

Update – Summer 2020



Introducing Mazarine Lodge

EFry is on the cusp of opening the doors to our latest supportive housing project for women who are homeless or at risk of homelessness – Mazarine Lodge. Located in Queensborough, New Westminster, Mazarine Lodge features 44 self-contained mini-suites, six of which are wheelchair accessible. We are currently taking applications, with potential residents referred through other EFry programs, non-profit agencies and government support services.

"We're particularly excited about Mazarine Lodge, as we've been working towards this day for more than two years," says Bonnie Moriarty, EFry's Director of Homelessness Initiatives and Housing. The project is part of BC Housing's rapid access to modular housing initiative. EFry, which will operate the Lodge and provide 24-hour awake supports and case management for the women, has been involved since the search for an appropriate New Westminster site began.

Each bachelor suite-style unit features a bed, table and chair, kitchenette with a microwave and small fridge, and a bathroom. Bedding, dishes and cleaning supplies are provided. As well, women will be provided with breakfast and dinner. Rent for the units is set according to the women's individual circumstances based on Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction rates.

"We look forward to supporting women in stabilizing their lives and helping them transition to independent housing when they are ready," says Bonnie. "Our staff is trained to support women in addressing whatever challenges they face, including mental health needs and substance use."

Mazarine Lodge is EFry's second supportive modular housing program. Legacy Manor, a 37-unit supportive modular housing program in Abbotsford, has been assisting women since opening in June 2019.



Summer Camp 2020

For several years, EFry's summer camps for children impacted by parental incarceration, addiction or homelessness have been one of our most popular JustKids programs. They give children an opportunity to enjoy a range of fun, skill-building activities in a stigma-free environment where they can feel just like everyone else. Usually, we offer week-long, sleepaway camps to give kids an immersive experience in nature and provide respite to caregivers. Then came COVID-19.

Just as with our other services, EFry knew our vulnerable child clients benefitted greatly from camp. As soon as the Provincial Health Officer gave summer camps that could comply with new safety guidelines the go-ahead, we were determined to find a way to operate.

"Camp looks very different this year but we've adapted in a way that makes parents and guardians comfortable letting us host their kids, while also ensuring the kids have fun," says Kirsty Gordon, JustKids Program Supervisor. To accommodate social distancing, this year EFry offers day camps with six children each, divided into two age groups: six to 11 and 12 to 17, which run on alternating weeks. Camps will operate for a total of eight week this summer.

"Due to reduced capacity, our initial focus has been on children from our hotel program, which was created as part of EFry's pandemic response to house homeless families and those fleeing domestic violence," says Kirsty. "We're also supporting our longstanding JustKids clients who look forward to camp every year."

Campers enjoy a wide range of activities, including fun learning activities for September readiness, arts and crafts, no-cook cooking classes, recreation in a nearby park that offers trails, water play and trails, as well as twice-weekly adventure expeditions to outdoor destinations.



Jessica Bristowe says shared values are what drew her to EFry.

EFry Staff Spotlight: Meet Jessica

Dignity. Equality. Opportunity. This EFry mantra summarizes the values that prompted Jessica Bristowe to apply as a frontline Third Party Administration (TPA) worker in 2016.

“My first day was cheque issue day in the Downtown Eastside,” she says. “I loved the job from the first moment.”

Jessica came to EFry after more than 11 years at Corrections Services Canada. She drew on her Master’s studies in Forensic Psychology to administer mental health assessments for the majority of her time there, before shifting to become a drug and alcohol counsellor.

“I’ve always been interested in understanding people in conflict with the law, so I could learn how to help them,” she says. “It started in my teens, when my friends starting doing things and I didn’t understand why. It turns out that trauma and difficult life circumstances played a major role.”

Jessica was promoted to TPA supervisor, a role she held for two years before being asked to take over management of Firth Residence, EFry's multi-stage substance use recovery program. When asked to describe a favourite achievement, she cites helping a TPA client get the ID they needed to apply to

social assistance. It took three years. “I supported them through psychosis, addiction recovery, incarceration and reintegrating into the community. Finally, we got it and now they’re on regular social assistance.”

“I loved TPA but it can be an emotionally intensive job. I appreciated how EFry looked out for me to make sure I was challenged but not burnt out.”

Jessica has just celebrated her one-year anniversary at Firth. “What I am most proud of here is our teamwork. There are 15 of us and we are very supportive of each other and the clients. They can tell and being in such a safe and supportive environment makes them feel more secure, which is so important.”

Jessica also oversees WEAVE (Women Exiting Abuse, Violence and Exploitation), which operates from the Firth Building.

When not at work, Jessica enjoys hikes with her nine-year-old son and cheering him on at Baseball. Since COVID disrupted many of their activities, Jessica noticed increased anxiety. “That’s another thing, EFry has been so great at supporting me in dealing with anxiety in a healthy way.”

Jessica also enjoys listening to podcasts and encourages everyone to try [Ear Hustle](#), about life in and after the US prison, San Quentin.

AGM - September 24: Save the Date!

In light of the pandemic, EFry will be holding a virtual AGM this year, from 6:30 - 7:30 pm on September 24, 2020. Zoom login details will be shared in the coming weeks.

