

CITY LIFE

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Aileen Payne and her kids, Breanna and Thomas, hang out Thursday at one of the drop-in programs offered at Abbotsford Community Services' Family Centre.

JOHN VAN PUTTEN /
The Abbotsford News

Slice of Life

Brits meet for lunch

The Brit Club meets at 11:30 a.m. three times a month for lunch.

The group meets the first Tuesday of every month at the Abbotsford Legion, the third Wednesday at C-Lovers Fish and Chips, and the fourth Saturday of every month at Milestones.

The next lunch is Wednesday, March 21. For more information, call Ivy or Roy at 604-854-5941.

Singles get together

AMA (Abbotsford Mission Aldergrove) Singles Social Club meets every Monday at 7 p.m. for coffee and/or dinner.

The group gets together the first and third Mondays of every month at the ABC Restaurant on Marshall Road in Abbotsford, and the second and fourth Mondays at the ABC Restaurant in Mission.

For more information, call 604-852-3308 or 604-855-5913.

Back to their roots

The Abbotsford Genealogical Society meets Tuesday, March 20 at Clearbrook Library (32320 George Ferguson Way).

The meeting begins at 6:30 p.m. Speaker Diane Rogers presents *Privacy Policies for Genealogical and Historical Groups in B.C.*

For more information, visit www.abbygs.ca.

Garden ideas

Peggy Jessome from Idea Gardens is the guest speaker at Mission Library (33247 Second Ave.) on Wednesday, March 21 at 7 p.m.

She presents suggestions on how to improve the look of your garden. For more information or to register, call 604-826-6610.

Club hosts AGM

The Mission Genealogy Club holds its annual general meeting on Thursday, March 22 at Mission Library (33247 Second Ave.).

For more information, call John Herl at 604-826-8071.

Games for teens

Teens ages 13 to 18 are invited to enjoy an afternoon of board games at Mission Library (33247 Second Ave.) on Thursday, March 22.

The fun begins at 3 p.m. Food is provided. For more information, call 604-826-6610.

Time for CHAT

A support group meets Monday, March 19 for those who have a loved one with a mental illness.

CHAT meets the first and third Mondays of every month from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. at Abby House (2676 Gladys Ave.). For more information, call 604-825-9531.

Wanted: A Penny for Your Tots

Family Centre launches fundraising campaign in face of money crunch

by **VIKKI HOPES**
Abbotsford News

Penny Petersen points to a bag of coins on the coffee table. "Try to lift it. It's really heavy," she says.

The challenged person attempts to lift the cloth bag with one hand, but must resort to two to get it to budge.

Dave Holmberg, owner of Bobcat Country Inc. in Abbotsford, observes the activities and estimates the value of the coins to be \$1,000.

It's all going to Abbotsford Community Services' (ACS) Family Centre as part of a new fundraising campaign called A Penny for Your Tots.

Holmberg and Petersen, Family

Centre co-ordinator, encourage more people to contribute to the cause, which began with a letter to the editor published in the *Abbotsford News* on March 3.

Holmberg wrote the letter following news reports on the possible elimination of the penny from Canadian currency. He suggested that people take their pennies and donate them to Family Centre, which is facing a funding crunch.

Holmberg got things rolling earlier this week by dropping off a piggy bank filled with coins that he has been collecting for several years. The coins were then transferred to a cloth bag.

Holmberg has always been a big supporter of the centre, which

provides programs for parents and their children six years and under.

Holmberg says the centre offers support that is so necessary in children's early years of life – a time crucial for their social, emotional, mental and physical development.

The community needs to get behind the service, he says. "It's everyone's responsibility to raise children."

Petersen says Family Centre recently faced a \$13,000 cut in federal childcare operating funds. As well, some grant funding reached the end of its three-year run.

She says the current operational budget for Family Centre and its Neighbourhood Place programs at three local schools is \$534,500. Forty per cent of that is covered through federal, provincial and school district money. The remaining costs need to come from other areas such as fundraising and donations.

The pressure is intensified with a growing demand for services, Petersen says.

"Given that our funding is year to year, and there are more and more demands on our resources, we are really struggling," she says.

Another option that is being considered, in addition to the Penny for Your Tots campaign, is a community-wide initiative to endorse Abbotsford as "family-friendly."

This would involve local businesses and homes participating in some type of campaign in which

they, for example, would receive a decal to place on their window in exchange for a donation to Family Centre.

Petersen says the idea is only in the initial stages, and more input is appreciated.

She says it is important for people to support Family Centre because its focus is on a "developmental, prevention approach."

Petersen says that Family Centre services – such as drop-in programs and two preschools – help parents connect with other moms and dads, instead of living in isolation, and assist children with their development.

When needed, referrals to other programs are offered.

Aileen Payne is among the parents who can vouch for the necessity of supporting Family Centre.

She and her husband experienced tragedy in March 1999, when their baby boy, Liam, died at birth due to complications in the delivery room.

Four years later, Payne was pregnant again. The stress of Liam's birth weighed heavily on the couple, but they were elated that their daughter, Breanna, was born without complications.

Their happiness was short-lived, however, when Payne suffered from post-partum depression – a combination of an hormonal imbalance and emotional issues related to Liam's death.

'It's everyone's responsibility to raise children.'

– **Dave Holmberg,**
supporter of Abbotsford
Community Services'
Family Centre

Drop in and have fun

Abbotsford Community Services' Family Centre offers a series of drop-in programs for parents and children.

The "resource and referral centre" hosts most of its programs from its main location in the Old Courthouse Building at 33780 Laurel St.

Drop-in sessions at the centre are:
■ Meet and Greet – Mondays at 9 a.m.;

■ Precious Baby – Tuesdays at 9:30 a.m.;

■ Toddler Time – Tuesdays at 10:45 a.m.;

■ Community Drop-In

– Wednesdays at 9 a.m.; and

■ Cozy Corner – Fridays at 11 a.m.

The centre also offers some

more formal programs, such as parent-and-tot classes, specialized preschool sessions, and adult classes.

As well, the centre offers two preschools – one at Family Centre and the other in Mount Lehman.

For more information about these programs, call 604-859-7681 (local 266) or e-mail acsfamilycentre@paralynx.com.

Meanwhile, Neighbourhood Place drop-in programs operate from three local elementary schools (phone for days and times): Godson (604-853-8346), Harry Sayers (604-852-9665) and Ten-Broeck (604-855-0274).