

Shedding light on FASD

by Deanna Mitchener

Sherri See with the Northwest Central Alberta FASD (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder) Network spoke during the monthly Interagency meeting in Edson on June 13.

Sherri, who has been in her new position for just over a year now, covers a large area consisting of Edson, Hinton, Jasper, Whitecourt, Greencourt, Mayerthorpe, Alexis, Edmonton, Spruce Grove, Wildwood, and Niton areas. Prior to that she worked at Mental Health and Addictions for 15 years as well as in group home care.

"I thought I knew what FASD was and had some knowledge about it before I started working for the network. I was really surprised as to what I didn't know and what was kind of a fairy tale to what I thought," said Sherri.

"I used to think people with FASD had facial features but in reality only about 5% do. When I asked why only 5% have facial features, I was told that there are only three days during pregnancy that will actually affect facial features in a person. Those three days are day 19, 20 and 21 of pregnancy. Most people don't even know that they are pregnant during that time and if you were not planning to get pregnant you may be at a special celebration and have a couple of drinks," said Sherri.

"What I really found interesting is how drinking will effect each pregnancy differently. Drinking during pregnancy can cause facial features during the three days mentioned, it can cause cognitive system [problems] and in some cases babies are born without limbs or it can affect their organs. During different parts of a pregnancy different parts of the baby is developing and if mom drinks during those times that is where you will find the systems of FASD," said Sherri.

"We work with women who are at child bearing age and at risk of having a child that could have FASD, women who are pregnant or become pregnant. Currently we have a client list of over 100 people. In order to get an assessment done for FASD we need the mom or a family member on mom's side to say they had been drinking during pregnancy."

After the intake Sherri said they "can apply for them to have an assessment, apply for Aish applications, PDD funding, we can support them in court, we can help them with budgets, life skills and get them connected to other agencies



Sherri See spoke about FASD during the monthly Interagency meeting in Edson on June 13. photo Deanna Mitchener

in their communities."

"As professionals we need to start talking with moms to get alcohol confirmation in order to help assist her and her child as they grow. We can then mark it in her file as prenatal alcohol exposure. And down the road when her child is born if the child starts showing signs of learning disabilities we as a network can go back, as we have consent to look back on her pregnancy records, and see that there was prenatal alcohol exposure. This is really huge piece of information needed so we can give them the tools needed to help through life," said Sherri.

Raven was saved from only a few weeks old. A found her along a railway attacked by Ravens. This fighter and has bounced her injuries (she lost a co attack).

Raven will need a home and will work with her sp

She's hoping to find her because, much as she lov home, a permanent home

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