



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 18, 2013

MEDIA ADVISORY

Opinions: Support of Calgarians more critical than ever

Calgary, AB - During the hustle and bustle of the holiday season it's easy to forget there are people on the front lines still supporting those reeling from the aftermath of the flood and those who continue to struggle daily with addiction, mental health challenges, poverty, and the great wish for life to just return to normal.

It is these front line support workers – counsellors, social workers, health care professionals –who help make Calgary the best place in the world to live, play and raise a family. For those who don't know such organizations exist, we hope you'll never need us; for those who depend on us, we plan to be here to help for as long as you do.

For more than a century Calgarians have been able to rely on the innovative, reputable services of organizations like The Alex, Fresh Start Recovery Centre and the YWCA of Calgary to respond to, reduce, and even prevent crisis through the delivery of services that help make Calgarians safer and stronger.

These services protect and support some of the most vulnerable members of society. Since June, as in years and crises before, many Calgarians have turned to our agencies to help them cope with the impact of natural and unnatural disasters. Disasters like the Calgary flood and homelessness.

Our organizations, and many of our partners, were on the front-lines and the sidelines, working with vulnerable, shocked and overwhelmed Calgarians at every socioeconomic level, providing them with assistance, relief and hope. While the waters have now subsided, the demand for our services remains high as people find themselves without clothing, shelter, support, and understanding and even without hope.

Now we are faced with the harsh reality that the flood created unexpected demands on staff already challenged by a lack of affordable housing, facilities and resources for each of our organizations that extended beyond our capacity ... and our budgets. We appeal to Calgarians to reflect on the work we do and the continued need in the community.

As the New Year approaches, our organizations face the challenging reality that many supporters are experiencing donor fatigue and continue to be overwhelmed by requests for financial support. We continue to work to dispel the myth that agencies have financial reserves to draw from to cover increased costs, and some agencies are also facing donation deficits nearing 40 per cent.

Without needed funding, core Calgary agencies like ours run the risk of having to make difficult operating decisions early in 2014 that could result in a reduction of services and put vulnerable people at even greater risk.

Faced with recovery challenges, compounded by a lack of affordable rental housing, and increased demand for mental health services our agencies enter the holiday season with a simple message: A message of thanks for past support that has made us immediately available to those who need us most and a reminder that when we work together we produce amazing results contributing to an incredible city and standard of living.

We ask Calgarians to remember the organizations they have supported in the past, that rely on financial donations to meet the social needs of our community. We ask you to join us as we continue to offer physical and mental health services, support with family violence and trauma, addiction challenges and a safe, warm room to shelter people from the storm of homelessness.

The Alex, Fresh Start and the YWCA of Calgary are grateful that you have been by our side to help us provide effective, established, award-winning services – services that reduce tax-payer stress and strengthen the social fibre of our community. Now you have the power to help safeguard the integrity of these services for those who need them most ensuring they have the ability to remain responsive as they continue to contribute to the vibrancy that makes Calgary a great place to thrive.

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Who: The Alex, Fresh Start Recovery and the YWCA of Calgary

What: Seasonal support

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About The Alex

The Alex is a non-profit organization that has provided innovative health and social solutions to those in need since 1973. Through its programs and services, The Alex helps its clients by removing barriers to health care, providing Housing First programming and mobile health services for our most vulnerable neighbours. For more information, visit thealex.ca

About Fresh Start Recovery Centre

For more than 21 years, Fresh Start Recovery Centre has been providing solutions that recover and save lives and families from the devastating disease of addiction through housing, treatment and support. Fresh Start is good at helping people in need and working with other agencies to make our community better. Every year since 2006 the Donner Canadian Foundation has recognized Fresh Start as one of the top three treatment centres in Canada and THE BEST Treatment Centre in 2010 and 2013. Charity Intelligence has ranked Fresh Start as a Top Pick agency perennially since 2007 and in June of 2013 they received the Calgary Award for Outstanding Community Advocate Agency. For more information, visit freshstartrecovery.ca.

About the YWCA

The YWCA of Calgary provides emergency shelter, housing, counselling and skills to women who are struggling with poverty, homelessness, family violence and social exclusion. For more than 100 years, YWCA of Calgary has continued to adapt to the changing needs in the city. Serving more than 8,700 clients in 2012, across a continuum of more than 30 programs and services, the YWCA is focused on empowering women and their families to move from a place of vulnerability to one of hope and resilience. For more information, visit ywcaofcalgary.com.