



Karen Fenzl and the Young Parents Mentorship Project at the Family Education & Support Centre

Karen Fenzl started attending a parenting group at the Family Education and Support Centre after she took time off work while pregnant with her third child. She was used to a busy life, working, volunteering and being a mom to her daughter and son. While looking to broaden her friendships with other people with kids and find some different ways of parenting, she found that and much more. The idea of a Young Parents Mentorship Project evolved from the parenting group and Karen quickly found her niche.

The Young Parents Mentorship Project is about connecting people to resources. Volunteers with the project are paired with young parents, a young mom or a young dad with a baby or child. The mentor is there for support, to help the young parent connect to all the resources that are available in the community. “There are a lot of challenges for younger parents,” says Karen. “They sometimes feel embarrassed to ask questions about different resources. They might feel they’re already being judged for being young parents and they don’t want to tell people that they don’t have much money. So they miss out on things they would qualify for.”

Karen was a young parent and knows how challenging it can be. “I worked and when you’re working, you’re busy enough and when you have a baby, that makes you even busier and then it’s really hard to seek out different resources. I didn’t even know there was a daycare subsidy available.”

Karen is really excited about the mentorship project. She believes if people receive that support early on, especially before they have their baby, and they’re encouraged in the right direction, they can be more capable, willing and able parents later on.

When a facilitators training course was offered, Karen signed up. She is hoping to eventually facilitate groups. In the meantime, she values the opportunity to be part of the work at the Family Education Centre and to be mentored by some of Family Ed’s positive and encouraging staff. It has improved the way she parents her own children and has helped her become a more compassionate person in general.

“I’ve had a lot of jobs and have really enjoyed a lot of them but this is the first thing I have felt a real passion about and felt I needed and wanted to search further in and find more. It makes you realize what’s in your community, what’s missing, and what could potentially be positive within the community.”

For more information about the Young Parents Mentorship Project, phone (604) 467-6055.