

Dear City of London,

I am a Social Work student doing my internship at Merrymount Family Support and Crisis Centre in the Family Resources program. I first stepped foot in Merrymount on a student tour in the fall of 2017. I was fascinated to see the services that this agency offered. From child minding to respite, therapy programs and supervised access visits, Merrymount was not just for children but the whole family. I had never seen a place that could offer so much to families in the community. I knew from that moment that I wanted to be a student at Merrymount. Since beginning as a student in the agency, I have learned so much about working with families and had experiences I would not get at any other internship in the London community.

During my first four months, I have spent many hours both observing the compassionate staff and participating with them in groups. Whether my tasks have been researching how to improve Merrymount services through our policies, spending time with the drop-in families at Playtime Fun or helping at-risk families improve their parent-child relationship, *I cannot deny that Merrymount plays a vital role for many families in transition or crisis and we want to increase our impact.*

Merrymount wants to help more families. For example, the agency has begun to take a more inclusive approach in order to better help London's diverse and immigrant families. In a co-learning helping experience between these families and Merrymount, cultural inclusivity is amplifying. With these recent changes, we hope to be better able to help refugee families, such as war affected children in the Yazidi children's art therapy group.

It is through our programs that we are able to fulfil our mission to make families stronger. Improvement is, at times, almost palpable in our groups. At the end of an eight-week parent education group, I heard a parent say, "'Be Bigger, Stronger, Wiser, and Kind and take charge when necessary.' I will forever remember that." The determination in her face as she said this told me that this parent, who through this process shared her fears, her stigma, and her heart, had grown and was ready for more.

As Merrymount continues to work hard and develop to be even better for the community, I encourage you as the City of London, to consider helping to fund Merrymount. With your support we could help build strong families through the essential work of children's mental health and parent education.

Kind regards,

Sarah O'Halloran
Bachelor of Social Work Intern Student