

January 4, 2018

To whom it may concern,

I am fortunate to be the Program Manager for the Crisis Residential/Respite Program at Merrymount Family Support and Crisis Centre. I have the privilege of interacting with parents/guardians and children every day in this program. Through these interactions I witness firsthand the impact that our programs and services have on the children and their families. Parents/guardians often state how thankful they are to have access to this program in their community. They share how the support that they receive has assisted their family in building their family's capacity to cope with the ongoing issues and stressors in their lives or in dealing with a crisis situation that has occurred. Families access programs at Merrymount for a variety of reasons. The common denominator is that the family is looking for support in regards to their children. These families lack an appropriate support system to assist them with their children and the issues that can arise when raising a child and living life as a family. Whether a family is looking for respite care due to behavioural challenges related to their child's mental health, respite care due to their own mental or physical health concerns or trauma, respite care for a kinship grandparent who is suddenly faced with raising their grandchild, crisis care for a medical emergency or any other crisis or need for respite they turn to Merrymount for service they can trust. Families count on the fact that this program is not just about a bed but rather about a program that is focused on providing an around the clock positive, nurturing and supportive environment for their children. The parent/guardian can focus on their needs for a period of time knowing that their children are well cared for and will return home to a parent/guardian that is now able to parent with renewed strength and ability because they had time to take care of themselves.

I have the opportunity to see growth in the children as they build resiliency and coping strategies, enhance their social skills, emotion regulation skills, life skills and improve their sense of self and wellbeing in program. I am fortunate to work with a team of skilled professionals who understand child development and are trained to work with children with mental health diagnoses, who live with toxic stress, have been exposed to trauma, children who require someone to focus on meeting their individual needs and issues to promote growth and build capacity in a nurturing and strength based environment.

In the Crisis Residential/Respite Program there are eighteen beds and eighteen different stories behind every child that occupies a bed each night. These stories are unique and individual but all equally important. All are there because their family requires support and assistance to improve their life as a family. Strong and healthy families is the goal and without this program many families could not attain this. Every parent wants the best life possible for their child. The families that come to Merrymount are no different. These families access services to improve their lives and those of their children. I am thankful that I get to be a part of this in working with these parents/guardians and children every day. We need to be responsive to the needs of families in our community by providing this short term residential program that is accessible to families twenty four hours a day. We ask for your support in funding this needed service in our community.

Thanks,

Lisa Sortun

Mossley, Ontario