

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder: The invisible disability

In a room full of people, walking down the street or even in casual conversation, it would be nearly impossible to recognize those living with FASD (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder).

Yet the reality is that people with FASD often have difficulty finishing school, holding down a job or building long-lasting relationships. This is the human face of FASD.

Support is often needed to be a part of society and navigate what can be overwhelming challenges of daily life.

FASD is not isolated to a specific demographic – it touches all social classes, ethnic groups and communities throughout B.C. and the world.

The results are lifelong and irreversible. Health Canada estimates that for every 1,000 births in our province, nine infants will be affected in some way.

FASD is the most common form of preventable brain injury to infants in the western world. It's preventable because there is no safe

time and no safe amount of alcohol to consume while pregnant or when trying to conceive.

It's in this interest that governments and communities are working together to support women to have healthy pregnancies, and to improve the lives of those living with FASD and their families.

The B.C. Government made a significant investment in FASD prevention and support when it established the FASD Action Fund with the Victoria Foundation in 2006. The Fund was created to promote prevention and support projects for children and

“Knowing that you have a medically based invisible condition allows people to identify the supports that they need.”

– David Gerry

youth with FASD.

The Foundation worked with an advisory committee made up of people representing the



With a Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Action Fund grant, Beacon Community Services established a local team of experts that provide diagnosis, assessment and support for people with FASD.

Left to right: Dr. Kathy Horne, psychologist; Grace Gerry, clinic coordinator and social worker; Dr. Jonathan Down, pediatrician; David Gerry, team manager; and Dr. Caron Byrne, psychiatrist.



community served by the Fund. They promoted the Fund's availability, evaluated grant appli-

almost \$9.1 million into FASD support, education and resources.

Grants from the FASD Action Fund have funded a range of projects to improve outcomes for children and youth with FASD.

David Gerry, from Beacon Community Services in Victoria, says, “our project has helped people with FAS (Fetal Alcohol Syndrome) to better advocate for themselves.” In talking about their clinical

diagnosis and assessment project, Gerry says, “knowing that you have a medically-based invisible condition, allows people to identify the supports that they need.”

“There's a baby a week born on Vancouver Island that is prenatally exposed to FASD,” Gerry says. “FAS is like an iceberg in that 90 per cent of it is under the water. Having all these projects funded by the FASD Action Fund is making visible all the different components of

the disability that need support and help.”

September is FASD Awareness Month. And, while preventing FASD is often considered the sole responsibility of women, the reality is that all of us can play a role in preventing FASD and supporting people with it and their families.

For information on the FASD Action Fund or to donate to it, visit the Foundation website at www.victoriafoundation.bc.ca or call 250-381-5532.

When the economy is up, we grant. When the economy is down, we grant.
How? By working smarter.

Established in 1936, the Victoria Foundation has built a lasting endowment fund that has served our community well. In 2009, during unprecedented economic times, we continued to grant to non-profit organizations. We also found innovative, successful ways to add value beyond granting such as our Community Advisors, a valuable resource for non-profits. At the Victoria Foundation, working smart is the result of our experience – nearly 75 years of it.

To learn more about the Victoria Foundation, please call Sandra Richardson, CEO, at 250-381-5532. www.victoriafoundation.bc.ca



VICTORIA
FOUNDATION

CONNECTING PEOPLE
WHO CARE WITH CAUSES
THAT MATTER