



Feature: September = Back to School



September is a month that many parents and kids either love or hate. It's appropriate that September starts with the letter 'S' because this is the first letter of the word "school."

September is a time for going back to school, which tends to mean that schedules get busier and there is added stress on kids and families. One important way to help reduce the stress of going back to school is for parents to help their kids start the school year off on a good note.

No one knows a child better than that child's parent. Thus, parents need to be an active participant in their children's education. To start the school year off on a good note, parents should meet their child's teacher at the beginning of the year to create and establish a good working relationship.

Parents need to create a team dynamic with their child's teacher and the school staff in order to maximize their child's educational experience and environment. If you have a child with special needs, or you are concerned about your child's potential to learn, establishing positive communication and a working relationship with the school is especially imperative.

At the start of the year, talk to the teacher about your child's strengths and areas of difficulty. Collaborate to implement some creative strategies in the classroom and at home to help your child succeed. For example, if your child struggles with organization, you could create a system using colourful folders or binders with clear labels or pictures. If your child struggles with transitions, let the teacher know so that your child can be assisted with prompting and visual reminders of when the next activity is coming.

Set up a positive incentive program to help your child improve in an area he/she struggles with. Most importantly, when strategies are developed with the teacher, it is crucial to include the child in the process.

Provide your child with opportunities to help come up with solutions. Often children are aware of the difficulties they have and many times they have some very creative strategies to help themselves. Also, when you involve your child in the process of coming up with solutions, the more likely he/she will be invested in putting them into action.

Finally, make sure you talk with your child at the beginning of the school year to see how they are feeling. Often the biggest source of stress for children is related to peers and social inclusion. Talk to your children about the social problems they face and strategize together about what they can do.

Good luck to all the kids and their parents this school year. I wish everyone a happy and successful year.

Jacquee Loerzel
Therapist
Children's Mental Health

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TOLL FREE NUMBER



Electronic Message Board

In June, Family and Children's Services installed an electronic message board on the west side of the office building. This board will be used to promote programs, services, and events of the agency as well as our partners and other community non-profit organizations. If you are a non-profit organization and wish to advertise an upcoming event intended for children and families, please call 274-7787 with your announcement. Messages will be posted for up to one month.



Children's Services

Summer Program

During the months of July and August, Family and Children's Services offered recreational activities for children and their families involved with our agency. The different activities were coordinated by Sairah Chabot, a student hired for the summer program. FACS staff members volunteered their time to the program as well.

Some of the activities planned were:

- Bowling
- A movie at the theatre

- Trips to the beach
- Picnics
- Arts and crafts at the park
- Horseback riding
- Toonie swims at the sports complex
- Golfing
- A trip to Thunder Bay to the Canadian Lakehead Exhibition's Summer Fair
- A tour at Manitou Mounds
- A day at the Emo Fair
- Family Fun Days at Sunny Cove including BBQs, a bonfire, crafts, and swimming.

The activities were well attended and enjoyed by all participants.

Farewell and thank you to our summer students Sairah Chabot and Heidi Friesen in Fort Frances and Fay Roblin in the Atikokan office. We wish you a good year at school!

Janelle Ice
Youth Support Worker



If you would like to receive this newsletter electronically; or to provide feedback about the newsletter, please notify us by sending an e-mail to: Information@facsrr.ca

Developmental Services

COMMUNITY INTEGRATION



Joan and Clayton Darrah receiving tricycle from Lion's Club members on behalf of Devon.

Adult Tricycle for Devon

I am the Community Integration worker at Family and Children's Services in Atikokan. Many months ago I had a conversation with Liz McKay of the Atikokan Lion's Club and she informed me that the Lion's in Atikokan are more than willing to fundraise for items needed by children who have a developmental disability.

I later spoke to Liz Shine, President of the Atikokan Lion's Club chapter and she informed me that if I had anyone on my caseload that required an item to improve their quality of life that the local chapter of the Lion's would do what they could to contribute to providing them with financial support for the item.

As it happened, I had a perfect candidate for their generous offer and we began the process of getting quotes for an adult tricycle for Devon Darrah, a young man diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

I discussed the purchase with various members of the Lion's Club. Once I had decided upon the bike that would best suit Devon's needs, they generously covered the entire amount for the bike.

On May 22, 2009 members of the club attended FACS and presented an adult size tricycle to Devon, his brother Clayton and his mother Joan. Devon and his twin brother Clayton are both impacted by Autism Spectrum Disorder and their mother has done her best caring for the nearly 16 year old young men.

The presentation of this tricycle has made it possible for Devon to participate in an activity that all young men his age enjoy and will contribute significantly to his development and participation in community activities.

This generous donation at a very difficult financial time in Atikokan is appreciated by the entire family.

The bike was delivered to their home and Joan reports that Devon is getting used to it and was happy to have the bike to use this summer and many more. Lion's members who attended the presentation were Alex Broski, Fay McAlister, Arlo Jewell and Angela Sharbot, as well as Joan, Devon and Clayton Darrah.

Thanks so much to the Lion's Club of Atikokan for their caring response to this young man and allowing the family greater social opportunities.

Lorraine Gauthier-Stromberg
Community Integration Worker

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## INFANT AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT



### September 9th is Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Awareness Day (9-0-9)!

What is Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder? F.A.S.D. describes a range of physical and developmental problems affecting some children born to women who drink alcohol during pregnancy. There is no cure for F.A.S.D.; the effects are permanent.

F.A.S.D. is the only developmental disability that is one hundred percent preventable. It is a sobering fact (no pun intended) that prenatal alcohol exposure is one of the leading causes of preventable birth defects and developmental delay in Canada, as in most countries in the industrialized world.

F.A.S.D. is more likely to occur following continuous or heavy intake of alcohol during pregnancy. However, some women who binge, or drink sporadically, have babies with alcohol related damage. The same concentration of alcohol that is in the mother's blood stream is also circulating through the baby's blood stream; with a much smaller body mass to

synthesize and absorb it, the brain and central nervous system of an unborn child is particularly sensitive to prenatal alcohol exposure. Abstinence from alcohol during pregnancy is the only sure way to prevent F.A.S.D.

Since the impact of F.A.S.D. cannot be reversed, it is extremely important to focus efforts on prevention. Public education is the key. Information about F.A.S.D. needs to be coupled with resources to support and treat those already affected. For women struggling with addiction, treatment and support for abstinence are critical—from partners, extended family, and their whole community, to make wise choices during pregnancy.

For those thousands of innocent children whose lives have already been affected by a condition they did not cause, and over which they have no control, we as a society must advocate for increased and improved diagnostic, treatment and support services. Several years ago, provincial government funding cuts forced the closure of two diagnostic clinics in North-western Ontario, which had demonstrated clearly the need for their services. Now families must travel great distances, and endure lengthy wait times, to access necessary diagnostic services. This is simply not acceptable.

Let us take a moment of silence on 9-0-9 to reflect on what we can do to raise public awareness for the need for education and support services for all those affected by F.A.S.D.!

Carolyn Pelletier  
Infant and Child Development Worker

**Mark your calendar for the Atikokan office Open House!**

**Date:**  
*Tuesday, Sept. 22/09*

**Time:**  
*2:00–7:00 p.m.*

**Where:**  
*277 Main Street  
Atikokan*

**We are on the Web!**  
[www.facsrr.ca](http://www.facsrr.ca)

Please post on your bulletin board!



Call your local office of Family & Children's Services  
24 Hours a day,  
7 Days a week  
Or visit us on the web [www.facsrr.ca](http://www.facsrr.ca)

