

Susan McKane
31 Brentwood Rd., London

December 18, 2018

“Merrymount Children’s Centre is a caring organization committed to providing around the clock support and crisis care for children and families. We deliver responsive and innovative services and programs to strengthen children and their families in times of transition.”

Merrymount Mission Statement

Between the years of 2003 and 2014, I worked with the Family Resources Team at Merrymount Family Support and Crisis Children’s, designing and implementing parenting support programs that the Family Resource Team provides to families in London and area. This agency and the service it provides is one-of-a-kind in south west Ontario. Families from the London area participated in the courses each semester and expressed their gratitude for these services since they were not available elsewhere.

As part of this team, I was provided with the opportunity to design and deliver educational support programs for parents of children 6-12 years of age. Some parents were working to regain custody of their children and, in some cases were successful, some were working to support their children through separation and divorce, some parents were bewildered about parenting a child with symptoms of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Other members of the Family Resource Team delivered a variety of programs for parents of younger children and some of the team worked with children through art and play therapy programs.

There was always much more demand for our services than there was staff or time to provide them, but our team worked to be creative with time management, to be professional in our approach to these families in crisis and to use current and applicable theory and research on “attachment”, “emotional self-regulation”, “trauma” and the needs of developing children to inform and educate, to support and empower parents to help their children manage in times of crisis.

This team of educator/support personnel was then, while I was on the team, and is now, committed to the welfare of families, professional in their dealings with adults and children, constructive and positive in their work and of invaluable support and resource to the families that attend our groups. Nothing was ever done that was not of the highest quality and standard.

Referrals to our programs came from other agencies in the city which recognized the necessity of providing parent education - The Children's Aid Society, the Thames Valley District School Board, Mme Vanier, medical professionals and the Provincial Court system used and use still the programs delivered by the team at Merrymount to support their own clients. This fact begs the question – "If left unfunded, where do these agencies and the families which they serve, access these valuable programs?"

The city of London, in my opinion has been slow to value the role of Merrymount Children's Centre in the life of this city – over many decades providing support, respite and education to parents trying to do their very best for their children. Investment at the grass roots, with parents and children through education and awareness, saves our city money in other areas since crises are handled early in their development. .

I sincerely request that London City Council acknowledge the value of the services that Merrymount offers in terms of parent education and support and offer recognition and resources that will enable Merrymount to continue the vital work that it does with families on behalf of the City of London

Susan McKane

Parent Educator (retired)