

Easter Seals Alberta

REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY 2019-2020



"It's known that human beings have one of three responses to a challenging situation: fight, flight, or freeze. When COVID-19 first reared its ugly head, my initial reaction was to flight or freeze.

The uncertainty surrounding how life would move forward was at times paralyzing. Although our organization was not untouched by the tribulations that came with the first provincial lockdown, there remained an inextinguishable spark amongst our team.

This not only came from the support and consideration we provided to one another during such a difficult time, but we also shared the same vision: we were working to achieve something greater than ourselves, which was the continued survival of Easter Seals Alberta and supporting our community who needed us more than ever before."

– Meghan Dart, Programs Coordinator

What's Inside?

A Global Pandemic

Take a look at how Easter Seals Alberta survived one of the most difficult years in the organizations history.

Our Programs

As a result of the pandemic, many of our programs looked a little bit different this year.

The Impact

Our mission to support individuals living with disabilities and medical conditions impacts every decision we make. Take a look at some of the incredible impact stories that donors like you have made on the community.



Meet our 2020 Board of Directors!

Dan McPhee - Board President

Kyle Scott

Anne Ewen

Susan Anderson

Dale Briske

Vineeta Maguire

Sally Lore



A note from our CEO, Paula Telfer

You will notice that this report does not read like a your typical report to the community, and that is because this was not a typical year.

We saw unexpected challenges and that required a lot of out of the box thinking to navigate.

In late 2019, we experienced a season of change. The organization was going through a change in leadership and we entered 2020 with high hopes for a great year. Our staff were motivated and excited to start the next chapter of Easter Seals Alberta's history.

However, this was a very unique year; not only for Easter Seals Alberta, but for the world. The COVID-19 pandemic spread very quickly causing catastrophic impacts worldwide.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit Canada, it caused an immediate and large impact on our organization. We experienced layoffs and large changes to the working environment, in addition to the uncertainty and fear our staff felt as individuals. Easter Seals McQueen Home went through numerous changes right away as Alberta Health Services brought in new protocols and procedures for group homes.

Following the uncertainty of the initial days of the pandemic, the organization moved into a stage of pivoting. We applied short term fixes and Band-Aids where needed and continued to pivot our programs to better assist our clients with their current and emerging needs.

We quickly realized that pivoting was not enough and the organization began looking at re-positioning. At this point we were looking for long term sustainability for programs and services as we began to admit that COVID-19 was not leaving us any time soon. Our team worked hard to establish what the new normal was going to look like and what we could do to create long term stability within our programs.

Our memories of clients from years past have propelled us forward on the hard days and our staff worked tirelessly all year to ensure our clients remained the focus of all activities and decisions we had to make. In the end, this experience made us stronger.

Regardless of what 2021 has to offer, we know we have the internal strength to handle whatever comes next.

Sincerely,

Paula Telfer
CEO

Our Programs

Each of our programs was forced to pivot in one way or another. This year was not "business as usual" for Easter Seals Alberta. We were forced to make changes and take measures to ensure we maintained the health and safety of clients, staff and community members interacting with our organization.



Easter Seals Camp Horizon

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and in accordance with the Government of Alberta and health officials, we had to suspend our 2020 camp season. Camp Horizon is a very special place to many, and while this cancellation was necessary to ensure the health and safety of our campers and staff, it was not an easy decision to make.

Camp Horizon is a place where kids get to go and experience high ropes, giant swing, arts and crafts, rafting and so many more awesome activities, but the true magic of camp is what our programs teach our campers. While they are having fun doing activities, they are provided with the opportunity to develop their independence, confidence and self-esteem. They have the opportunity to grow with our counsellors and see leadership from individuals with disabilities themselves. They create lifelong friendships with people just like them and incredible, lasting memories. We see the difference Camp Horizon makes in our campers every single day, as we watch these children grow and feel included in society, all thanks to our generous donors and supporters.



My favourite part about Christmas Camp is the child-like joy our campers experience and the simplicity of Christmas. Our campers come out every year and have made themselves a family.

- Paula Telfer, CEO



What is Christmas Camp?

Christmas Camp 2019 was one of the few camp experiences that happened during our fiscal year, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Each year Camp Horizon turns into a winter wonderland, just in time for Christmas. Our campers come from across the province to spend this special holiday with their chosen family and we could not be more thrilled to see them year after year!

Christmas camp hosts 60 adults living with a disability for three days over Christmas. Many of these campers have nowhere else to spend Christmas and no one to celebrate with. Camp is packed full of camp activities, Christmas crafts, a full Christmas dinner and dance, and gifts to open under the tree on Christmas morning.

Christmas Camp in Kananaskis

Christmas camp was probably my most profound experience at camp.

I think we tend to take for granted the family and community we often find ourselves with during the holiday season. It wasn't until I saw the impact that bringing everyone together for Christmas had that I realized that what I had experienced during my childhood wasn't the same for everyone. It wasn't something I had thought about.

To many of the campers who attended Christmas camp, we were that family. The great food, gifts and the fun we had over those few days didn't hurt, but I think it was the sense of belonging that came from having a community that made it so special. On top of all that, everyone who came to support Christmas camp formed some incredible relationships with the campers over such a short amount of time. A lot of those people had never even been to camp let alone met those campers before then. Yet, the whole camp felt like everything I had remembered from my own family gatherings with people I'd known my whole life.

I think that shows just how much impact we had that Christmas, and my memories of those few days shows how much impact they had on us.

– Christmas Camp Counsellor

Easter Seals McQueen Home

Easter Seals McQueen Home is home to 9 residents who range in age and disability type. The home provides a space for individuals with physical disabilities to maintain their independence while getting the assistance and care they need.

McQueen Home experienced a significant amount of pressure throughout 2020. With the pandemic sweeping across the world, we had to take measures to ensure the health and safety of our residents and staff.

Our proactive measures fell in line with what was recommended by health officials and we are incredibly proud to say that there was not one case of COVID-19 in McQueen Home. Thanks to our incredibly diligent and hardworking staff and the cooperation of our residents and families, our residents remained safe during 2020.

This was not an easy task to accomplish and things were not always rainbows and sunshine for the home. Our residents have felt isolated and unsure throughout the pandemic and are looking forward to the day when restrictions are lighter and they can once again do the things they love and visit with family.

"I think it goes without saying it has been an extremely challenging year for residents and staff. I have staff who have been with us for years showing serious signs of burnout and residents are showing more behaviours. However, Easter Seals has made it through due to an incredible team. The home made it through the year without a single case of COVID-19 and residents and staff are fully immunized. The staff at the home have been working very hard to keep everyone safe." – Cindy Moisan, McQueen Home Manager



Easter Seals Accessibility Supports

Accessibility Supports was maintained throughout the pandemic.

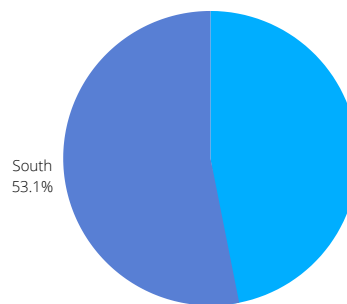
The Accessibility Supports program changed directions in the beginning of the pandemic to ensure we were helping Albertans remain in their homes with the necessary equipment to keep them out of hospitals, where possible.

In June of 2020, we made the decision to close the waitlist to new applications as we were experiencing a decline in funding for the program. While the waitlist was closed, the program underwent some changes to ensure efficiency and ease of use for both clients and staff.

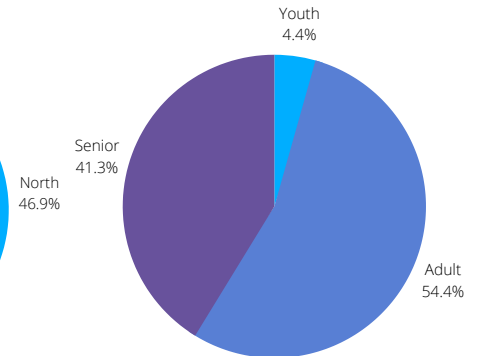
In total the Accessibility Supports program supported 137 individuals and completed the year with 90 requests remaining on the waitlist.



Equipment Provided



Ages of clients



Client Testimonial

"I received the scooter on Friday. Words cannot describe how much this means to me and I will be forever grateful to Easter Seals. I now have the ability to adventure around my community.

Moreover, I can now go into stores and into malls versus having to wait for my wife in the parking lot or staying at home. This was something I could not do before due to health issues.

These are only two of the multiple benefits this scooter will bring to my life. I am excited to have this new opportunity to engage in the city." – Accessibility Supports Client



Thank you

2020 was an incredibly challenging year and we would not be here without your continued support. You, our donors and supporters, make up the foundation of our organization and allow us to continue to support Albertans living with disabilities and medical conditions through a variety of programs and services.

Looking Forward

We are excited to see what 2021 has in store. After a very unexpected year, we are more prepared than ever to ensure that our clients have the services and supports they need to live an independent and full life.

Did you know we will be celebrating our 70th anniversary in 2021? Celebrate with us by following us on social media!



Get Involved

There are a number of ways you can make a difference in your community:

- Volunteer with us
- Corporate Fundraising
- Host a fundraiser
- Participate in an event

Learn how you can help by visiting www.easterseals.ab.ca



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