

THE ALEX

2018 / 2019 ANNUAL REPORT



Community & Collaboration

MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

It is with great pleasure that I share with you our 2018-2019 Report to Community. This marks my first year as the CEO of The Alex, and I am still amazed on a daily basis at the breadth and scope of services this organization provides for vulnerable Calgarians, and the incredible energy our staff has to meet challenges and come up with solutions each and every day.

The theme of this year's report is Community and Collaboration – and our work simply could not exist without these two important elements. No one can create lasting change alone; we need strong partnerships with a shared vision of moving the needle on seemingly intractable issues such as poverty,

homelessness, addiction and trauma. What I have discovered in my time at The Alex is that we have an incredible group of collaborators that has been steadily building connections, sharing resources, providing supports, and leveraging skills and knowledge to make a difference in thousands of lives every year.

This year we saw several new initiatives that are strengthened by collaboration across the sector. At our Youth Health Centre, support from the City of Calgary enhanced and expanded our mental health and addictions services, which enabled us to connect our program evaluation with Access Open Minds, a national research and evaluation network. We are now able to contribute to a much larger conversation

across the country to fill in key gaps in knowledge on what works best to support youth mental health. This year we also expanded our outreach, providing a Nurse Practitioner to the YWCA of Calgary's Mary Dover House, an 86-bed temporary housing facility, providing comprehensive primary health care to women transitioning from homelessness. This partnership is a great example of the nonprofit sector doing what it does best: leveraging each organization's strengths and coming together to develop an integrated, collaborative system of client-centered care.

And of course, all of our programs continue to deliver comprehensive, compassionate, dignified care to

thousands of Calgarians. Read more inside about our mobile health buses, our housing programs, and how we are measuring our impact through exciting new research and evaluation methods.

I believe community is both a place and a feeling; it is as much about where you live as it is the spirit of how you walk through your day. Is our community one of kindness? Is it supportive? And is there space held for everyone? I encourage you to read the stories of Joyce, Mujda, and Kelsey, and the profiles on our incredible donors and funders who helped write the new chapter in the lives of those we serve.

JOY BOWEN-EYRE / CEO

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

At The Alex, we believe in a community of good health, of togetherness, of supporting one another in our moments of struggle, and of celebrating our successes. Our leadership, front-line staff and volunteers demonstrate daily how creating a dignified, welcoming

community creates brave spaces for healing, and how providing comprehensive, wraparound care for vulnerable Calgarians truly transforms lives, and I thank them for their tireless efforts, kindness, and commitment.

Our government partners, corporate friends and foundations and individual

donors all share our vision of a healthy community, and we are grateful for their trust in our work, and support of our programs.

And, in turn, we understand how important it is to demonstrate how that financial support is truly having an impact on our community. To this end, we are

excited to present our annual report, highlighting our achievements and the great work that happens at The Alex. We are all better together.

DOUG PAGE / BOARD CHAIR



Joyce’s Story

During a busy meal at The Alex Community Food Centre, Joyce can usually be found at a crowded table with a cup of coffee or a plate of healthy food. With kind, welcoming eyes and a slight smile, she’s often sitting quietly, offering a listening ear to those around her.

Joyce begins her story a few years ago. She was experiencing health problems and was recently let go from her job of 8 years. She was living alone, and after losing many of her family members to alcohol addiction, she didn’t have a support system in place to guide her through challenging times. Joyce admits that the effects of isolation and loss caused her to consider suicide. She discovered The Alex Community Food Centre (CFC) through a social worker.

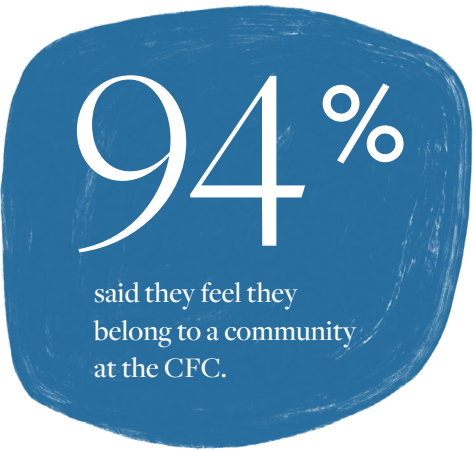
“It took everything I had just to come the first time. I was lonely, and I thought, there has to be a better life for me.”

During her first visit to the CFC, a volunteer welcomed her with a kind greeting, a hot coffee and healthy meal. She instantly felt welcome and began visiting the CFC several times a week. As a diabetic, Joyce was having difficulty keeping her blood sugar regulated. “I would go to the other Alex [Community Health Centre], and I would eat at the community kitchen there,

so all of a sudden I was eating one healthy meal every day.” Joyce’s blood sugar began stabilizing and she remembers feeling much better. “I started to look forward to coming here. This was a place where I could come and connect with other people and talk to other people.”

Once Joyce was feeling better physically and making connections at the CFC, she began volunteering as a Peer Advocate. “I wanted to volunteer and give back. By giving back it made me feel better. I didn’t have to worry about being lonely or not having enough food.”

As a Peer Advocate, Joyce utilizes her skills and lived experience to listen, support, and facilitate referrals to members of the community. She expresses how much she loves helping others. “I enjoy it a lot. I like meeting different people and I’m a really good listener, so I just listen and if they ask me a question I answer it. If I can do something to help I will. I have a lot of knowledge and I like sharing my knowledge to give them a better life.”



Today, Joyce is thriving. Her granddaughter and grandson-in-law moved in with her, and she has built some meaningful friendships at the CFC. With an interest in community leadership and development, she even started taking humanities classes at St. Mary’s University. She admits that because of her busy schedule, she doesn’t attend community meals everyday anymore, but remains in her role as a Peer Advocate.

“Volunteering helps me counteract the effects of loneliness, stress, anger, anxiety and depression. Also, volunteering helps me to connect to my community and make it a better place. Volunteering is a two-way street. It can benefit community members and me.”

Joyce intends to continue a path of supporting her community to ensure all members feel accepted, connected, healthy, and heard.

"VOLUNTEERING IS A TWO-WAY STREET. IT CAN BENEFIT COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND ME."



**FUNDER STORY:
SHAW COMMUNICATIONS**

Shaw Communications was one of the earliest supporters of the CFC, providing support to our youth programs. “Creating Calgary’s first community food centre through our partnership with The Alex and Community Food Centres Canada has allowed us to collaborate with leading organizations that are bringing a systems-thinking approach to create thriving, connected communities that support the health and well-being of vulnerable Calgarians,” said Chethan Lakshman, Vice President, External Affairs.

“We chose to support The Alex through the Shaw Charity Classic as it provided the ideal vehicle for us to collaborate with local organizations and the community on projects that positively impact Albertans. The Alex is a vital organization for our city — addressing significant social determinants of health and well-being while helping Calgary communities become more welcoming and inclusive for people from all backgrounds. With their community food centre they are increasing access to healthy food and strengthening the community’s sense of belonging, creating lasting impact in the lives of thousands of families.”

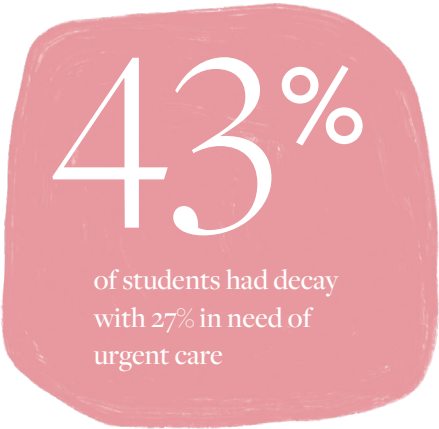
Mujda’s Story

The Alex Dental Health Bus (DHB) is a dental office on wheels that provides preventative dental care and education to children at up to 40 schools in Calgary’s highest needs areas.

It began in 2013 as a pilot project to offer oral health education, screenings, sealants, and fluoride varnishes to children in designated high needs elementary schools in partnership with the Calgary Board of Education and Calgary Catholic School District. Once the program began, we found an unforeseen crisis in decay rates among the students we were seeing. We saw an approximate 50% rate of active decay, with one-in-three of these students experiencing pain or infection. Through phone calls to families, we learned many are unable to qualify for government funded dental programs and have no employer benefits. These families are not able to keep up with Alberta’s high dental fees, and it’s the kids who are paying the price.

Mujda first visited the DHB when she was in grade one. She was very quiet, but cooperative on the bus, and not at all nervous. The hygienist looked in her mouth and found cavities and decay on her baby teeth as well as her newly erupted permanent molars. “It is always heartbreaking when we see rampant decay because we know if the child is not yet in pain, they will be very soon,” said the dental hygienist. Mujda’s teeth needed to be urgently addressed, so the DHB staff called home to find out if the family had the means to access dental care for her. They learned her father had been trying to get dental coverage through a government program for the first time, but the family had been denied because their income was just

above the poverty line. Mujda’s father expressed that he could not afford the high cost of dental work for his family, so Mujda had never been to a dentist. Now in Grade 4, Mujda has been to seven Dental Access Clinics, where local dentists have generously volunteered to do restorative work at no cost to the patient, saving Mujda’s family over \$2000 to date. The staff on the DHB also taught her how to properly brush and floss to maintain good dental health and hopefully prevent future problems. The urgent care Mujda required has been completed and it is the hope that her parents will be able to find a family dentist for on-going care. Mujda expressed that she’s very happy her teeth are all fixed, and her father has said she’s smiling now more than ever!



“THE KIDS ARE HELPED, AND THE STAFF FIND IT REWARDING. WHEN WE DID OUR FIRST CLINIC WITH THE ALEX, IT WAS VERY WELL ORGANIZED, AND THE STAFF WERE REALLY HELPFUL.”

**SUPPORTER STORY:
DR. TROY MICHELSON,
DIMENSION DENTISTRY**

Dr. Michelson has been supporting The Alex’s Dental Health Bus for several years, bringing his community-minded approach to his practice, and providing critical dental care for in-need youth. His journey in charitable dentistry began with a focus on international support, traveling to Rwanda, Honduras, Cambodia, and Uganda, arranging for donations of equipment and providing training to increase local capacity. It became apparent that help was needed on a local level, and he wanted to expand his support so his staff could also find it rewarding. “Part of the vision of our practice is community involvement – giving back – and I thought it’s great that I’m going across the world doing this, but there’s a need here in Calgary. Dentistry has been good for me, and it is important that I pay it forward – to make sure the kids get the dental care that they need. The kids are helped, and the staff find it rewarding. When we did our first clinic with The Alex, it was very well organized, and the staff were really helpful,” Dr. Michelson reflects. Dr. Michelson is just one of dozens of dentists who opens their practices to our community, providing no-cost restorative care to ensure young Calgary kids have a brighter smile and a brighter future.

Kelsey’s Story

Kelsey, aged 21, had been struggling with increasingly severe anxiety and depression for years.

Shortly after graduating from high school, Kelsey began searching for a job. She hoped to secure her own income to support her mother with the household expenses. “I remember being so upset because I sent out 160 job applications and didn’t hear anything back from anyone. My anxiety and depression were getting to a point where I couldn’t leave the house.” Financial struggles and lack of job prospects, compounded by worsening mental health, caused Kelsey to spiral. “It was out of control. I was a mess.”

A close friend of Kelsey’s became concerned for her health and called The Alex Youth Health Centre for help. Kelsey was booked to see Sylvia, a mental health professional with the Access Open Minds program at The Alex.

Kelsey was experiencing dissociation, which causes a lack of connection in a person’s thoughts, memory and sense of identity. On her first appointment at The Alex, “they instantly picked up on my dissociation and understood.” She started to feel like The Alex was a safe place where she could be supported.

“I didn’t want to go on medication at first. I wanted to see if I could heal with counselling alone. So I used the tools they gave me to bring myself back down, but I could never stay in that space – I would end up back in the anxiety. So they put me on medication and the combination has been working really well.”

Kelsey has been receiving support from The Alex for 7 months, working hard to address trauma and manage the anxiety

well enough to feel safe leaving the house and riding transit. “You know, things normal people do,” she laughs. She began seeing Sylvia once a week, but is now down to one appointment per month.

Kelsey has seen a significant difference. “Things are great, I’m out with friends, we go downtown, and I’m able to be among other people.” She was even able to get a part-time job at the mall. “I can pay my bills, and because I don’t have anxiety I’m excelling at my job. And I have energy; my brain isn’t constantly running so I can sit down and rest. I can actually function like a human being.”

“I’m one of the lucky ones – I’ve got a home, I’ve never been homeless. I’ve never had problems with addiction, that sort of thing. But I see all sorts of people walk in through The Alex for all sorts of reasons, whether it be to see the doctor, for counselling, or for just a snack or shampoo or something. And it’s not just one person or one group of people they’re touching. It’s anyone within my age group going through absolutely anything. The Alex is amazing, and it can help anyone.”

45%

of youth are struggling with substance use issues when they arrive at The Alex

342

babies and children supported through parenting programs

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DOWN AND REST. I CAN
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**FUNDER STORY:
JIM AND JANICE PARKER
FOUNDATION**

For Janice and Jim Parker, it is important to match their philanthropy to areas of personal connection.

“When Jim and I had decided we wanted to donate to a cause, I took a tour of The Alex. Seeing first-hand the interactions between staff and the clients and gaining an understanding about some of the other services offered, I knew immediately that we wanted to help. Having volunteered with young victims and at-risk youth as well as having raised two boys was, for me, also a factor in our decision,” said Janice.

They worked with The Alex Youth Health Centre to determine that they wanted to support the Pre/Post Natal program, and then reached out to their friends, Lisa Lajeunesse and Crawford Gordon to partner on the purchase of a new SUV to be used for trips required to support young at-risk expectant and new mothers. For Lisa, who had experienced a difficult birth of twins just a year before, this partnership was very personal. For her the most important reason to give was “knowing that a hard day could be made just a bit easier. I really appreciate and cherish the staff and volunteers who do this hard work, sometimes with sad days. I had my own tough experiences as a new mom, and knew how lucky I was to have the resources I did,” explained Lisa.

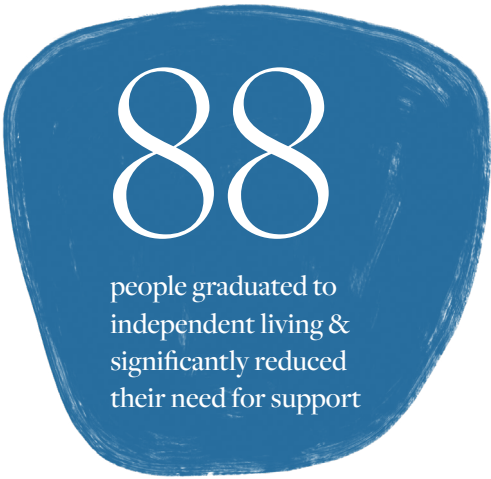
Now The Alex Youth Health Centre has a new vehicle that can comfortably and safely transport that most precious of cargo, connecting young mothers with the resources they need to start their new babies’ futures on the right path.

Housing First

Did you know that The Alex was the first organization to become part of Calgary Homeless Foundation’s model for addressing homelessness? With their incredible support, our Pathways to Housing program began in 2007, using a Housing First model to house our community’s most vulnerable homeless population by providing wraparound case management support.

Housing First is the understanding that a person cannot work on the issues that have contributed to homelessness while homeless; you cannot work on addiction while sleeping on a park bench, or work through trauma without a safe space to live. At The Alex, we provide a safe home, then add on a complete team of physicians, addictions specialists, and mental health supports. Each client then works with a case manager to develop goals and actions that address the root cause of their homelessness, helping to stabilize health, encourage wellness and build life skills that lead towards a path of resilience and independence. HomeBase, which just celebrated its 10th anniversary this year, joined Pathways as a program using “scattered-site” apartment housing, while Abbeydale and Prelude provide permanent supportive housing with 24-hour care.

This approach significantly reduces dependency on emergency medical



services and the justice system, saving taxpayer dollars while providing dignified, welcoming, community-based care. Once in The Alex Housing programs, people find the strength to develop new friendships, invest in positive relationships, and address the root causes of their homelessness, helping them establish lasting stability.

Research & Evaluation

Measuring the impact of good medical care can be fairly easy; you can check blood pressure, run some lab tests, and then know that a certain prescription is doing what it is intended to do. But how do you measure quality of life? And how can you demonstrate that feeling more socially connected can have a positive impact on someone’s overall health?

That is the challenge that The Alex has given itself, and it has been the focus of the work of our Research and Evaluation team for the past year. We have been building a complete system of measurements that will track and demonstrate effectiveness across all our programs - not just primary health, but community-driven, social programs as well. This helps us better create and deliver evidence-based interventions that support people’s journey to wellness, including nutrition and food skills, social skills development, substance use supports, mental health and physical

activity programming, as well as living skills and financial literacy. We believe this solid, data-driven foundation is a first of its kind, and we are excited to have a full set of data to dig into in coming years.

Although The Alex’s journey of data enhancement is still in its early days, initial results are already providing useful insights about how we can better meet client needs, improve their outcomes, and improve their quality of life and social inclusion. We will soon be able to assess the individual and collective impact of all programs and provide detailed information on how we are moving the needle on people’s journey to wellness as well as their health system utilization. We will also be able to calculate health care costs before, during, and after participation in our programming, further demonstrating that wraparound health and wellness benefits all of our community. For more information on what we are measuring, see our word cloud on page 2.



Mobile Health

Providing the right care, in the right place, at the right time is a lot easier when the doctor’s office is on wheels. The Alex Mobile Health Buses hit the streets way back in 2001, when our first Community Health Bus started visiting areas known for high populations of people experiencing homelessness.

We knew that this population was underserved, especially in terms of preventative health care, and that for many street-connected people, they would be more likely to take an expensive trip to the emergency room once they hit a health crisis.

With a doctor, nurse, and client support specialist on board, the bus brings a kind and welcoming face to what is an otherwise dark and difficult place for many. Connecting with our medical team has been the first step in many paths to a healthier, happier life.

With the success of the Community Health Bus, we expanded our fleet to

include a Youth Health Bus in 2012, partnering with the Calgary Board of Education to connect with students in their own community – through their high school. The bus rolls up throughout the school year, allowing students to access a safe space to talk about health and wellness issues, with encouragement to connect with their parents as support systems.



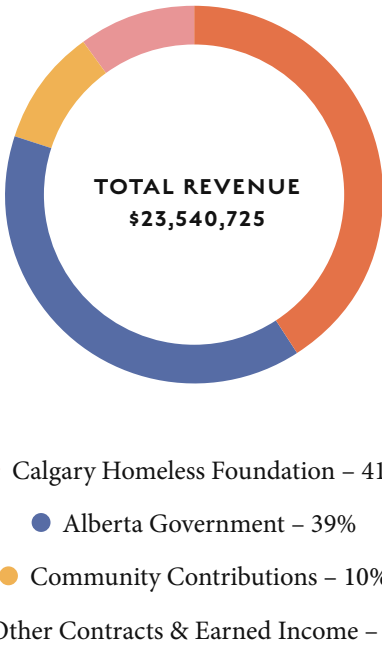
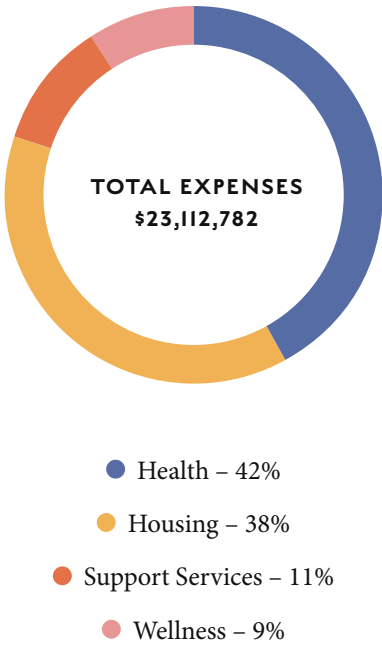
"THE BUS BRINGS A KIND AND WELCOMING FACE TO WHAT IS OTHERWISE A DARK AND DIFFICULT PLACE FOR MANY."

FUNDER STORY: TELUS

TELUS’ Health for Good program is helping deliver medical and social supports to those who need it most.

“TELUS is partnering with The Alex in an effort to deliver better health outcomes for Canadians,” said Jill Schnarr, Vice-president of Corporate Citizenship and Communications at TELUS. “Through this important collaboration, they are bringing necessary medical care, including electronic medical records, to at-risk youth and vulnerable community members, ensuring that all Canadians have access to the healthcare support they need to lead healthier lives. Through TELUS’ Health for Good program, and in collaboration with our incredible partner, The Alex, we will help ensure homeless, and similarly underserved communities, receive access to immediate, high-quality and compassionate care, including vital support for their mental health. Without question, it is by leveraging our world-leading technology innovation, that we are able to create remarkable human and social outcomes in our communities, ensuring our youth can realize their full potential.”

THE ALEX 2018 / 2019 FINANCIALS



Full financial statements are available at thealex.ca



OUR MISSION

*Delivering innovative
and accessible health and
social solutions*

OUR VISION

*A community of
healthy individuals*

VOLUNTEER

*Our volunteers are
vital to our work in
the community.*

They are the friendly faces who can do the little extras for our clients, enhancing the quality of services that we offer.

You can help by relieving isolation for a senior with friendly visits; facilitate movement or art classes; assist with the preparation of sandwiches and hot meals in our community kitchen; accompany clients to their medical appointments; provide dental services to children; and so much more.

Join us at thealex.ca/volunteer

DONATE

*Your support goes a long
way at The Alex, and there
are many ways that you
can make a positive change
in someone else’s life!*

Your generosity can help us teach cooking skills and deliver food and nutrition programming, give seniors opportunities to connect to their community, provide social programs and support for street-connected youth, and help house someone who has experienced homelessness.

Support us at thealex.ca/donate

CORPORATE GIVING

*Get your organization
involved in making
an impact in the lives
of at-risk youth and
vulnerable Calgarians.*

There are so many ways to give. Opportunities include sponsoring medical equipment on our health buses and funding programs that provide life-changing food, social and wellness programming. Group volunteering opportunities can include making and serving healthy meals in our community kitchen and helping make someone’s new apartment feel like a home.

Contact us to learn more at
funddevelopment@thealex.ca

THANK YOU!

The Alex is a registered charity made possible by funding we receive from the Government of Alberta, Alberta Health Services, public and private foundations and associations, and generous corporate and private donors. We’re grateful for the supporters who power the incredible work we do.

To see our full list of donors and supporters, please visit thealex.ca/supporters

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