



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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GOING TO NEW HEIGHTS TO RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER (FASD)

VICTORIA - Liberal MP Keith Martin joined Beacon Community Services Executive Director Isobel Mackenzie to hang the FASD Awareness Day banner over Douglas Street today. Dr. Martin is committed to working to raise awareness about FASD on a national level.

"FASD is the result of an undiagnosed brain injury. All the more tragic is that this injury is caused by the consumption of alcohol during pregnancy and is therefore completely preventable. The failure to prevent cases of FASD and help those with this collection of challenges causes people to endure untold tragedies" said Dr. Keith Martin, "we need an effective national strategy to address FASD."

The affects of FASD are prevalent on Vancouver Island:

- Every week on Vancouver Island, a baby is born with the adverse affects of prenatal exposure to alcohol.
- Of all substance abuse, including heroin and cocaine, alcohol produces by far the most serious neuro-behavioural effects in the fetus.
- The effects are usually invisible and always lifelong.
- People with FASD are over represented in foster care, homeless populations and in institutions.
- FASD costs tax payers more than \$1.5 million over the life span of each person with the disorder.

In addition to Keyworker services to assess and support children with FASD, the Beacon Community Services FASD program provides a unique Adult Diagnosis and Assessment Clinic that helps adults living with FASD to gain insight and education about their condition so that they are better able to advocate for their own needs and wishes.

Frank Smoke is a client of the Beacon Community Services FASD Community Circle. "I've lived my entire 62 years with FASD, but didn't know what was creating all the challenges in my life until I was diagnosed just 12 years ago. FASD is often multi-generational. My life has not been a bed of roses – every step of the way has been a challenge for me," says Smoke. "Education and support are the most important preventative tools that we have. As a society we can no longer plead ignorant – we can't blame it on not knowing. We are all one click away from knowledge... I am on the computer everyday. The information is out there and groups like the FASD Community Circle are so incredibly important as they support those who are most vulnerable."

For more information about FASD and the services available, contact:

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[Photos included below.]

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*Employment Services • Child, Youth & Family Services • Counselling • Volunteer Services • Home Support • Seniors Housing
Charitable Registration No. 12995 1174 RR0001*



Keith Martin and Isobel Mackenzie raise the FASD Banner over Douglas St. in Victoria.



David Gerry, Isobel Mackenzie and Keith Martin team up to raise awareness about FASD.

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