



MEDIA RELEASE

HEART Family Violence Conference Brings Community and Experts Together May 1, 2019

Valleyview, Alberta

The Health Education and Action in Relationships Team (HEART) is hosting the third HEART Conference which begins today and will run from May 1 to 2, 2019 in Valleyview. The event features speakers from Alberta and across Canada with conference participants coming from across northern Alberta.

Valleyview's HEART Team began working together in the spring of 2014 to address the high rates of domestic violence in the town and surrounding areas. The team consists of Valleyview Victims Assistance, RCMP and Green View Family and Community Support Services (FCSS). Green View FCSS is a partnership between the Alberta Government, Municipal District of Greenview, and the Town of Valleyview that provides support for children, families and seniors in Greenview's communities.

Conference attendees will learn about effective resources and programs to address family violence and build safer communities. Real life experiences will be woven throughout the conference with learnings imparted by diverse voices - from hands on service providers to researchers and survivors.

Ms. Lisa Hannaford, Green View FCSS Manager explains "Family violence is not secluded to one or two communities or pockets of the province, it is in every community, that's why working collaboratively on the issue is paramount. The HEART Conference helps foster healthy relationships by highlighting proven strategies and current family violence prevention research. We recognize how important it is to address the issues facing our communities by increasing awareness and bringing together social service providers and laypeople."

Today's sessions will cover the impacts of childhood abuse on adult survivors, intergenerational trauma and stalking. Tuval Dinner Nafshi from Alberta Council of Women's Shelters will host a panel discussion with community members regarding the successful awareness project Breakfast With the Guys. Heather King will provide a presentation on Intergenerational Healing. Julie Lalonde shares her personal experiences of stalking and as an advocate for women's rights. Tina Buikema from Sagesse will detail their

programs with Green View FCSS, including Finding Our Voices, Growth Circle and the Provincial Collective Impact Initiative.

Dr. Betty Jo Barrett, Assistant Professor and Director of the Women's and Gender Studies Program at the University of Windsor, provides key note addresses on both days of the conference. Dr. Barrett is a social worker by training with a PhD in Social Welfare. She begins today's conference with Childhood Sexual Abuse, Adulthood Revictimization and Mothering followed by a presentation tomorrow on the intersection of domestic violence and animal abuse.

Day two sessions of the HEART Conference will delve further into the interconnected nature of family violence and other social problems. The conference continues tomorrow with family violence survivor and author Holly Crichton, and experts in the field of family violence prevention. Sessions will address the links between domestic violence and animal abuse, pornography, and addiction.

Dr. Farzad Zare-Bawani, Associate Professor at Concordia University of Edmonton will provide a presentation regarding the impact of pornography on family violence. A practicing forensic psychologist, Dr. Zare-Bawani chairs the interdisciplinary research cluster on youth mental health and leads forensic psychology training and research at Concordia University. He has served as a forensic psychologist with the provincial and federal governments for more than a decade, working in maximum security institutions with violent and dangerous offenders. Using emerging research, Dr. Zare-Bawani will identify factors that differentiate female viewers and male viewers of pornography and highlight long-range effects on socialization and emotional well-being of youth of all genders.

The conference ends with a message of hope and healing for all involved from Mel Siggelkow, Director of Rising Above Ministry in Grande Prairie. Mel will speak about the intersection of addiction and family violence. Rising Above operates a residential addiction treatment centre in Grande Prairie and provides services to help people break cycles of defeat and take steps to move forward in their lives. Mel will provide the conference's closing keynote address on the topic of Healing and Hope for Offenders and Victims of Family Violence.

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Media inquiries may be directed to:

Diane Carter, Communications Officer
Municipal District of Greenview
Mobile: 780.524.6584