

Alberta Adolescent Recovery Centre

Success is measured one graduate at a time

The Alberta Adolescent Recovery Centre (AARC) has been helping adolescents from ages 12 to 21 fight and beat their addictions to drugs and alcohol for the past 22 years.

The Calgary-based centre is dedicated to helping these youths cope with and conquer their addictions, by transforming their regular daily habits, giving them a different outlook and a different way to live their lives.

“We have graduated 519 adolescents,” says Donna Edwards, Director of Development at AARC, proudly. “Including the graduates and their families, we’ve touched the lives of over 2,000 people,” she adds.

AARC is a long-term care program, where the adolescents are generally in treatment an average of about eight months to a year. “We treat the kids that have tried every other alternative to get help, and have been unsuccessful. AARC is kind of like the last house on the block,” says Edwards.

The program involves the entire family; not just parents, but siblings too. All are an important part of the process. Another rather unique feature to this program is that the at risk youth actually are hosted out to a home in the evenings with a family that is further along in the program. “Clients don’t sleep at the centre, so this is a huge commitment on the family because eventually you have to take kids in to your own home,” says Edwards.

Here, kids can really get the attention they need to persevere, through peer counseling, from people who have been there. “Every one of our staff members on the clinical team have been through the program, so they have an insight as they have been in the same position that these young people have,” says Edwards. “And they’ve come through it, which is another reason why our program works,” she adds.

The philosophy at AARC is that they don’t turn any client away due to their inability to pay for treatment, which is \$150 per day. “Over 90 per cent of our families are subsidized, in order for us to be able to do that, we have a Gala and a golf tournament, the funds raised go towards off-setting those treatment fees,

and accommodate the philosophy of ours,” says Edwards.

The Gala event is going to be held at the Telus Convention Centre, on May 22, 2014. “Our event is put on by an events team that we have internally, however our volunteers, parents who currently have family members in treatment, and our alumni are a huge part of pulling off the event. We couldn’t do it without them,” says Edwards. There are about 75 to 100 volunteers for this event alone.

Tickets for the Gala are \$250 each, with between 800 to 1,000 people expected, and anyone can attend. “We also have sponsorship opportunities available for the event,” says Edwards.

There is a silent and live auction held at the Gala, a formal program that includes a variety of speakers, including past graduates and their parents, sharing their very personal stories of success.

“The benefits of having our graduates participate in the event, not only as speakers but as volunteers, is that the community has the opportunity to meet our kids,” says Edwards. “And we’re sending the message that addiction is treatable, and that AARC is successful at treating addiction,” she adds. “That people have somewhere they can go for help.” ■

AARC’s 500th graduate, Evin Akpinar speaks at last year’s Gala.

