

Playroom and Kitchen Supplies

Keeping families strong and healthy is the goal of Westcoast Family Centres (Tri-Cities) which offers free programs to families with children from birth to 15. In addition to in-home support, families come to the Manning Street Tri-Cities East Neighbourhood Centre for a variety of programs and services.

While parents are attending groups, their children have access to toys, games and crafts in the playroom. The Centre was established 10 years ago and many of the games and toys need replacement, as does some of the kitchen equipment which is used to teach families how to make nutritious meals from Food Bank supplies in their Budget Gourmet program. Enter the Port Coquitlam Community Foundation which in 2016 provided \$1,240 to buy toys, games and crafts for the playroom and kitchen supplies for people attending programs at the Centre.

We hope to provide some joy to families they might otherwise not experience, says program director Tanya Valois, adding we are a collaborative hub and proud of our efforts to make sure we are welcoming and inclusive. The toys, games and crafts are designed to challenge and entertain children while their parents attend the various educational groups.



Hundreds of families use our programs each year and we need supplies that reflect the needs of those participating in our services, Valois says. Having a number of services offered to families in one location is revolutionary in social services, she adds, and staff collaborates with other agencies to make sure families are receiving the best and most relevant services available. Happier families will have a lasting impact on the community, explains community projects supervisor Michelle Picard, adding healthier families lead to less risk to children, improved performance in school and a reduction in criminality and crime. Although it works specifically with parents, Westcoast Family Centres also looks for opportunities to increase the strength of their relationships with their children.

Because the work we are doing is quite intense, it is lovely to have craft supplies a family can use together during Supervised Visitation or the Budget Gourmet cooking program a parent can take to supplement the counselling and personal work they are doing, Picard says. Among the programs offered by Westcoast Families Centres are Family Preservation and Reunification, Therapeutic Supervised Access Support, Healthy Babies, Strong Kids, and Avenues of Change which is funded by the United Way.

For information on Westcoast Family Centres, call 604-944-2500.