



Shawn Bayes

EFry Invests in Children

Photo credit: Renee MacDermid

We know that without meaningful intervention, 60 per cent of children who have had a parent in prison will become involved in crime themselves.

Moreover, those children often grow up in poverty with developmental, emotional, and behavioural challenges.

The children's programs of the Elizabeth Fry Society of Greater Vancouver (EFry) break the cycle and provide the best chance for the children to grow and prepare for the future.

"Growing Great Kids" is a unique, curriculum-based, one-on-one support system for women and their children, up to age 3. Through the program, they work with a support worker to

- develop secure attachment between mom and baby,
- foster strong and empathetic parenting skills,

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- build strong support networks in the community, and
- reduce the need for government intervention.

Through the program, moms are supported to provide strong early-childhood development by helping babies feel safe and valued, encouraging curiosity and problem-solving, and building identity, independence, and healthy mental and physical development.

This year the program has added a peer support-worker component; a UBC longitudinal study will begin looking at how the program reduces involvement with government services and the number of children in government care.

A Great Start

Kendra was incarcerated as a teenager and, in her words, "I would not be here if it wasn't for EFry." Kendra

participated in numerous programs that helped her leave behind her previous life and make a new start for herself. And, when she was expecting her baby at 23, EFry was there to help again.

Beginning during the prenatal months and since the time her baby was born nearly a year ago, Kendra has participated in Growing Great Kids. "Learning about nutrition was really important to me," she says, "but I have also learned about brain development and milestones so I can help my baby grow. Kirsty, my facilitator, provides guidance for raising my child, for reading my baby's cues, and dealing with challenges in a patient way. Communication is really key."

"Kendra has done really well as a mom," says facilitator Kirsty. "I am really proud of her."

Thanks entirely to the generous support of donors, Growing Great Kids is one of the primary programs EFry offers to support women like Kendra to raise healthy children.

www.elizabethfry.com. ▲

Shawn Bayes is the Executive Director of EFry.