

Programs for teens a missing link

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Wainwright & District Family and Community Services (WDFCS) marked its 40th year in operation on Tuesday, June 4, and while the facility's funding is secure, members say, its programming has suffered in recent years due to a lack in increases.

Many of WDFCS's programs are going strong, such as the Meals on Wheels and housekeeping assistance programs for seniors, and the Parent Link centre, which has become an essential part of life for many of the area's families.

"My daughter was about six months old when I found out about Parent-Link, and I'm very thankful for that, because I've met a lot of friends and other people with children my age," said Colby Hinton, who comes to the centre regularly with her three chil-

dren. "Sometimes having kids is isolating. Wainwright is very, very lucky to have all these resources available for young families. It's a good support system."

Hinton says Parent Link has been vital to her and her kids' well being, as it provides her opportunities to connect with other families and teaches her kids to socialize with children from other age groups and backgrounds.

Parent Link currently serves upwards of 300 families at its Wainwright centre, and travels weekly to Irma, Chauvin and Edgerton.

While these essential programs are well supported, funding has not increased in several years, and consequently some programs have been cut.

The centre receives 80 per cent of its funding from the province, and 20 per cent from the municipalities it serves.

It relies heavily on volunteers. "One of the biggest needs that I would like to see filled in our com-



Wainwright & District Family and Community Services celebrated 40 years and the re-opening of Parent Link with a ribbon cutting. (Above) Wainwright Mayor Norm Coleman, Chair Myron Zajic, Director Cathy Charlton, Programming Manager Kari Aykroyd, and Deputy Reeve Ted Wilkinson. (Below) A mother uses Parent Link.



munity is before and after school programming. What has directed the last few years, as far as programming, has been government funding. Funding has been huge," said FCS Board Chair Myron Zajic.

Zajic cites the Boys and Girls Club as an example of youth programs that have gone by the wayside.

The Wainwright Boys and Girls Club of Canada was funded in part by WDFCS, until it lost its volunteer support and dissolved.

"When you're working on funded dollars, when you're working on charitable donations to operate, it's tough. Because most of your volunteers are always chasing money to operate on, and that takes away from our programming," said Zajic.

WDFCS director Cathy Charlton says that with two working parents becoming ever more common in the household, the centre is missing a key demographic of kids, particularly in

the summer months and after school.

"There are some times that good programming could help some kids get through the challenges of moving through their teenage years," she said. "But right now we're constrained by the amount of funding we have."

She says there has not been a funding increase since 2003.

Charlton and Zajic see the centre's value in its municipally based programs which can respond directly to local needs, and the services they do offer are necessary.

"When you need it, that's when you find it," Zajic said. "This is a first stop shop when people move to this community."

"I don't think this program is going to go away. We've been embedded in the government scenery for quite a few years now, so I'm sure this program is here to stay. It's just how it's going to evolve in the future, we're not sure of yet."

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