

January 2, 2019

To Whom this may Concern:

I am writing to you today to express my sincere support for Merrymount Children's Centre. I have had the privilege to work at Merrymount for over 32 years. I have developed relationships with many of the families utilizing the services provided by our agency and have witnessed the changes our services make in their life's. Our agency has provided support to families from London experiencing crisis within their family unit. Whether they are long time London residents or have just moved to the London area, or whether their needs are ongoing or temporary (e.g. waiting for transplant surgery or have a sibling ill in Children's Hospital) the flexibility of our programs allows the family to develop their own plan in meeting their family and child's needs.

Our beds have provided care to children whose parents are ill in the hospital, living in a shelter, living at a campsite, or living in a cockroach infested apartment. Our children have experienced vast amounts of toxic stress (harmful stress) and trauma in their young lives; living in poverty, witnessing intimate partner violence, watching their caregiver struggle with substance abuse issues, or severe mental health. Many children struggle with trust and social relationships, struggle with the conformity of school and rules within the community. These children naturally respond by fight (aggressive and verbal outbursts), flight (avoid situations, run away), or freeze (conform due to intense fear, unable to focus); Merrymount provides these children the skills to cope with their situations and respond positively.

Over the years, we've planned, implemented and enhanced our services and programs, for families in crisis. Following best practice research our agency utilizes a trauma informed approach when developing relationships with our families. Our families feel respected, non-judged and safe, leaving their children within Merrymount's care. Many of our families express their appreciation with words such as "Merrymount is my family", "I don't know what I would have done without Merrymount's support", "You gave me hope" and "Now I can be the parent I always wanted to be".

We pride ourselves in supporting families in a crisis through our 24 hour programming, with the ability to provide immediate care as required, and our work with parents, individually or in groups, in gaining an understanding of their own triggers and styles in parenting. Parents learn to increase their skills in listening to and supporting and encouraging their child, while setting limits and developing consistency within the home environment to meet their child's unique needs (e.g. ADHD, FASD, trauma, etc.). Parents and children often learn together through the many concurrent groups offered.

Merrymount is very unique in the services that it provides to families and is the only one of its kind in Canada. All families are unique; the needs and supports they require are unique; and their hopes and dreams for their children are unique. Merrymount provides these families the tools they need to reach their goals.

Respectfully,

Rose Nasswetter