

Our Promises in Action

carya's 2017 Annual Report



In 2016, we made three promises to guide our work in the year to come. In 2017, we brought those promises to life every day as we engaged individuals, families and communities to realize their potential.

A message from Sue Mallon, carya CEO

Eight years ago, we celebrated 100 years of serving the citizens of Calgary in whatever manner best suited the needs presented. **carya** was here long before us, and, with good fortune, will be here long after we are. Perhaps **carya's** staff and board members are simply stewards of this entity, stewards charged with caring for the essence of the organization in order to consistently deliver on its promise.

In order to understand **carya's** promise, we can go back in history and check in with a key founding member, Ethel McKillop. 73 years ago, Ethel said: *"We believe the future will be brighter than the past, and relying on the support which has been ours in days gone by, we go forward into a new year with a keener desire than ever to help men help themselves and lift from the hearts that have grown discouraged, the loads that are too heavy for them to bear."* But for a few dated references, our challenge and our promise remain the same today.

Ethel faithfully lead Associated Charities, which later became Calgary Family Services and then **carya**, for some 30 years. She looked for where the load was too heavy for folks to carry and responded. Ethel kept **carya's** promises.

In 1941, Ethel hired Mary Livesy - the first social worker to come on board and perhaps the beginning of the professionalizing of our work. As World War Two was winding down, Mary wondered if some of the work of the agency would diminish after the war, enabling them to return to their core purpose, which was: Strengthening family life and helping individuals in developing both the capacity and the opportunity to lead socially useful lives

Does this sound familiar? The core of our work remains much the same 83 years later when virtually everything else has changed.

So who are we now, the current staff and volunteers and supporters of **carya**?

carya is not ours but we have been entrusted with its care and nurturing during these years. We have a strong and proud legacy of keeping promises, and again we are challenged to renew our commitment to this lofty ideal. Ethel delivered on her promises with little resources and in the midst of two major world wars which brought unimaginable stress and strain on community. As we move forward, our **carya** brand will be a direct reflection of our commitment to articulating our promises and delivering upon them.



A message from Ray Chartier, carya Board Chair

I believe that it takes a strong team and the support of others to truly fulfill one's potential as an individual and a collective. I am happy to say that is exactly what we have here at **carya**, both within the staff and volunteers who do the work of organization, and also at the board level. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank the members of the carya board, our leadership team and all of our staff for their hard work and support this past year - support for **carya** as the wonderful organization that it is, and support for me as the new Board Chair.

In 2017, one of the board's major goals was to create a new, five-year strategic plan for **carya**. I'm happy to report that we accomplished this goal! Both the process of its creation and the Strategic Plan itself represent **carya** at its best: thoughtful, collaborative, compassionate, creative – all pulling together to achieve a common goal, moving boldly forward with a common vision and a plan for realizing that vision.

Working together, valuing relationships, finding strength and support through and with one another are all themes you will see in the new Strategic Plan. These are all things we see and experience with **carya**.

carya is an organization with deep roots and a rich history within Calgary. **carya**, in one form or another, has been helping people in our community since 1910 - for 108 years and counting. Over that time Calgary has changed greatly. The world has changed. **carya** has had to change, but our agency has been able to continue its good work and its service to our community, no matter the passing of time and the changes around us. We are, though **carya**, part of something larger and part of something special within Calgary.

carya is one of the largest social service agencies in Calgary, offering over 40 programs for people at every age and stage of life. Our Strategic Plan acknowledges that there are challenges ahead, but also opportunities.

carya's collective strengths, both as an organization and through the people within it, make us well positioned to meet all of the challenges that may face us and to seize the opportunities that present themselves. The agency is already a recognized leader in the provision of social services within Calgary. We will continue to build upon the professional knowledge and skills that we bring to this sector to fulfill our mission of engaging individuals, families and communities to realize their full potential.



In 2017, we promised to...

**1. respond to the needs of the
communities we work in**

**2. create the conditions that
allow for change to happen**

**3. actively work to see an
increase in natural supports &
relationships for those we serve**

Jerry's Story

I was in serious debt. I hadn't paid my taxes in years. I was 71 years old and still trying to provide for my family, but looking at my finances made my head spin. I needed help.

A friend told me about **carya's** Financial Coaching program, and I decided to give it a shot. Sajjad, my financial coach, didn't judge me, and he didn't try to sell me anything. He helped me find solutions that made sense, and made me feel like I could get my finances under control.

Calculating all of my debt was scary, but once we came up with a plan to get rid of it I felt a lot better. We looked at my family's income and expenses and figured out some simple ways to save money. I never thought that cutting out my daily Tim Horton's run would make a difference, but it's amazing how the little things add up! Sajjad connected me with one of **carya's** free tax clinics, which helped me figure out exactly where I stood with the Canada Revenue Agency. Together, Sajjad and I figured out how I could pay my missing taxes in installments instead of all at once.

After nine sessions with Sajjad, I'm feeling optimistic about what the future holds for me and my family. With my taxes in order, I'm finally taking full advantage of the seniors benefits I'm entitled to. Best of all, I'm actually putting a bit of money into savings every month, something that I never thought would be possible! I feel like a huge weight has been lifted off my shoulders, and I can finally enjoy life again.

Responding to Community Needs

From day one, way back in 1910, **carya** has always been flexible. We've gone through immense growth and change over the years, always in response to what we see around us. Calgary is a dynamic city, and we continue to evolve along with it.

Responding to the needs of the communities we work in is about thinking outside the box. It's about taking risks grounded in data and experience. It's about being bold and trying new things. It's about filling a need and providing services that will improve the lives of the people that we work with, services like our brand new Financial Coaching program.

In 2017, we helped 424 older adults file their taxes at 24 tax clinics



Abby's Story

Hurting myself wasn't something I wanted to do. I did it because it made me forget about the other stuff that was going on in my life for just a little while. I was embarrassed by the scars on my wrists - I wore long sleeves every day to cover them up. I hated myself, and I was pretty sure everyone else hated me, too. I guess "anxiety" is the official name for it, but for me it was this constant voice in my head telling me that nothing I did was good enough. Hurting myself was the only thing I could find that would shut that voice up.

I guess my mom saw the scars one day and got freaked out so she signed me up for Worry Warriors at **carya**. Turns out there are other ways to make that voice in my head shut up. Worry Warriors helped me learn not to assume that everything was my fault, and gave me some techniques to use if I was starting to get super anxious.

I really connected with Chelsey, one of my Worry Warriors counsellors, so I started seeing her one-on-one. I felt super comfortable talking to Chelsey about the things I was struggling with, and she helped me find ways to cope with that inner voice that was always putting me down.

So much has changed since I started coming to **carya**. I've been able to make new friends, and my parents and I are getting along better than we have in a while. I'm not hurting myself any more, and my scars are starting to fade. My inner voice is a lot nicer than it used to be, and I'm happier than I've been in a long time.

Creating conditions that allow for change to happen

To make change for the better, we need to feel safe. That might mean having stable, supportive relationships to depend on, feeling financially secure or finding an environment where we feel accepted unconditionally.

The capacity for positive transformation lives within each person who walks through our doors. By connecting with our participants, and helping our participants connect with their support networks, we help to bring out that inner potential.

88% of participants in carya's Starburst program for junior high girls reported feeling Safer and more empowered



Stephanie's Story

Dealing with Owen's behaviour had become a nightmare for our whole family. Whenever my husband or I would ask him to do something, he'd do the opposite. He was running away and getting into trouble at school. When he started getting physically aggressive towards his older sisters and me, I knew something had to change. I worried about Owen's future - if things were this bad at eight years old, would they get even worse he got older? I felt like I was failing as a parent. I felt hopeless.

Our counsellor, Maria, came into our home and helped us understand that if we wanted Owen to change his behaviours, we had to change as a family. Maria was so patient with us, and helped us all learn new skills that, little by little, started to make a big difference. Understanding the whys behind Owen's behaviour was a game changer for us. It was a relief to hear that acting out was actually my little boy's way of telling me he needed me. He just couldn't find the words to say it.

Since Maria and **carya** came into our lives, so many relationships have changed for the better. Our family has been spending quality time together again. My husband and I have reconnected. Relationships with our extended family have been repaired. Teachers at Owen's school have told me how well he's doing and how much they love having him in their classes. That's something I could never have imagined hearing before we met Maria. Then again, before finding **carya**, I could never have imagined how happy and confident I feel, or how rewarding my relationships are with Owen, my daughters, my husband and my entire family.

Improving relationships and increasing natural supports

Relationships are **why** we do our work and **how** we do our work. To be healthy, happy and well, we simply need each other. Relationships are especially significant in the dynamic and fast paced world we live in. Social connections and strong natural supports are life sustaining, energy creating and essential to strong families and communities. At **carya**, this has been our focus for more than a century.

83% of families in carya's FFT 7-11 program reported a reduced risk for conflict, abuse and neglect and social exclusion

Work Worth Doing: 40 years at carya

Douglas came to **carya** in 1978, straight out of the University of Calgary. He's seen the agency change from Calgary Family Service Bureau, to Calgary Family Services to **carya**. He's been a counsellor in Forest Lawn, provided one-on-one support for elementary and junior high students, led our Act Out! program, and held office hours at our Eastside location. Now he's come full circle, back to Forest Lawn as a counsellor where it all began.

Why has Douglas made **carya** his life's work? For him, being a counsellor at **carya** has always been work worth doing.

Douglas's Story

When it comes to work, the most important thing to me is that I'm doing something meaningful. Over the years, my job has changed many times, but I've always felt like I was making a difference.



People might not have access to the type of services we offer if we weren't around. The fact that all of our programs are offered on a sliding scale has made it possible for many people who otherwise couldn't afford it to come to me and get the support they need. I love feeling like I'm part of the solution for people with diverse backgrounds and life circumstances.

At **carya**, I've always been able to find a niche where I could grow, both personally and professionally. This place has always encouraged me to be creative. Supervisors and coworkers have come and gone, but there's always been an atmosphere that has encouraged me to grow in my own unique way.

Working at **carya** has allowed me to become myself, to learn who I am, and to pass that along to the next generation. I now have the opportunity to mentor younger counsellors, and I can see bits of myself in them. I try to foster the same kind of environment I benefited from and encourage them to explore their own way of doing things. I want to help them become themselves, whoever that might be.

In 2018, we promise to...

1. grow in innovative ways

2. inspire those we work with

**3. use our partnerships,
collaborations and resources
to make an impact**

Thanks to our agency partners



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