gibbs.

Jeans week has been another big hit with staff. By paying \$1 a day, staffers can wear jeans to work for a full week.

"We also had a bake sale recently and it went really well. All the committee members made things and brought them in," says Reddick. "It was awesome."

Two minutes with:

Cassidy Letcher, Summer Intern, CASA Finance Department

Q Where are you from, Cassidy?

I grew up on an acreage southeast of Sherwood Park. I attended ABJ (Archbishop Jordan Catholic) High School and recently got my diploma from NAIT's Business Administration (Accounting) program. I'll be returning to NAIT in September to finish my degree.

Q What are your career goals?

I want to get my CPA (Chartered Professional Accountant) designation. Ideally, down the road, I'd like to have my own accounting firm.

Q What brought you to CASA?

I came across a CASA ad for a student position in the finance department. I applied and got an interview, and lo and behold I got an offer. I started in mid-May and I'm here until the end of August.

Q What kind of work are you doing at CASA?

Lots of general office duties, like filing. I've also been introduced to accounts payables and some other miscellaneous things where they need extra help. I work closely with Sarah Campbell.

Q What do you like about working at CASA?

I love the environment here. Everyone is super friendly and it's a real team atmosphere. If you have a question you can usually find someone to help.

Q What do you like to do when you're not working?

I'm really into horses, and I have a horse named Nash. His actual registered name has Hollywood in it, so I thought I'd pick a name that was the opposite. I chose Nashville, and I shortened it to Nash.





Nadine Samycia, Executive Director CASA Foundation, Members of the Sikh Motorcycle Club and Dr. Denise Milne, CEO CASA and CASA Foundation

Sikh Motorcyclists Turn Out for 4th Annual Emily's Memorial Ride

Members of the Edmonton Sikh Motorcycle Club, pictured here, were out in full force for the 4th Annual Emily's Memorial Ride for Mental Health Awareness, which took place June 1st in Sherwood Park.

In all, roughly 40 riders participated in this year's event, raising almost \$12,600. That pushed the cumulative fundraising total for the ride since it was launched in 2016 to more than \$62,500.

CASA and CASA Foundation CEO Dr. Denise Milne (pictured at right) and Nadine Samycia, Executive Director, CASA Foundation (left), were on hand to cheer on the riders, who gathered at Wild Wings Restaurant before embarking on a six-hour round trip with stops in Camrose, Viking and Tofield.

CASA House Program Manager Janet Cathro, along with Rick and Stephanie Taylor also addressed the assembled riders. The Taylors founded the event after their 17-year-old daughter Emily took her own life in 2013, following a battle with depression.

"I think most people who come out for the annual ride have a personal story to tell, and as we all know, mental health affects all of us," says Rick Taylor.

"You never know what someone is going through in their daily life. The big thing for us is just getting the word out and reducing the stigma around mental health issues."

"It is heartbreaking when you see people who are suffering from these kinds of issues, who need support. So this is a good cause and a way to raise awareness about it," says Saurab Vadhera, a member of the Edmonton Sikh Motorcycle Club. "That's why we participate."

Greater Emphasis, Increased Resources Needed to Address FASD, says Dr. Jacqueline Pei

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) affects one in 25 Canadians or about 4% of the overall population, making it the most common developmental disability in this country.

"FASD is a significant problem. If you don't think it's in your community you're not looking closely enough," says Dr. Jacqueline Pei, who delivered an address on FASD on April 25th as part of CASA's Dr. Roger Bland Lecture Series on Improving Children's Mental Health.

"There is no safe amount of alcohol" a pregnant woman can consume, says Dr. Pei, an Associate Professor in the Department of Educational Psychology and an Assistant Clinical Professor in the Department of Pediatrics at University of Alberta.

"Alcohol is really an equal opportunity teratogen – a word that refers to any agent or substance that can cross a placental barrier so it can get past our defenses and have a toxic effect on a developing baby," she explains.

"But we do know that FASD occurs within the context of the social determinants of health, wherever alcohol is used. The more vulnerable or more marginalized populations may see higher rates (of FASD) as a reflection of that marginalization or vulnerability."

Individuals diagnosed with FASD also experience extremely high rates of mental illness, ranging from Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) to depression, anxiety, trauma and psychosis.

About one-quarter of all youth treated within inpatient psychiatric facilities have FASD.

"In short, mental health issues are disproportionately represented in individuals with FASD, reflecting many complex factors. So it's important for us to have informed treatment teams thinking about how we can move forward."

A panel discussion moderated by Lesley MacDonald, producer of the Global Woman of Vision TV program, followed Dr. Pei's address.

Dr. Pei's fellow panelists included Meg Smale, a mother of six including two adopted teens with FASD; Lisa Rogozinsky, an FASD Community Educator with the Bissell Centre; and Robbie Seale, a former Child & Youth Care worker.



From left: Lesley MacDonald, Dr. Jacqueline Pei and Dr. Denise Milne.

CASA's Minds Over Mountains Cycle Tour Posts Best Results Ever

It was a record-busting gold medal performance by CASA's annual Minds Over Mountains Cycle Tour.

This year's spectacular eight-day ride from Jasper, Alberta to Haida Gwaii, on British Columbia's gorgeous west coast, set records for participation and fundraising.

In all, 43 riders and 16 support crew made the eight-day trek, which included overnight stops in Jasper, Terracana, Prince George, Houston, New Hazelton, Terrace, Prince Rupert and Queen Charlotte City.

The final fundraising total has not yet been disclosed, but it's expected to be close to \$300,000, says CASA Foundation Executive Director Nadine Samyca.

"We made our goal of \$250,000, so we're really happy. But donations are still coming in daily, so the final numbers keep going up," she says.

"Some cyclists will be doing some fundraising over the summer months and they've got events planned around that. So I'd expect the final number to be closer to \$300,000. We raised \$150,000 last year so that would be almost double last year's total."

If so, it would also mark the most successful year ever for the event, in terms of both the number of participants and total dollars raised. Even the weather cooperated for this year's tour.

"It was good. We had some rain but it was just in spurts. We didn't have any heavy downpours for long periods," she says.

"That always makes it harder because you wind up eating that gravel off the pavement and you get pretty dirty. But fortunately, that wasn't a big issue this year."

In fact, Edmonton recorded more rainfall over the course of the eight-day event than most tour stops in B.C.

"I'd call my wife Wendy every day while we were on the road and she would always tell me it was raining back in Edmonton, so I guess we escaped just in time," says cyclist Allan Mayer.

Participants in this year's event were welcomed back home July 3rd when *Edmonton Journal* columnist and longtime CASA supporter Nick Lees hosted his annual Pinot OnThe Patio event at the Royal Glenora Club.



Cyclists and Support Team members ready to start Leg one on June 15th in Jasper.



Haida Gwaii Artist and cyclist Ben Davidson, Camgill Tour sponsor and cyclist, Neil MacGillvray and cyclist Miles Cymbaluk pose at the end of the route at Mile Zero in Masset, BC.



Cyclists and Support Team pose at Ben Davidson's, All about U Art Gallery on the last day of the ride on June 22nd.

"Some cyclists will be doing some fundraising over the summer months and they've got events planned around that. So I'd expect the final number to be closer to \$300,000. We raised \$150,000 last year so that would be almost double last year's total."



Taking Charge of Youth Mental Health: The CASA Youth Council Shows How It's Done

Give youth impacted by mental health concerns a space to work, a little support and encouragement, then stand back and be amazed by what they accomplish.

Exhibit A: The CASA Youth Council (CYC), a self-described “mental health action group” formed in 2016 to create a platform for youth-driven mental health initiatives.

“We started by putting out a call to the CASA community to say: do you know any young people who are interested in doing advocacy work?” recalls Anna O’Brien-Langer (pictured at right), who serves as the CYC’s Co-Facilitator.

Three years later, an initial group of four youth has mushroomed to 30 members organized around four subcommittees overseeing multiple projects, including the CYC’s own glossy periodical – Unseen: Youth Mental Wellness Magazine.

Other CYC subcommittees are engaged in projects involving social media, community education (via presentations organized through the Edmonton Public School Board), and community outreach. The latter includes talks by CYC members to mental health professionals and others.

“The CASA Youth Council’s structure, direction and projects all come from the youth themselves. They decide what they’re passionate about, what they think is meaningful and they go out and do it,” says O’Brien-Langer.

Recent CYC activities included a youth mental health presentation to the Alberta College of Social Workers Conference, and an address to several hundred junior and senior high school students in Bonnyville, Alberta.

The CYC will also organize, plan and host a community lecture on youth mental health in coming months as part of CASA’s Dr. Roger Bland Lecture Series on Improving Children’s Mental Health.

“CASA provides us with the means to put our passion to work, and they leave most of the responsibility in the hands of the youth,” says Rachel Goud (pictured at left), a 20-year-old, third-year neuroscience student at the University of Alberta, who Co-Chairs the Unseen subcommittee. “They let us create our own projects and provide us with the resources to make it happen. It’s amazing.”

Like many CYC members, Goud – an articulate, engaging young woman whose career goal is to become a psychiatrist – has a compelling personal story to tell. Her mother suffers from major depressive disorder, and Goud saw first-hand the profound impact it had on the entire family.

“I saw how much she struggled, how much of a toll it took on her and our family, and the resources she needed to make her life better,” she says.

“So I knew early on that mental health is something I was interested in pursuing, and I’m really happy that CASA has provided me with the means to get involved as a youth.”

“Because of the broad age range, there’s a lot of cool spontaneous mentorship by the university-age students supporting the younger ones. So it has created a really interesting mix.”



ILLUSTRATION: Joshua H.

CASA Adapting Well to Alberta's new Occupational Health and Safety Act, says Ian Lang

As CASA's Facility Safety & Wellness Coordinator, Ian Lang is responsible for ensuring compliance with Alberta's new Occupational Health and Safety Act, which was introduced by the former NDP government in June 2018.

He also oversees such functions as site security and access, construction project design, facility maintenance and related staff training. Lang, whose academic background is in psychiatric nursing, is now in his 6th year with CASA, and the 4th year in his current position. Following is an edited version of our conversation with him:

Q *What are some of the key challenges you've had to deal with?*

Well the new OHS legislation introduced in June of 2018 was groundbreaking, I'd say. It was also something of a double-edged sword. It included some really good changes, I would argue, in terms of safe business operations, and increasing the due diligence required from the employer and employees. It clarified the responsibilities of all CASA employees. But it also created pragmatic challenges on the ground, particularly for nonprofits, which are always asked to do more with fewer resources.

Q *So you're talking about increased burdens on staff time?*

Yes, plus a lot more paper work. Our processes and procedures all had to be changed to establish full compliance with the OHS legislation. So the impacts are quite substantial if I'm asking for more front-line time, taking staff away from their regular duties.

Q *Can you give me a concrete example?*

Sure. Previously CASA had just one OHS committee that represented all of our four sites. Under the revised standards of compliance, we were required to establish four separate OHS&W (Occupational Health, Safety & Wellness) committees, one for each site. From the employer's perspective we had to do it. But from the employee perspective that can be difficult to accomplish while they are already very busy providing treatment or supporting business administration. So again, we're sort of robbing Peter to pay Paul in terms of time and human resources.



Q *Are there any concrete examples of how the new OHS legislation affected CASA's operations or its facilities?*

The serviced air quality at one of our facilities – our Fort Road location – was identified as a risk and a hazard that required corrective action. Dr. Milne and I approached the landlord and asked him to pay for new rooftop units (which supply heating and air conditioning) and swap out the old, nasty ones. In the end, we were successful. I'd also say the effectiveness and outcomes of our committee-based work has resulted in many quality improvements at all of our sites.

Q *Have these OHS changes also required more staff training?*

Yes. Training is huge, and ongoing at all levels. I lead development and implementation for the training and deliver the workshops with respect to my assigned departments. My collaborative colleagues and teammates have been critical to our success in accomplishing these priorities.

Q *Any final thoughts about what you see ahead in this area?*

We have amazing staff here. Our employees and managers always do so much more with so much less. So I dream of getting our OHS&W activities to an optimal point where we can do our part in reducing the stress on our employees in their safest possible workplace of choice.

"I'd also say the effectiveness and outcomes of our committee-based work has resulted in many quality improvements at all of our sites."

CASA's Adolescent Day Program Aims to Change the Trajectory of Troubled Young Lives, One Day at a Time

The Adolescent Day Program (ADP) at CASA Centre focuses on youth with serious mental health and sometimes addictions issues, helping them and their families move towards a better life.

Students from grades eight through 12 who are typically dealing with anxiety, depression, school avoidance and family stresses typically attend this five-day-a-week tertiary program for a full school semester.

With the support of the ADP's multidisciplinary team, students work on developing their interpersonal relationships as well as their capacity for problem solving, conflict management, organization and family functioning.

"We have 12 kids per semester divided into two classrooms, with six kids per class," says Samantha Hogan, a Registered Psychologist and the ADP's Clinical Lead.

"Besides our two (Edmonton Public School) teachers, our team includes two classroom behaviour specialists, a psychiatrist, therapists and a nurse. I'd describe it as a therapeutic program with a school component, although the kids spend most of their time in class."

The ADP's intensive, all-encompassing approach includes individual therapy for the teens, and their families, as well as multi-family therapy, where all the families and teens gather for collective discussion.

"We're working with them every day, whereas in private practice or in other programs you might only see your clients once every month or two. It's all these face-to-face interactions every day over a period of five months that makes this program so special. The shifts we see over that period are just incredible," says Hogan.

"We all have seen examples of the incredible shifts that occur," says Dr. Robert Drebit, the ADP's Medical Lead and Consulting Psychiatrist.

"Some kids especially stand out, for example the girl whose voice was silenced by her experience with trauma who then began to speak again. Or the anxious teen who tried to make herself invisible, but later would dance into or exiting a room."

"Besides our two (Edmonton Public School) teachers, our team includes two classroom behaviour specialists, a psychiatrist, therapists and a nurse. I'd describe it as a therapeutic program with a school component, although the kids spend most of their time in class."



From left: Dr. Robert Drebit, Samantha Hogan and Karl Merritt.

It's that underlying capacity for resiliency in these young teens that Dr. Drebit and other staff members hope to find and nurture.

"We live in a society that likes to think mental health issues in youth can't be severe or persistent, but that's just not true. There is a massive shortage of appropriate care for adolescents in our system," says Karl Merritt, the ADP manager.

"Many of our youth can't attend school because their anxiety is so severe. Our program provides the intensity and comprehensiveness of treatment needed to improve their functioning and change that."

Another key differentiator between CASA's Adolescent Day Program and other programs is that it is family-centred, and not focused exclusively on the teenager alone.

"Sometimes parents will send their teens to us with the idea, 'We need a cure, fix our teen.' But that's not our approach," says Hogan.

"Our goal here is to get to the core of the issue for the whole family. It's not just your teen coming here to get fixed and learn skills and strategies. We also offer the parents the skills, strategies and supports that their teens are getting."



From left: Dr. Alice Leung, Janet Cathro, Dr. Yvonne Legris and Jessica Rivard.

CASA House Gives Adolescents with Serious Mental Health and Addictions Issues a Chance to Reboot Their Lives

The hallways, classrooms and gym at CASA House are quiet this June evening.

A pond in the backyard shimmers beneath the fading late-day sun. A family of geese has made it their home, I'm told, emerging each morning to strut on the lawn with visiting ducks and pelicans.

Other than a group meeting in one of the conference rooms, and a few chattering teens who have gathered for dinner, it's as peaceful as a monastery.

But looks are deceiving. The 19 young residents aged 12 to 17 who live here – typically for four to five months at a time – are in crisis.

They're grappling with severe mental health challenges, addiction issues, complex learning needs, family problems, school troubles and interpersonal issues. Almost all have already attended outpatient or hospital inpatient treatment and day programs elsewhere.

"CASA House is tertiary or somewhat 'end of the road' care. Usually by the time kids get here it isn't just mental health and school issues they're dealing with. There is often a breakdown in the parent-child relationship," explains Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist Dr. Alice Leung, Medical Lead at CASA House.

"When you've been through so much in terms of the complexity of trauma, mental health issues, school issues, and sometimes involvement with Child & Family Services or the legal system, it really wears on the parent-child relationship. That's why we do a lot of family work here," she adds.

CASA House – which has 11 beds for local kids and eight for teens from central and northern Alberta – employs a comprehensive, family-centred, evidence-based treatment approach, involving a multidisciplinary team of psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, psychiatric nurses, speech and language therapists and others.

"These kids are dealing with things like ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, self-harm, parent-child relational issues, peer problems and social and economic issues," says Registered Nurse Janet Cathro, Program Manager at CASA House since this facility opened in 2009.

Residents attend regular classes each day. The Edmonton Public School Board operates four classrooms onsite, including two junior high and two senior high classrooms. Individual and group family therapy sessions are a standard part of every child's treatment plan.

"When kids are away from school for a long time, and if they've accessed other types of services and failed, it can create conflict or disengagement, so their families are not cohesive anymore. That leads to anger, frustration and isolation," says Registered Psychologist Dr. Yvonne Legris, Clinical Lead at CASA House.

"Part of the beauty of CASA House is there are so many different types of therapy here, and families get an opportunity to look at themselves and see what part they play in the dynamic, as well as the children. Then we all work together. That's what makes us successful."

It's not all hard work. Play is important too. There are jam sessions, movie nights, yoga classes, cooking and art classes, trips to hockey games or other events. There's also a backyard fire pit and patio, with brightly painted Adirondack chairs.

"Our jobs can be quite stressful, but you'll often find staff walking around with speakers, playing music, waking kids up or just being silly. The staff here is so positive and validating and comforting that you can feel it as soon as you walk into the building," says Psychiatric Nurse and Program Supervisor Jessica Rivard.

"Everyone here puts in 110% and cares a lot about the teens. No matter who is in the building you can tell they're giving their all."

CASA'S SUMMER 2019 Community Events Calendar

JULY 20

EMILY'S MEMORIAL FUN HORSE SHOW

www.emilyhorseshow.org

Emily's Memorial Fun Horse Show for mental health awareness. Prize for the highest fundraiser and included is the registration fee is a pancake breakfast, lunch, t-shirt, ribbons to 6th place, and loads of fun activities. Hosted at Affinity Stables.

JULY 28

PEACE IN THE PARK

<https://www.navinayoga.ca>

Join us for some yoga in the park! Enjoy great vendors and shop our silent auction at the Victoria Park. There will be door prizes and so much more; the best part is there is no yoga experience required!

JULY 29 – AUGUST 4

1932BYBATEMAN OPEN

<https://www.1932bybatemanopen.com>

Official Mackenzie Tour & PGA Tour Canada event, will take place July 29 to August 4 at the Edmonton Country Club

AUGUST 28

ZIN ON THE RIVER

<http://www.zinontheriver.org>

Hosted by Nick Lees, this evening takes place on the beautiful terrace of Fairmont Hotel MacDonald. Enjoy some live music, delicious hors d'oeuvres and taste some delicious Zinfandel and other summer wines. Festivities also include a live and silent auction.

SEPTEMBER 19

CASA GOLF CLASSIC

www.casagolfclassic.org

Join us for the 4th Annual CASA Golf Classic at the beautiful Blackhawk Golf Club.

Registration and Lunch 11:30am followed by a shotgun start at 1pm. Dinner and auction to follow.

OCTOBER 4

MENTAL Q

<https://www.mentalqyeg.com>

Enjoy a great evening filled with music, a silent auction, and good food at Hudsons Canada Pub, Bourbon Street, West Edmonton Mall, in support of children's mental health.

OCTOBER 5

THE MAD HATTER GALA

<https://www.madhatteryeg.com>

A Tapas-style dinner and cocktails with million dollar dreamers live band and entertainment at the fabulous 1920s inspired Halley's Club. Donations will be made to the CASA Foundation.



CASA PRESENTS:
THE DR. ROGER BLAND LECTURE SERIES
on Improving Child and Youth Mental Health
At TELUS World of Science

<p>CASA Child, Adolescent and Family Mental Health is proud to announce we will be continuing this series, which has included insights from leading national experts, clinicians, professionals, families, and youth to start the conversation about child and youth mental health. We thank each of our keynote speakers, panelists, and volunteers who have so generously dedicated their time to us in order to facilitate these imperative conversations thus far.</p>	<p>UPCOMING SESSIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SURVIVING TRAUMA September 17, 2019 • INFANT & PRESCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH October 16, 2019 • YOUTH PERSPECTIVE ON MENTAL HEALTH, PRESENTED BY CASA'S YOUTH COUNCIL November 19, 2019 • SELF-CARE AND THE WINTER BLUES January 21, 2020 • ADDICTIONS February 18, 2020 • CHILDREN IN CARE March 17, 2020 • AUTISM AND MENTAL HEALTH April 21, 2020 • MENTAL WELL-BEING: LESSONS LEARNED May 26, 2020
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CASA AIMS TO CONTINUE TO COVER THE TOPICS THAT MATTER THE MOST TO YOU.
Do you have a suggestion for a lecture topic?
Let us know at feedback@casaservices.org



Staff from CASA's Concurrent Addiction and Mental Health Program (CAMP) were on hand June 13th to celebrate Pride week at Edmonton's Northmount Community Center. Dr. Bina Nair, CAMP's Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist (right), was joined by Margot Crane, Clinical Lead (left), and Headstart program student Justine Elliot (centre).