

promise

EMPOWERING TEEN PARENTS TO SUCCEED

Winter/Spring 2018



Then and now

Submitted by Natalie Hermann, Terra alumna

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Natalie and her son Noah. Photos supplied by Natalie Hermann.

I found out I was pregnant at 15. Being pregnant at such a young age was a terrifying experience, but I was lucky enough to have the support of my family and friends.

Still, looks from older people and comments like, “you will never do anything with your life” and “you will never be able to provide for your child” were discouraging and difficult to handle, especially at my age.

I graduated from Braemar School in June 2011, and received support from Terra Centre from 2009–11. My experiences with Braemar School and Terra are extremely positive and will have lasting effects

on both my son and me. If it had not been for the on site daycare at school and the daycare staff who took amazing care of my son I would not have graduated. I was experiencing so many new things raising a baby at 16 and they provided me with so much helpful advice and support as Noah got older.

I volunteered as a student ambassador after Noah was born and I attended events on behalf of Terra such as

a United Way lunch, Peers Educating Peers sessions and Promising Futures. Through the student Ambassador program I was able to attend a public speaking seminar and various other events that have helped me in my university career and everyday life. Throughout these experiences, my confidence as a mom and a person improved greatly.

Story continued on page 3.

To update your mailing address, please contact us at terra@terracentre.ca.



Recognizing achievement

On November 16, 2017, we recognized some outstanding Terra participants and alumni at Deep Roots, New Heights, our annual donor appreciation event and scholarship awards ceremony. The award recipients are post-secondary students who juggle bedtime stories, crying babies and late night feedings while studying, writing exams and attending class. That's no easy feat!

Each recipient is currently enrolled at a post-secondary institution and has a connection to Terra, whether they've attended Braemar School or accessed one of Terra's programs or services. These young parents are dedicated to creating a bright future for their children and themselves.

These awards are made possible through generous ongoing donor support. We are grateful for the inspiration and vision of each scholarship donor:

- Maureen Barnes and Joe Dolan Award Fund at Edmonton Community Foundation
- Brentwood Community Development Group

- Jac'y Hayter Achieving Dreams Together Fund at Edmonton Community Foundation
- Toby Levy Fund at Edmonton Community Foundation
- Sylvia Nasser Education Fund at Edmonton Community Foundation
- Jilian Campbell
- DynaLIFE Medical Labs

To learn more about establishing a scholarship, please contact Donna Ma at dma@terracentre.ca.



Jerika is studying at the University of Alberta, where she is working towards a Bachelor of Arts in Native Studies and a Bachelor of Education in Elementary Education.



Katherine is taking general science at the University of Alberta. She is a passionate advocate for family, education and the Indigenous community.



Shaylee is completing her first year of Early Learning and Child Care at MacEwan University. She enjoys encouraging play and creativity in her daughter Meadow.



Sarah is studying social work at MacEwan University. Her goals include becoming an advocate for high risk youth and raising her son in a stable, loving environment.



Natalie is embarking on a new journey as a law student at the University of Saskatchewan. One day, she hopes to realize her dream of bringing accessible legal advice sessions to teen parents.



Jennifer is now in her first year of her Bachelor of Science at MacEwan University. She aims to become a respiratory therapist and provide a stable future for her daughter.



Mary is enrolled in open studies at the University of Alberta. She hopes to help others overcome addiction, mental health challenges and homelessness through music.



Juan became an apprentice with Bison Transportation after rediscovering his passion for working with vehicles. He recently began NAIT's Heavy Equipment Technician program.

**Not pictured: Julia is working towards a Bachelor of Science in Nursing at MacEwan University. After graduation, she plans to apply for the University of Alberta's Medicine and Dentistry program.*

Cover story continued

I am now 23 and Noah is seven. He loves school and enjoys sports such as swimming, ball hockey and basketball. He is the happiest, funniest and sassiest kid I have ever met. He loves to build Lego and read and he's crazy about anything involving Star Wars. Noah is also one of the Oilers' biggest fans. He wears his jersey on game days even when not attending the actual game and his favourite player is Connor McDavid.

Noah has been a huge motivator for me to do something with my life and provide opportunities for him. The people that have discouraged me in the past have also motivated me to get where I am today. I am very proud to say that I am currently in my first year of law school at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon. I feel that pursuing this level of education will give us a future that no one thought we could have. I am also hoping to set an example for Noah that no matter what your life circumstance, if you work hard you can be successful.

I am hoping once I am done my law degree to be able to give back to the community, including Terra. Its work makes a huge difference in the lives of the moms, dads and their children. I cannot express how huge of an impact the staff have had on our lives. I am so thankful that there is a program like it in Edmonton and I hope that others recognize the value in it when they see parents and their children becoming successful later in life.

In-kind corner

We want to thank all the new and recurring donors that helped replenish our downtown, Brentwood House and Braemar Clothes Closets with in-kind donations. Thank you especially for helping to provide our families with special toys and gifts this past holiday season, as well as basic supplies, toiletries and baby clothing.

Without your support, we would not be able to provide crucial items such as diapers, formula and other baby essentials for our participants year-round. **Collectively, you donated over \$85,000 worth of new in-kind goods to our families in 2017!**



Did you know?

Please contact us prior to dropping off an in-kind donation at Braemar School so we can schedule a time with the school. If you are planning any donation drives, please contact Colleen Dombrosky at 780-428-3722 for a list of our current needs. Thank you for continuing to think of our young families!

LETTER FROM LEADERSHIP



Greetings,

At Terra, we often say that we meet our young parents where they are at. This means that our staff are accepting, non-judgemental and empathetic. Many families that we work with face complex situations and our staff aim to provide

responsive, supportive interactions that address their unique needs and experiences. We believe in the importance of this type of response, yet we know it's uncommon in many of the systems our families have experienced. To make a difference, we came together several years ago with four other agencies, and identify our collaboration as C5.

Our partners include Boyle Street Community Services, Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society, Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers and Norwood Child and Family Resource Centre. Collectively we serve 30,000 families. Besides jointly delivering services, we are working to reduce the barriers in systems that our families use to help ensure they achieve stronger outcomes for themselves and our community.

Throughout 2017 we greatly appreciated the opportunity to meet with various MLAs, ministers, other government officials and leadership from Alberta Health Services and Capital Region Housing to advocate for change and to share stories about how policies, practices and regulations impact the ability of our families to achieve all they strive for. We participated in and hosted round table discussions, and developed recommendations for resource development and improvements with a particular focus on affordable housing and mental health services — both of which are vital services for our young parents and their children.

In 2018 we will continue to be relentless in keeping the children, youth and families we serve at the forefront of our efforts. We aim to continue pursuing collective action that will reduce and remove barriers to ensure our families experience their promising futures!

Sincerely,

Karen Mottershead
Executive Director, Terra Centre

Team member profile

CHANDRA ASHTON



Hey, I'm Chandra! I'm the mental health therapist at Terra Centre. This is a new role for Terra and it's a dream come true for me. I see my job as a way to create a safe environment where participants can work on and better understand themselves. Together, we explore ideas, talk about challenges and develop healthy coping strategies.

Having my office located at Braemar means that students can come see me during their free block. They don't face wait-lists, high costs or limits on number of sessions, as they might if they sought counselling in the community. Participants can drop in or schedule regular appointments with me in a way that meets their needs. If they require crisis counselling and I'm booked, they can slip a note under my door or text me, and I'll see them as soon as possible. I also have the opportunity to support our outreach and housing programs by seeing participants in the community and working with partners in couples counselling. This helps to lift barriers toward accessing mental health supports.

For the average person of any age, being a parent is the hardest job they will ever have. Our young parents are dealing with so much more — completing high school, growing little humans, maintaining safe housing, supporting themselves financially and being a teenager all at the same time. I think the fact that Terra can provide an accessible, on site mental health therapist is really important for our families.

I'm grateful to be in this role and to have the unique opportunity to get to know our incredible participants in this way. That they trust me with their stories is humbling, and I hope to always find ways to help them find and honour their resilience.

Chandra's profile is one of many that we've been sharing on social media. If you'd like to learn more about the work of our team, visit [instagram.com/terracentre](https://www.instagram.com/terracentre) or [facebook.com/terracentre](https://www.facebook.com/terracentre).

A heart of gold

Marion Barry is a long-time Terra volunteer. She sorts and organizes in-kind donations, such as children's clothing, toys, toiletries and other essentials in the downtown Clothes Closet, one of three free donation centers for our teen parent families. Marion's involvement began in 2010, when her daughter worked at our Braemar School location.

She and our other long-time dedicated volunteer, Sharon, are familiar and welcoming faces for the many young parents and children who stop by the Clothes Closet for necessities.

"I just like being here," Marion says about volunteering at Terra. "When I come here I don't have to try to be happy — it comes naturally. This place is my saving grace. It has done as much for me as I do for [it]." Although she was once naïve to what teen parent families experience, she has learned a lot over the years and now feels a personal connection to them. "I feel like a mom to these girls," she explains.

After volunteering in several other areas, such as baby showers, participant Christmas parties, fundraising events and childcare, Marion discovered that her true passion lies in the Clothes Closet. So much so that she sometimes even brings her tasks home with her!



Through dedicated leaders like Marion, the Volunteer Services program continues to thrive and make a meaningful difference in our families' lives. We appreciate every moment she has shared with us over the past seven years!

If you're interested in volunteering with Terra, get in touch with us at 780-428-3772.

Reflections

Erik Holmlund has served on the Terra Board of Directors for the past seven years. He will be retiring from the board in March 2018, and we're incredibly grateful for the significant contributions he has made to Terra and for his dedication to empowering teen parent families. We asked him to reflect on his time with the board.



Submitted by Erik Holmlund, Board Chair

When I think about what makes me most proud over the past seven years, a few things come to mind, including the way Terra has:

- Introduced the Learner's Bursary, which has a huge impact on Braemar School students' access to funding and services.
- Worked to continuously improve and expand our services.
- Taken a leadership role at the city, province and the social services sector.
- Sought out partnerships that support our families.

For me personally, it's so rewarding to see parents who spoke at Promising Futures six or seven years ago, who are now in the midst of their post-grad studies or have completed their studies and are thriving in our communities. I find this incredibly gratifying and it makes me very, very proud to have had the opportunity to be a part of Terra.

The Terra Board of Directors continues to improve as a strong governance committee that I think serves Terra better than it did seven years ago. This is due to previous board chairs for their guidance and vision, Karen Mottershead and her staff for their extraordinary effort and all the excellent people that I've been lucky enough to serve with on the board.

The last seven years have taught me the value of having different viewpoints in the room when you're looking to make critical decisions, even when it can be uncomfortable.

It means being willing to say my initial position may have been wrong, but as a group we worked together to make the right decision for the organization.

My hope for Terra is that the organization continues to focus on quality service delivery and growth. The organization drives so much value back into our community through education for parents and children, outreach in family homes, speaking at high schools as a prevention strategy in the community and supporting poverty reduction — Terra can't stop moving forward.

We'll be announcing our new board chair at our Annual General Meeting on March 21, 2018.

UPDATES

2018 TERRA TOURS

Terra is offering eight Terra Tours at Braemar School this year. These free tours are a great way for the public to learn more about the programs and services we offer young parents. Highlights of our guided tours include meeting a young mom, hearing the difference Terra has made to her family and visiting Terra's award-winning Child and Family Support Centre where children are cared for while their moms attend class.

All tours begin at 10:30 a.m. on site at Braemar School. RSVPs are required at least two days prior to the tour by emailing terra@terracentre.ca or calling 780-428-3772.

Upcoming Tour Dates:

- February 22
- March 22
- April 19
- May 24
- June 14
- September 20
- October 11
- November 22

SAVE THE DATE

- **Annual General Meeting and Awards Night**
Wednesday, March 21, 2018
- **Promising Futures Fundraising Breakfast**
Tuesday, June 5, 2018

Note: we're seeking volunteers for our casino on May 23 - 24, 2018. Please contact Donna Ma by email at dma@terracentre.ca for more information.

Tell us what you think!

We've printed and mailed the Promise Newsletter to our partners, funders and supporters since 2009. To evaluate the effectiveness of the newsletter in its current format, we want to hear from you. To submit your responses, visit ow.ly/bMWW30hEtp or email mhunka@terracentre.ca.

1. What is your connection to Terra? (i.e. donor, volunteer, etc.)
2. Do you enjoy reading the Promise Newsletter? Why or why not?
3. What kind of stories or information do you wish to receive in the Promise Newsletter?
4. How can we improve the newsletter?
5. Would you prefer to receive a print newsletter by post or an electronic newsletter by email? (To receive electronic newsletters, please provide your email address.)
6. In general, do you prefer to receive print or electronic communications from Terra? Please explain.

Submit your responses by March 1, 2018 to be entered to win a \$25 Starbucks gift card!

Path to Success Campaign



Big thanks to everyone who generously supported our Path to Success campaign! Thanks to you, we raised over \$16,400 to provide essential supports and skill development groups for teen parents to allow them to create and maintain safe, stable homes for their families.

Funds raised will allow us to provide tools and resources such as the RentSmart education program to teen parent families in Edmonton. This program will be available to participants in our housing support program, and will also be offered to any participant with an interest in starting their tenancy off right. Participants who complete this six week course will learn and develop skills for good tenancy, receive a certificate recognized by landlords and be provided supports to create healthy, loving homes for themselves and their young children.

Thank you for helping us build strong foundations and communities from the ground up!

Yes! I want to help teen parents and their children achieve promising futures!

Enclosed is my gift of:

Monthly gift of \$_____ for _____ years (For direct debit enclose void cheque or complete credit card info below.)

One time gift: \$50 \$100 \$150 \$200 \$500 Other: \$ _____

Payment Type: Cheque Visa Mastercard American Express

Credit Card #: _____ Exp. Date: _____

Name: _____ Signature: _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____

City: _____ P.C. _____ Email: _____

I/We prefer to be acknowledged in print materials as _____

OR I/We prefer to remain anonymous.

I am interested in learning about legacy planning and how I can include Terra in my estate plans.

I have already included Terra in my long-term plans.

Any personal information provided on this form will be used for administrative purposes only. An official tax receipt will be issued for all donations \$20 and above. Charitable Reg. # 119210417RR001.



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