



**A welcoming Christian
community giving life meaning.**

“To Give & Receive”

The Story of

Mont St. Joseph Special Care Home

and

Blooms & Buds Intergenerational Childcare

I. Introduction & History

The Sisters of Our Lady of the Cross moved Mont St. Joseph (MSJ) Home to Prince Albert in 1956 from Marcellin, Saskatchewan. In 1990, they transferred ownership of the Home to the Diocese of Prince Albert. We recently celebrated our 50th Anniversary. Today, Bishop Blaise Morand is our spiritual and inspirational leader. Along with the Sisters’ rich tradition of caring and compassion, we have a strong foundation that gives us the courage to dream that we can be **“a welcoming Christian community giving life meaning.”**

II. MSJ in its New Home

In 1997, MSJ Home moved into a “state of the art” 120 bed special care home that provides care and support for the very aged, disabled and mentally challenged. This move was not without its controversy. It was in the midst of health care reform in Saskatchewan. Holy Family, a Catholic hospital with a deep tradition of caring and with a deep following of supporters, was closed by the Government. Out of this turmoil came a commitment to build a “new” MSJ. **It opened on 27 September 1997** with members of staff from the “closed” Holy Family Hospital and the “replaced” Mont St. Joseph Home. With the turmoil, anxiety and anger in the community, the focus for the leadership team and staff was simply to “get here.” To add to the difficulty of this scenario, the Executive Director passed away in early April 1998. Our organization struggled to adopt to its new environment.

III. Who is Mont St. Joseph Home & What do We Represent?

In late 1998 and early 1999, we went through an extensive process involving a number of people from our “extended MSJ family” to determine who and what we really were. **Sister Anne Collins of CHAS** facilitated a process that eventually led to our Vision, Mission, Core Values and Elders’ Bill of Rights. What an experience this was! This working group did such a great job that our organization – everyone – celebrated with relish and pride when the results of their work became public. THIS was worth waiting for and committing to! To compliment their inspirational work, we adopted the **Eden Alternative** that gave us operational direction and purpose. The core concept of Eden is striking simple.

We teach ourselves to see special care homes like MSJ Home as habitats for human beings rather than institutions for the frail and elderly. We observe and learn what Mother Nature has to teach us about the creation of vibrant, vigorous habitats!

The Eden Alternative seeks to eliminate the three plagues of long term care institutions – loneliness, helplessness and boredom. The process of living the Eden Alternative vividly demonstrates how companion animals, the opportunity to care for other living things and the variety and spontaneity that mark our enlivened environment can succeed where pills and therapies fail.

The Eden Alternative has 10 Principles. Today, we shall focus on the first two. Principle I states that “the three plagues of loneliness, helplessness and boredom account for the bulk of suffering in a human community.” Principle II states that “life in a truly human community revolves around close and continuing contact with children, plants and animals. These ancient relationships provide young and old alike with a pathway to a life worth living.”

IV. Planning Processes and Action Plans

We began to understand that **children were a critical part of our plan to live our Mission** on a daily basis. We took an inventory of children’s involvement and discovered that we had three sources of children being in the Home: 1) community schools 2) volunteer opportunities and 3) children visiting Elders with their parents. We became frustrated because there didn’t appear to be viable options to increase this participation.

Through much effort and dialogue, one of our many working groups asked us to consider a Childcare Center and Preschool being located in MSJ Home. Our first reaction was “are they crazy?” Who has ever heard of a such a thing? Where would we put them? How much would renovations cost? How would it be staffed? It appeared that obstacles were everywhere. And, this first reaction left a very strong impression on just about everyone - “are they crazy?!”

Slowly though, we began listening. Father Mark Miller of CHAS constantly reminded us that the Spirit works in mysterious ways. It’s likely that this experience is another perfect example! People started talking about the advantages of having a childcare center and preschool in our midst. We began to envision the opportunities that could occur to live our mission – “to give & receive.” Staff became excited about the possibilities of having their child in a childcare center located in Mont St. Joseph Home!

Our initial plan included a **childcare and preschool** that were privately run. The plan was implemented in 2000 with the support of our Board of Directors and the majority of our staff. We had no support from the Department of Health or the Regional Health Authority. We were quietly reminded that “no one does this type of thing” and asked “why is MSJ Home so committed to such an idea?”

There were initial successes. But, there were challenges too. In 2001, we converted the childcare center from a private operation to a non-profit operation that was licensed by the Department of Early Learning and Childcare. The Center created its own Mission – “Generations together giving life meaning.” It has its own Board of Directors. **Its operational mandate included collaboration and cooperation with MSJ Home to create intergenerational opportunities for their children – and our Elders.**

I now wish to introduce Colleen Bowen, a trustee of the Blooms & Buds Board of Directors. She is a parent with two children involved in the childcare center. She’ll tell you – as Paul Harvey would say - “the rest of the story!”

V. **Blooms & Buds (B&B) Childcare Center**

Initially, Colleen was looking for a **quality childcare center** for her son. Criteria that she was looking for in a center included: 1) quality childcare services 2) clean, supportive and safe environment 3) learning environment 4) licensed and able to care for infants and 5) competent and caring staff. Colleen currently has two children involved with Blooms & Buds. They are two of 31 children that are enrolled with the Center, along with one infant.

Today, the benefits of having a child in the Blooms & Buds Childcare Center are visible in different ways. Certainly, it is a progressive childcare program supplemented by intergenerational opportunities that are created. Unanticipated benefits also became apparent that included: 1) children see and accept disabilities of the elderly and accept the physical differences between them and the Elders 2) children learn compassion for the Elders’ limitations 3) as the children become familiar with their environment and their place within it, they quietly begin to nurture, support and comfort the Elder.

We are also discovering that the Elder is taking an active role in teaching and providing learning opportunities for the children. Every day, there are regular occurrences of the two generations of people mixing and interacting with one another. Some of our “new” children are initially shy of their peers, but hardly ever with the Elders. The Elders welcome and orientate children to their Home! These benefits all have a common theme. In this Home, relationships are being developed by these children with people they would normally not have access to.

The **parents of the children** attending B & B’s have also benefited. Their child is in a childcare center that provides the attributes that Colleen was looking for five years ago. Parents have a quiet confidence and sense of ownership in B&B’s because they know they have direct input into the direction and goals of the Center through their Board of Directors. Because of the Center’s location, they also have exposure to and learn about the successes and challenges of Mont St. Joseph Home. In today’s society, where youth and beauty are constantly emphasized, creating awareness of special care homes and the people who live

and work in them can be powerful ally as the Home struggles to not only meet the collective needs the Elders but to dream of improving the quality of programs and services offered to the Elders – today and tomorrow. So, how does this benefit the parent? Tomorrow, they or a member of their family may be required to live in MSJ Home!

Blooms & Buds enjoy practical benefits by locating in Mont St. Joseph Home. Rental fees are \$1 per year. Collaborative efforts by the two organizations were the criteria used to establish this fee. Today, Blooms & Buds has a progressive Executive Director who understands and is strongly committed to the intergenerational concept. She has a dedicated team that provides effective childcare services to the children. Samantha **promotes the benefits of the intergenerational concept through a provincial board of childcare providers** and travels to other communities sharing our experiences.

VI. MSJ Home

Are there benefits to Mont St. Joseph Home, as a **faith-based special care home**, having a childcare center located within it? You may already have reached some conclusions to this question but perhaps you should “hear the rest of the story.”

Often times, there will be individual Elders who are withdrawn and choose to be socially isolated. They see no reason to live – they have no purpose. Almost without exception, the children of Blooms & Buds, who are here 5 days per week, 52 weeks of the year, provide them with a reason to live. They enjoy the children in group settings as well as in one-to-one visits. **Elders and children develop meaningful personal relationships.** These relationships have created powerful experiences of compassion, love and friendship. There is no joy as great as watching the very young and the very aged intermingling with one another, supporting one another and simply having fun with one another. When Elders and their families evaluate the services of our Home, the children’s presence in this place is one of the key factors that they most appreciate. If it wasn’t for our sense of community, commitment to family, Eden and the human habitat, would we be living our Mission as fully as we are today?

Who else has “won” at MSJ Home? **Our staff certainly has!** Their children have priority for childcare spots when they become available. With their child in the childcare center, it provides opportunities for them to participate in their child’s day. They get to witness their child being in a safe environment where they are learning and having fun. Universally, our staff observes the interaction that happens – formally and informally – every day between our Elders and children. Recently, a staff member shared with us how proud their child was to see “Mom taking care of one of her friends,” ie. an Elder. Think about the potential within that message. A new recruitment tool for the future!

The young children have quietly created an **environment where the opportunity “to give and receive care and compassion for mind, body and spirit based on Catholic ethics and Christian values” happen in a natural way.** The experiences that we witness about the two generations sharing and doing for one another are so powerful. Our mission to “give and receive care and compassion” lives itself daily with our Elders and these children.

VII. Integration of Our Core Values

In the following paragraph, we shall identify our core values. We will illustrate how B&B has supported initiatives to integrate our values into the daily affairs of MSJ Home each and every day.

In the scriptures, Luke 10: 38-42 reminds us to put first things first when Jesus came to visit Mary and Martha. Perhaps that is why we have **hospitality** as our first value. We define hospitality as “a warm and welcoming atmosphere.” In the power point presentation, think about the pictures and stories that create a sense of welcome! The children’s natural inclination to welcome people is infectious. Our Elders’ sense it. Staff and volunteers witness it and subconsciously emulate the children’s hospitable nature. Strangers visit us and are often heard observing that “somehow, this place is different.” It is stated in a very complimentary way. We’re proud of that. The children, like Zacchaeus in Luke 19:6, help us to open doors to our community with joy. Not surprisingly, the CHAC begins its **Health Ethics Guide** with attention to how health and social organizations are to welcome people! Simply, hospitality is key to who **we aspire to be – “a welcoming Christian community giving life meaning.”**

Spirituality – respecting and appreciating the sacredness within each person – is strongly supported and lived through this intergenerational concept. Romans 14: 17-18 provides the true measure of spirituality. It reads “the kingdom of God is not a matter of food and drink but of righteousness, peace and joy in the holy Spirit. Whoever serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by others.” Our **second value of spirituality** is envisioned by striving to “feed” the sacredness of our Elders – not by food and drink – but by doing what’s right for them in a Spirit of peace and joy, thus respecting & appreciating them and loving them unconditionally exactly the way they are, just like Jesus did. Our kids from daycare certainly live this every day. Spirituality calls us out from being focused on ourselves and to turn towards love and compassion for others. **The kids feed our Elders with love. That in turn, feeds the Elders’ soul.** Simply, the children don’t judge our Elders’ frailties, their old age or disabilities. They simply appreciate them for who they are. Somehow, they simply know that all human beings are to be respected at every stage of life. Out of this commitment to create an environment where the intergenerational concept has an opportunity to thrive, come powerful stories of relationships and love that acknowledge the sacredness of each person. **When we think about the legacy that the Sisters**

have left us, perhaps this value is the catalyst that drives everything we dream to be.

Without our third core value of **compassion** – accepting and responding with love to the needs of others – MSJ Home cannot aspire to treat our Elders with dignity, respect and love. Mathew 9: 35 – 36 talks about Jesus’ compassion for the multitudes, healing every sickness and every disease among the people. The *Health Ethics Guide* reminds us that “healing occurs best when people experience that they belong to communities of compassion.” Again, **this intergenerational concept supports and creates a natural environment for compassionate people to thrive.** Whether it is a child providing comfort to an Elder who is lonely or whether it is an Elder visiting a child who has been hurt or whether it is a child’s parents who provide support for an Elder who is dying, people ARE responding to the needs of someone in this – their - community.

“Working as a team dedicated to living the mission” defines **collaboration** which is our fourth core value. The scriptures in Luke 10:1-2 tells us that Jesus sent out his disciples two by two to every place to evangelize. They were united by a common goal. When you first hear of B&B’s and this intergenerational concept, your immediate reaction may be that this is a “strange” collaborative effort. Consciously mixing the very aged and the very young into one place – a place originally designed for “old” people!! But, is this partnership so strange? When we think about this, a vibrant community is one where people of all ages, along with nature, co-exist and thrive together. Sounds like Dr. William Thomas and the Eden Alternative! It is with a real sense of pride that I remember Sister Anne’s strong endorsement of the Eden Alternative as a compliment to the Vision & Mission that she so ably facilitated for us in 1998.

Our fifth and last value is **accountability** which is defined as striving responsibility to meet the needs of our Home community. MSJ Home is accountable to create an environment where people feel welcome and where the well-being of our Elders is paramount. **The Elders’ Bill of Rights states that it is their right “to maintain relationships and integrate with their community.”** The childcare is one visible and proactive way to ensure that this right is nurtured. It must also be recognized that we are stewards of limited financial resources. Luke 19: 11 – 17 speaks to us about “financial accountability.” If an employee’s child is with B&B’s during their day, there is no need to utilize leaves directly or indirectly related to their dependent child. B&B also creates an environment where people can enjoy the diversity of their work. This concept also creates a marketing tool for people who are placing their loved one in a special care home. It has assisted us recruit personnel who are seeking an employer who recognizes and supports the family unit. All of these benefits contribute to our stewardship of scarce financial resources.

VIII. Conclusion

This narrative and our presentation to CHAC highlight the successes that we have enjoyed in this unique environmental setting.

This initiative was not and is not without challenges and risks. There are some who do not believe that children should be in an “old folks” home. The health care system itself is still not supportive of this concept. There will always be the quiet skeptics who are watching – “they are doing something different – we need to WATCH them.” But, that’s OK, we love the attention! We’re proud that the Health Quality Council has visited us to learn more about our experiences. These are good developments. Elders in institutional settings and our very young deserve these opportunities elsewhere. So, their interest and your participation in this CHAC Conference provide us with hope that we’ll get the message out there!

There are risks around infection control and disease that you need to be aware of. As much as we love the children and their parents, their traffic creates incremental work especially for our support personnel. There have been and always will be those types of risk. Please understand that these challenges – and others like them - can be addressed. Good planning and teamwork are essential for those challenges and this concept to be successful. It also goes without saying, timing of implementation is critical. You may have a great concept and a good plan but poor timing could impair or destroy this concept.

Believe us, though, the rewards of this intergenerational initiative between Mont St. Joseph Home and Blooms & Buds Childcare Center far outweigh any risk, challenge or problem that may occur! If this narrative and our story today does not convince you, come and visit us at Mont St. Joseph Home. Witness our efforts to “to give and receive care and compassion for mind, body and spirit based on Catholic ethics and Christian values.” You will immediately sense the hospitality and warmth. You’ll melt when you see the children and Elders interacting comfortably and in full trust with one another. It’s worth the visit, your time and your commitment. It will make such a difference to so many people.

Finally, I urge us all to reflect on the message of Isaiah. He says “to watch for the new things I am going to do. It is happening already – you can see it now.” Isaiah, thank-you for providing us with hope.

Truly, this is God’s work!

Brian B. Martin



Our Vision – or dream – is to be:

A Welcoming Christian Community
Giving Life Meaning

Our Mission is:

To give and receive
care and compassion
for mind, body and spirit
based on
Catholic ethics
and
Christian values.

Core Values

- Hospitality -

A warm and welcoming atmosphere

- Spirituality -

Respecting and appreciating the sacredness
within each person

- Compassion -

Accepting and responding with love
to the needs of others

- Collaboration -

Working as a team dedicated to
living the mission

- Accountability -

Striving responsibly to meet the needs
of our Home community



Resident/Elder Bill of Rights

**It is the right of the Residents/Elders of
Mont St. Joseph Home to:**

- Live with dignity, self worth, and independence
- Be recognized for their uniqueness as a person
- Have their life respected, nurtured and cherished
- Receive care that fosters their spiritual, physical, psychological, emotional and social well-being
- Receive care provided by compassionate, competent and knowledgeable staff
- Give as well as receive care
- Have the opportunity for companionship, variety and spontaneity
- Be informed, consulted and exercise choices
- Maintain their relationships and integrate with their community
- Be in a safe and accepting environment

Eden Alternative
The “TEN PRINCIPLES”

1. The Three Plagues of loneliness, helplessness, and boredom account for the bulk of suffering in a human community.
2. Life in a truly human community revolves around close and continuing contact with children, plants and animals. These ancient relationships provide young and old alike with a pathway to a life worth living.
3. Loving companionship is the antidote to loneliness. In a human community, we must provide easy access to human and animal companionship.
4. To give care to another makes us stronger. To receive care gracefully is a pleasure and an art. A healthy human community promotes both of these virtues in its daily life, seeking always to balance one with the other.
5. Trust in each other allows us the pleasure of answering the needs of the moment. When we fill our lives with variety and spontaneity, we honor the world and our place in it.
6. Meaning is the food and water that nourishes the human spirit. It strengthens us. The counterfeits of meaning tempt us with hollow promises. In the end, they always leave us empty and alone.
7. Medical treatment should be the servant of genuine human caring, never its master.
8. In a human community, the wisdom of the elders grows in direct proportion to the honor and respect accorded to them.
9. Human growth must never be separated from human life.
10. Wise leadership is the lifeblood of any struggle against the three plagues.
For it, there can be no substitute.

CONTACTS

Brian B. Martin, B. Comm
Executive Director
Mont St. Joseph Home
777 28th Street East
Prince Albert, SK S6V 8C2
Phone: (306)953-4500
Fax: (306)953-4550
Email: bmartin@montstjoseph.org
www.montstjoseph.org/home/presentation.ppt

Samantha Simmons
Executive Director
Blooms & Buds Intergenerational Child Care Centre
777 – 28th Street East
Prince Albert, SK S6V 8C2
Phone: (306) 764-3101
Fax: (306)953-4550

Renee Durell, Consultant
Community Resources & Employment
Department of Learning
Box 6500
Melfort, SK S0E 1A0

William H. Thomas, M.D.
742 Turnpike Road
Sherburne, NY 13460
Phone: (607)674-5232
Fax: (607)674-6723
Email: info@edenalternative.com
Web site: www.edenalternative.com