

Year in Review



Barnwell | Barons | Coaldale | Coalhurst | Lethbridge County | County of Warner | Coutts | Milk River
M.D. of Taber | Nobleford | Picture Butte | Raymond | Stirling | Taber | Vauxhall | Warner

Strengthening families in rural Alberta!

2022/2023

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WELCOME MESSAGE



On behalf of the Board of Directors of Barons Eureka Warner Family and Community Support Service (BEW FCSS), I welcome you to tonight's All-Councils meeting.

BEW FCSS has a 52 year history of cooperation between 16 municipalities to provide preventative social services. By working together, our municipal contributions, which make up 20% of the BEW FCSS budget, are leveraged with the provincial allocation to make for better programming than if each municipality had to provide FCSS services by themselves.

The friendly, professional staff at BEW FCSS are here to help your citizens with parenting skills, to help your teenager develop emotional resilience and learn to give back through community-based projects, to provide seniors in your municipality with seniors conferences and income tax preparation, to provide services to our Low German Mennonite and Indigenous community members, to provide family and individual counselling, and many other services. All of these services are provided at minimal or no cost to those receiving the services. Everything BEW FCSS does is focused on the family and family wellness.

I hope when you leave this evening, you leave with a better understanding and appreciation of the value that FCSS has in each of your municipalities.

Merrill Harris, Reeve, M.D. of Taber

Board Chair, Barons-Eureka-Warner FCSS

STARTING WELL

Strengthening families by increasing parental knowledge, confidence & social connection.

PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAMS OFFERED IN 2022:

- Baby Signing
- Baby & Me
- Caregiver Café
- Infant Massage
- Kids Have Stress Too
- Triple P Groups & Seminars
- Triple P Fearless
- Presentations on different topics



"This class is so wonderful. I enjoy the time with my baby and with other moms. It fills my cup and helps me be a better mom." – Parent

1,207 Total service visits

1,487 Total service hours

90% Strongly agree or agree that they are more aware of how their child's needs changes as they grow and develop

"Very helpful, this program has not only educated me on how to help my son, but it has also helped me grow as a person and I'm very grateful." – Parent

89% Strongly agree or agree that they have more information on what resources are available for their family



STARTING WELL

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS:

Early childhood development programs are designed for caregivers and children ages 0-6 to attend together, learn new skills through play, meet other families, and get connected to resources in their community.



7,642 Total visits

12,367 Total service hours

83% Strongly agree or agree that they have more information on what resources are available for their family

84% Strongly agree or agree that they have met other parents in their neighborhood/community they can ask for help and support

"She helped us understand our son in a way I didn't think was possible. How children develop - How their brains handle and manage emotions - and unrealistic expectations when it comes to being a perfect parent." – Parent

AGES AND STAGES:

Regular developmental screenings provide a **fast and helpful look at how a child is doing in important areas** like communication, social skills, motor skills, and problem-solving skills. Screening can identify a child's strengths, uncover new milestones to celebrate, and reveal any areas where the child may need extra support or specialized intervention. In 2022, the Family Services team completed a total of **144** screenings with **10** children needing follow-up and referrals to specialized services.

PARTNER:

"Our Population Health Promotion Program staff work closely with the amazing team from FCSS to support young families in communities throughout the South Zone. FCSS enhances access to services by hosting our clinics and promoting our services through its various networks. We collaborate to assess the diverse needs of these young families and to determine the best strategies to address these needs within the scope of services we each provide. In the process we have all gained knowledge, developed resources and planned events and educational sessions. It truly is a privilege to work with the FCSS frontline staff, Management and Board members to improve the services available to children and families in rural communities in South Zone."

–Cathy Woolfrey, Manager – Population Health Promotion Program - South Zone, Alberta Health Services



WONDERING ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT?

The Ages and Stages Questionnaire can give you a guideline to tell if your child is doing what other children of the same age are typically doing.

Ages 2 months to 60 months

For more information call 403.795.3328

ASQ
Ages & Stages
Questionnaires

ADDRESSING BASIC NEEDS

Addressing basic needs connects individuals & families to supports such as food, clothing, housing, transportation, and referrals to other organizations.

SUCCESS STORY:

A young, single mother who had recently separated from her partner – let's call her Sam – was referred to FCSS. When starting the program, Sam was couch surfing, struggling with substance use, and trying to find a safe and stable place to live. She was also in the process of having weekly visits with her toddler, who was in the care of the paternal grandmother. After identifying her most pressing needs, FCSS staff was able to empower her to find housing, get connected to the local food bank, and receive addiction counselling from AHS.



840

Clients assisted with
documentation &
government benefits

750

Families attended
Clothing Fest

364

Food deliveries
to families

Did you know?

The third most common topic that parents bring up during one on one sessions is about financial stress.

PROGRAM SUCCESS:

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 28, 2022 | THE GLOBE AND MAIL

NEWS | A5

Mini outdoor pantries offer more than food

For those struggling to afford basics, access to free essentials can help dispel shame around food insecurity

ZOSIA BIELSKI

They perch on people's front lawns, outside libraries, in parks and by duck ponds. They're colourful, crafted like tin homes on stilts, or retrofitted from discarded newspaper boxes or kitchen cabinets.

Miniature pantries stocked with free food and essential toiletries dot neighbourhoods across the country, thanks to good Samaritans who build, maintain and replenish these boxes for the benefit of those struggling to afford the basics.

The mini pantry movement gained speed throughout the pandemic, when opportunities to volunteer grew slimmer during lockdowns. Now, as Canada faces record-high food inflation, neighbourhood pantries — and their philosophy of “take what you need, give what you can” — feel even more relevant.

Some \$8 million across the country — worried about running out of food, bought fewer groceries or missed meals last year, according to Statistics Canada. Food banks' visits were up 35 per cent this past March from prepandemic levels, according to a Food Banks Canada report. Food costs are set to rise by another 10 per cent to 15 per cent in 2023, according to Canada's Food Price Report.

While little pantries aren't meant to solve the root causes of hunger — inadequate wages and a lack of affordable housing among them — they aim to dispel shame around poverty and build trust in communities. Operating independently of one another, pantry stewards keep their boxes



Children walk past a 'little free pantry' in Nobleford, Alta. In November, pantry stewards independently kept the boxes stocked with the help of the local community. (IAN MARTENS/THE GLOBE AND MAIL)

them hatched their idea.

In June, they ran a food drive for their pantry, going door to door dropping off empty bags to be filled with goods. What they collected is now stored at a local community centre; the kids ferry supplies to their little blue box in a wagon.

The pantry's central location is key. The nearest food bank is 25 minutes away in the rural community, the distance proving a challenge for some struggling with gas prices and those without a car, Ms. Weaver said.

Townpeople were aghast when the pantry fell victim to vandalism during its first days in the park. Someone had torn the door off, takes out a donated tube of toothpaste and smeared the box with minty goo.

“The entire town was up in arms over it,” said Joseph Hunter, Nobleford's chief administrative committee officer, who helped get the project into the park. “It was like

Church staff take a moment during Sunday services to gently remind parishioners to donate goods. With grocery prices still painfully high, the pantry is emptied quickly. “There is nothing that doesn't move,” said Ms. Rozeire, who helps refill this particular box every week or two.

She thinks the pantry movement offers dignity. “It doesn't instill shame. You can just walk by there and grab something. You can even go if it's tight.” She added, “I like this grassroots thing. I'm not a big stage organizer.”

On summer nights, she might leave bananas. For winter's frigid blast, she puts out coffee, tea, macaroni and hot dogs. “They can take the freezing.” At Christmas, she likes setting out cake and biscuit mixes, including eggs and oil, measured out for specific recipes.

She watched one day as a woman placed something bulky into the pantry and walked away.

for the box.

Sitting out in the elements, the kitchen cabinet slowly rotted and caved in on itself. It's now been replaced by a small garden shed, with more room for warm winter clothing donated by neighbours. “We're expanding,” Ms. Buxton said.

The family's living-room window looks out onto the pantry. People visit at night, their belongings carried in shopping carts.

“The people taking are very much in need,” Ms. Buxton said. “What I'm hoping is that it make people feel welcome, that they're our neighbours and that we want to share what we have.”

Alexis Baudelham and her friends have persisted against neighbours, grocers, farmers and restaurateurs in Sinyay, N.S., help keep one popular pantry full.

A café donated macaroni 100 pies one week, lobster mac-and-cheese pot pies another. The winter food businesses will go Sazo a week for two months, seniors at local Rotary Club and peddled to grocery stores to stock the pantry with the surplus.

The pantry is open and appeared in town mere days into the pandemic. It was set up in a large old maple tree near a community organization. Nobody knew who put it there, eventually it was revealed to be a quiet local contractor. A Facebook group sprung up to co-ordinate grocery errands, cleanup and fixes. The pantry has since been moved off the tree and returned to a fridge and red roof.

It needs constant maintenance with sitters, open and covered food, food, and frost-cracked bags of lentils to contend with — pulses to slowly salt, pepper, sugar and peanut butter go faster, as do toilettes and garbage bags.

One day, a member of the group found someone had “blasted open a can of soap,” causing it to fall on the sidewalk. So

neighbour practising her knitting skills donates all her hats and mittens.

Ms. Tollenaar studied food insecurity at the University of Alberta. She learned some Canadians without food addresses are denied access to food banks. That's when little free pantries came up as a small-scale way to help. “You don't have to fill out any application to access them. They're available fresh, all the time,” she said.

An elderly woman without a home stops by her pantry often. “She doesn't have any teeth so it's hard for her to eat any kind of hard food. I put in pudding and apple sauce for her.” The other one she loves is apple pie filling. Recently, a man came by to ask for food for five people camping out nearby.

“People ask us all the time, ‘Well, what if someone comes and cleans out the whole pantry?’” Ms. Tollenaar said. “My



The Nobleford Youth DO Crew Jr.'s Little Free Pantry project was featured on a national scale in the Globe and Mail. Together, the Town of Nobleford and FCSS spoke to the success of the project through youth leadership and community collaboration.

ADDRESSING BASIC NEEDS



NOTEABLE STATISTICS:

Community Volunteer Income Tax Program

60% of tax clients were female

27% of tax clients were Low German Mennonite

5% of tax clients were Indigenous

"I would like to send out a HUGE thank you to FCSS and the volunteers who helped me and my uncle complete and send in our 2021 taxes... I remembered seeing the FCSS ad in the Taber Times for help with taxes for people [in] low income situations... Volunteer Services Coordinator was so kind, listened to my story and then advised that they would complete our taxes. I am very grateful to FCSS volunteers and the kind staff in the office. They all treated me with respect and kindness."

- FCSS Tax Client

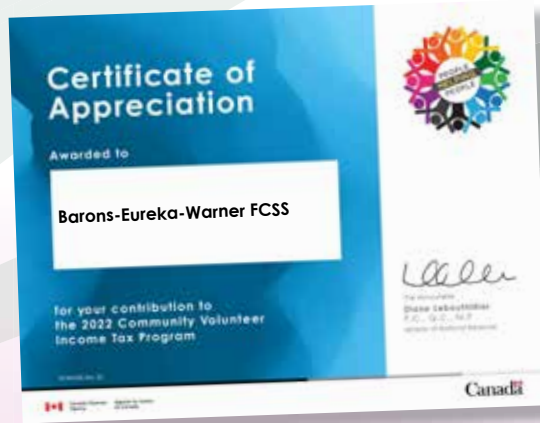
PARTNER:

The Community Volunteer Income Tax Program (CVITP) is offered through a partnership between FCSS and the Canada Revenue Agency. The CVITP arranges for volunteers to complete income tax returns free of charge for eligible individuals with a modest income and simple tax situations.



\$3,416,464

Benefits received by eligible individuals



289 Returns

- Taber
- Vauxhall
- Coaldale
- Picture Butte
- Warner
- Raymond
- Stirling
- Milk River
- Enchant
- Grassy
- Lake
- Barnwell
- Barons
- Wrentham
- Nobleford

2020

305 Returns

- Taber
- Vauxhall
- Coaldale
- Picture Butte
- Warner
- Raymond
- Stirling
- Milk Rive
- Enchant
- Grassy
- Lake
- Barnwell
- Barons
- Wrentham
- Nobleford
- Turin

2021

443 Returns

- Taber
- Vauxhall
- Coaldale
- Picture Butte
- Warner
- Raymond
- Stirling
- Milk River
- Enchant
- Grassy
- Lake
- Barnwell
- Barons
- Wrentham
- Nobleford
- Turin
- Shaughnessy
- Lethbridge County
- Coalhurst
- Coutts

2022

STRENGTHENING EMPLOYMENT SKILLS

Volunteering supports the future success of our youth, families, seniors, and communities.

3,570 Volunteer hours
(31% increase from 2021)

95 Registered volunteers

63%
of volunteers are between the ages of 11-18

PRACTICUM PLACEMENTS AT FCSS:

FCSS embraces the value of sharing knowledge and experience with those preparing to enter the workforce by offering post-secondary students an opportunity to experience practicum placements with FCSS. Students receive mentorship, hands-on learning, and qualified supervision while working with a diverse range of clients within our geographical region. Post-secondary partnership agreements are in place with the following institutions:



NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK:

FCSS staff hosted in-person events to acknowledge and appreciate volunteers in the FCSS service area. **56** volunteers were given appreciation gifts, which included a planting kit, a volunteer certificate, and a snack. This event was funded by the Volunteer Enhancement grant from Volunteer Alberta and the Government of Alberta.



"I have been a volunteer with the FCSS income tax program for 3 years. I enjoy using my various experiences and skills to help others. I also enjoy the challenge of finding tax deductions and benefits that people are eligible for but not aware of. The support we have as a volunteer is great. I have always felt that FCSS staff are there to help even when my questions may seem simple." – Tax Volunteer

STRENGTHENING EMPLOYMENT SKILLS

DO CREW:

The DO Crew and DO Crew Jr. are **volunteering and leadership programs** for youth ages 11-18 hosted in the FCSS service area.



628 Youth volunteer hours

DO Crew - 331

DO Crew Jr. - 297



**YOUTH DO CREW
WINS “UNITED
NATIONS
SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOALS AWARD”**



The Youth DO Crew was awarded with the Employment and Education Award, numbers 4 and 8 on the list of UN SDGs depicted above.



“My son has been involved in Do Crew Jr. Program since the start. I would love to express how truly wonderful and comfortable the program is. I am his mother, obviously I give him rave reviews, but the change in his drive for wanting and actually carrying out community/family service independently is impressive. He wants and seeks things to do for others and knows WHY he wants to do them. He tested positive for Covid when they had the classes to create Christmas Cards for seniors, I was taken back on how disappointed he was when he couldn't attend. The FCSS staff is positively to blame. My son has always been outgoing and enjoy activities, but now he seeks and notices when things need to be done or help. He also approached me to text the FCSS staff a picture back after he finished a project from class at home.” – Parent

BUILDING EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL RESILIENCY

Improving mental health & preventing addiction through individualized supports & services.

ONE-ON-ONE PARENT EDUCATION:

Triple P Positive Parenting Program gives parents simple and practical strategies to help them build strong, healthy relationships, confidently manage their children's behavior and prevent problems from developing.

Top 3 challenges families report:

- 1 Child behaviour
- 2 Family/Relationship dynamic stress
- 3 Financial stress



1,265 Total service hours **838** Total visits

98 Caregivers received this service

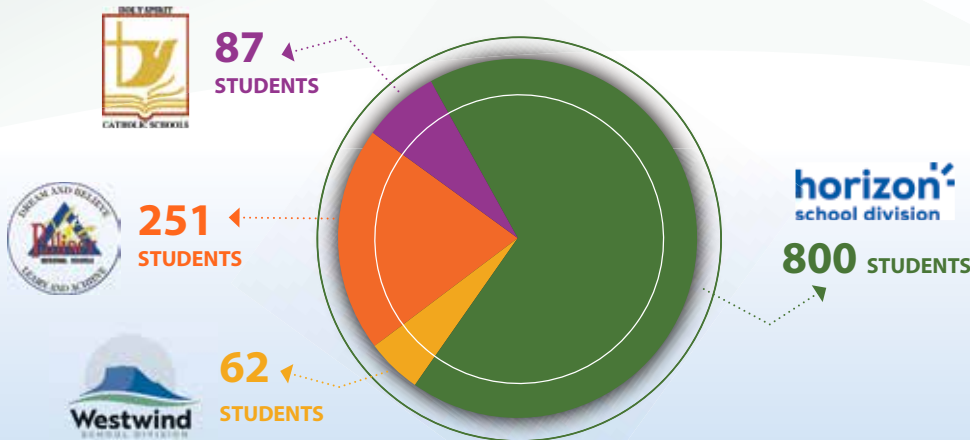
"My favourite thing about this course was the FCSS staff's constant reassurance and understanding that we were going to be okay, that we are good parents, and most importantly, how AMAZING and capable our son is. We are closer as a family because of this program. Forever thankful. It almost sounds fake typing it out.. haha! We are honestly so thankful that this program exists." – Parent

FAMILY SCHOOL LIAISON PARTNERSHIP:

1,200 students across the region received **direct one-on-one support** as a result of FCSS funding.

The Family School Liaison Counselling Teams frequently supported students in the following ways:

- Strategies for emotional and social regulation
- Coping with stress and anxiety
- Seeking out resources for food security and transportation for families
- Coping with family separation and divorce



"We are so grateful for the on-going support of the work in Westwind by FCSS. We cannot express the value of the money or the [lives] that are impacted as a result of being able to extend our services. Thank you for the opportunity of working together."
- Westwind School Division

BUILDING EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL RESILIENCY

YOUTH PHOTO EXHIBIT:

Acknowledging youth's contributions to their community helps increase their self-confidence and willingness to share their talents with others. In 2022, youth's photographs were featured at the Southern Alberta Art Gallery, Barnwell Library, and the Town of Taber's Administration building. Using disposable cameras, the youth captured how they see and experience their communities.



TAMING WORRY DRAGONS:

Taming Worry Dragons is a program for children and parents. It provides children who experience anxiety with the necessary **skills to identify signs and impacts of anxiety and to build their range of coping strategies**. Participants reported a **significant reduction in anxiety symptoms following the group**, that they enjoy making new friends in a therapeutic environment, and had a whole lot of fun!

"I feel better about myself because I am less scared. I learned how to calm myself down. I learned I have adults I can trust. I feel like I do not need others to calm me down." – Youth Client



TOP MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS OF FCSS COUNSELLING CLIENTS:

- Anger
- Anxiety
- Boundaries
- Depression
- Emotional Regulation
- Finances
- Guilt/Shame
- Grief/Loss
- Loneliness
- Self Esteem
- Stress
- Trauma - Adult
- Trauma - Child



COUNSELLING OUTCOME SURVEY RESULTS:

83% AGREE I am good at handling whatever comes my way

81% AGREE I am optimistic about my future

87% AGREE My relationship with my family is enjoyable

“A young girl was having a lot of peer stress and experiencing anxiety. After several sessions learning some social boundary setting and some of her own strengths her anxiety lessened, and she reported having better social relationships.” – Counsellor

“A young client came with some separation anxiety, causing stress in the family, and sleep issues. After addressing the sleep issues the separation anxiety just disappeared.” – Counsellor

PREVENTING AND ADDRESSING FAMILY VIOLENCE

Collaborating with regional organizations to create safe homes.

PARTNERSHIP:

FCSS provides weekly **group programming to shelter residents, consultation services to Safe Haven staff**, and improved access to counselling services by offering **on-site counselling sessions** and group programming to help emotional regulation through culturally-appropriate themes.



SUCCESS STORY:

The FCSS LGM team received a call from an LGM client who needed to leave her abusive husband. With only her children and a few belongings, the client escaped in the family car. RCMP officers, the FCSS LGM team, and the Victim Services team met with the client and her children alongside a range road. Together, the team translated her needs to English and transported the family to a local shelter. The FCSS LGM team supported her to find affordable housing and receive counselling with one of the FCSS LGM speaking counsellors. Today, the mom and children are enjoying life, she states “I feel free and empowered, and know my children are flourishing”. She is living in a safe home with another LGM mom who also left an abusive relationship, and she is regularly attending FCSS play programs and taking ESL classes.



SUCCESS STORY:

An Indigenous client with five children under the age of 18 was referred to FCSS by Safe Haven Women's Shelter. At the time of fleeing violence and during her stay in the shelter, a FCSS Counsellor provided specific support and psychoeducation to help the client acknowledge and identify personal triggers and develop new responses to those triggers. FCSS staff also explored natural and cultural supports and connections to Indigenous roots. Since receiving supports, this client has reconnected with her Indigenous community, including her family, formulating a new sense of self-worth. The mother and her five children are now in a safe home cared for by a parent who is able to meet all of their needs.



Provincial Family
Resource Networks

Supporting seniors to age well through programs, education, and one-on-one client support.

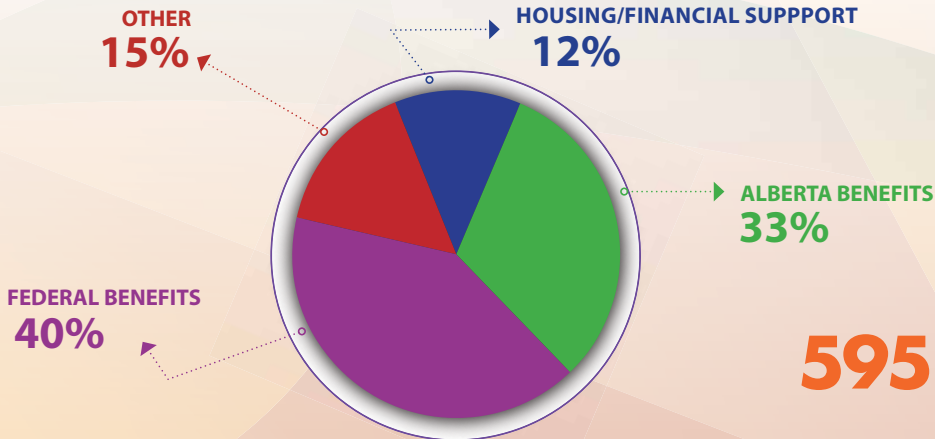
PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT: MEMORY CAFÉ

The Memory Café is a place for individuals with dementia or Alzheimer's – and their care partners - to come, relax, and enjoy themselves. The activities include sensory games that help support healthy brain development, socializing, and resources for care partners. The group that has been attending are new to the area, and it has helped them connect with new friends. Care partners enjoy coming to the Cafe because they feel like they can relax with a supportive group who understands their challenges. Since attending the Café, some care partners have noticed a positive change in their loved one's memory as they have been discussing past events in great detail.



INFORMATION AND SUPPORT FOR SENIORS:

The Senior Services team offers **in-person supports for seniors who need help** filling out paperwork to access their benefits and resources. These benefits include Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income Supplement (Federal Benefits), Special Needs Assistance (Alberta Benefits), and subsidized housing applications (Housing/Financial Support). 'Other' includes discussions around elder abuse, support completing personal directive forms, and additional information about tax returns.



233

Seniors were referred to other organizations or provided with information about resources they could access outside of FCSS programming.

595

 Seniors directly supported (55+)

PARTNERSHIP:

Casual Conversations with Counsellors (CCC) is a partnership between FCSS Counselling Services and the Taber and District Housing Foundation to **address the emotional health needs of the senior residents**. By connecting with seniors in a casual setting with warm drinks and snacks, counsellors promote help-seeking behaviours among seniors and **offer tangible and senior-friendly coping strategies** that help them deal with life's challenges.

"I have been facilitating Casual Conversations with Counsellors with FCSS in the senior manors for a couple of years. The interactions between the counsellor and the seniors have been very positive. They joke and laugh and generally enjoy the times that he is there. The audience has grown from a few to an entire table filled with happy seniors. I know they look forward to these times as I am asked often, when we are coming the next time (even though the dates were clearly displayed) I think this is their way of verbally letting me know they enjoy the program." – Carrie Wilson, Placement Officer at Taber and District Housing Foundation

Did you know?

Seniors who socialize daily or weekly "have a **40% reduced risk** of developing dementia" compared to those who do not.

PREVENTING SOCIAL ISOLATION IN SENIORS:

Planned by the Raymond and District Seniors' Club, the *Living Well, Living Rural Seniors' Conference* was **attended by over 100 seniors** from the FCSS region.

The day included a keynote address from John Carstairs, a catered lunch, and resource tables, which were full of information and supports available to seniors. The day ended with some incredible entertainment from comic, juggler, and performer, Bob Cates (Comedy in Motion).

Seniors were also invited to Vauxhall, Stirling, and Coalhurst to enjoy the comedic stylings of Ken Valgardson, senior and comic from Camrose. Over 100 seniors **reminisced and laughed together**, reminding them that there is always something to smile about.

Funded by the
Government of Canada's
New Horizons for Seniors Program

Canada



STRENGTHENING FAMILIES IN RURAL ALBERTA!





FCSS

Family & Community
Support Services

Supporting and serving your communities.

