

# Community Development

*The cornerstone to health*

**What do our Community Development Coordinators have in common?**

They work to increase positive community connections, develop networks of support, and build engagement opportunities for community members, alongside partner organizations. They help communities work on initiatives that contribute to health and wellness.

The Community Development team focuses on four key areas:

- Early Childhood Development
- Seniors
- Physical Activity & Nutrition
- Mental Health



# Mental Health

## Bragg Creek/Redwood Meadows

The Bragg Creek and Area Wellness Committee began in the spring of 2014 as a partnership between social service providers, local organizations, and residents to enhance the wellbeing of Bragg Creek area residents.

Due to ongoing stress in the lives of residents since the 2012 flood, a permanent Alberta Health Services Mental Health Clinician was hired.



## Emotional Wellness Through Capacity Building - High River

The Community Development Coordinator successfully applied for a million dollar grant from the Canadian Red Cross to help build capacity in agencies and citizens.

The Community Capacity Building initiative is Safe Spot, which focuses on creating a safe place for people who need assistance. If there's an orange "spot" in a window, residents know someone inside is trained to offer assistance.

"Our High River" is the capacity-building initiative for citizens. An app, website, toolbox, and monthly community cafes are part of the initiative.



## Therapy Dogs - Chestermere

Helping people, one dog at a time. This program serves intergenerationally, with Listening Tails (children read to dogs to improve their skills); Visiting Tails (seniors interact with a dog, which enhances their quality of life); and Caring Tails (for those coping with stress caused either through a traumatic event or a short-term challenge, such as teens writing exams).



# Physical Activity & Nutrition

## Promoting Activity in Black Diamond and Turner Valley

**Borrow a Bike Program:** Worked with the High Country Wellness Coalition, the Lions Club, RCMP, and the Sheep River Library to establish this well-used program.

**Trail Maps:** Working with the Towns, and High Country Wellness Coalition to produce GIS maps for the trail system.

**Walkability:** Working with Alberta Health Services, High Country Wellness Coalition, and the Towns to assess the factors that impact walkability in both communities.



## High River Community Wellness Challenge

The Wellness Challenge is six weeks of healthy, active living that encourages people to learn new tips towards a greater level of health in their lifestyle.

Participants learn about the resources available to them, as well as what they can do to stay healthy and well. For example, five information sessions cover the "How's Your 5?" components – work, love, play, sleep and eat.

Our Community Development Coordinator established this challenge in 2010! Now run by "Our High River," the Wellness Challenge is a perfect example of how our team implements and connects, and then oversees the hand-off of successful initiatives to the communities they serve. Sustainability all the way!



## Nutrition in Vulcan

Partnering with the local grocery store provided a couple of outcomes. One was the promotion of purchasing healthy foods. This was then tied to Market Street's donation of funds to buy healthy foods for the food bank.

Plus, sandwich boards with messages about healthy eating were placed on the town's walking paths.



## Alberta Healthy Communities Approach

One initiative in this project to create healthier environments supporting healthier lifestyles was to increase the opportunity for physical activity. So, Act 4 Health partnered with the Vulcan Golf & Country Club to groom pathways for cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. They also bought snowshoes for community use, and bike racks throughout town.

Another initiative was reducing exposure to UV radiation. So, appropriate messaging was posted on walking paths, and sunscreen was distributed.

Strathmore and Gleichen, led by HEAL our Future (Healthy Eating Active Living) Coalition, determined how the community environment can provide physical and social supports to prevent cancer. A \$25,000 grant was awarded to focus on UV rays, physical activity, and walkability assessment.



# Early Childhood Development

Research tells us that investing in the early years is the best investment society can make. All of the community development coordinators in the CRPCN are involved with Early Childhood Development through their local Early Childhood coalitions.

Recently, resource sharing has been a major initiative throughout the CRPCN, as it helps to ensure that parents, caregivers, and families are receiving consistent, evidence-based information on Early Childhood Development no matter where they present in the CRPCN.

Early Childhood Coalitions within the CRPCN are:

- Foothills Children’s Wellness Network
- Vulcan County Early Childhood Development Coalition
- Porcupine Hills Early Childhood Coalition
- Formative 5 Coalition
- 5 for Life
- Cochrane + Area Early Childhood Development



## Next-Generation Gardeners

In creating a Children’s Garden, Langdon ensured the project’s sustainability. The Children’s Garden created a number of opportunities (passive recreation, healthy eating, stewardship, environmental awareness) and became self-sustaining.

The garden is inclusive and inviting. It created a space to learn and “grow” as a community. Langdon is very proud of this, and has offered its support.



# Seniors



## Senior Care in Strathmore

The CRPCN's Community Development Liaison collaborates with agencies to address social isolation for seniors.

Often this is determined through education on community resources and activities available with linkage to agencies.

Partnership on Seniors Resource Handbook, Senior Power – Community Resource Expo, Falls Prevention – Finding Balance and Seniors Week activities.

## Balance Fitness for Seniors

Langdon is a town with a young population, and while multiple organizations were engaged in developing youth programs, little was being done for the senior population. So, senior community champions were sought out, drawn from experts in the area of seniors fitness.

When a Communities Choosewell grant to buy low-impact exercise equipment was awarded, a Balanced Fitness class came to fruition.

Response has been overwhelmingly positive. Class registrations are consistently at or above capacity. It has created empowerment, connection and purpose. The group is very involved in other community functions – in fact, members of this group are the CRPCN's strongest attendees of other groups and classes in the community (ie. grocery tours, mental health classes, etc.)



## Dementia Friendly Okotoks

The CRPCN's Community Development Coordinator is on this committee, which is a Brenda Strafford Foundation initiative. A Dementia Friendly Community provides community-based support and services through local action for those living with, or affected by, dementia. Those with dementia, and their caregivers, are supported so they feel inclusion in the places where they work, live, and socialize.

This 2.5-year Proof of Concept Project is happening in only two Alberta locations - and Okotoks is one of them!



## Langdon Walk / Run

Volunteers from the OK (older kids - 55+) Club and the Langdon Medical Clinic staff took the initiative to coordinate the community's first-ever Walk/Run.

With 40 participants in year 1, the OK Club wants to make the event bigger and better every year!

Local businesses sponsored the run, and funds raised were donated to Prostate Cancer and the Langdon Community Campus.



# Community

Research has established links between social networks and health outcomes. Social engagement and attachment are associated with positive health outcomes.

Our people strive to foster the sense of community belonging that creates social attachment for individuals and reflects engagement and participation within communities.

When this happens, illness is prevented, health is improved, and individuals and communities are made stronger.

## Langdon Community Garden

Community gardens are not a new concept, but are as important as ever. Life is fast-paced. We've become disconnected from each other, and with where our food comes from. A community garden provides a critical space for gathering and connecting.

After seeing a webinar hosted by Communities ChooseWell, Langdon received seed money (pun intended!) to get their community garden going, with the idea that much of the food grown would be for the local food bank.



## Alberta Healthy Communities Approach

Vulcan was part of the pilot project to create healthier environments supporting healthier lifestyles. One of the initiatives in the program was to increase the opportunity for physical activity. So, Act 4 Health partnered with the Vulcan Golf and Country Club to groom pathways for cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. They also bought snowshoes for community use, and bought bike racks to be installed throughout town.

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## The Station, Claresholm - Caring Community Connection

The CRPCN is an active participant in The Station, a single point of contact for community members to find varied services, information, support, learning, advocacy and referrals. The Station's mission is to support and encourage collaborating organizations to provide programs and social support services in the Town of Claresholm and surrounding areas.

In addition to increasing community awareness of existing services, it provides, under one roof, stigma-free services and support.

The added bonus... services are coordinated and non-duplicated.

