



Kids These Days – Celebrating Social Workers

Every year, the first week of March is dedicated to celebrating some people whom you may likely never meet—unless you happen to find yourself on a rough patch along life’s road. In that case, you might have their names programmed into your cellphone, posted on your fridge, or etched in your memory.

Social workers are often the unsung heroes who dedicate their lives to helping vulnerable people become strong. In my world of Child and Family Services, I’ve been privileged to encounter many of them and see for myself the impact of their work with children and families. I’ve also heard young people speak with passion and conviction about how a caseworker was an important bedrock of support when their world got turned upside down, making the difference between hope and despair, helping guide them to a brighter future.

A social worker’s role may range from mentoring troubled youth, to helping a young mother improve her parenting skills, to helping a child in crisis find a permanent home. They are caring professionals who provide emotional, social, physical and financial support and counselling to the ‘clients’ on their caseload. Their job can be unpredictable, include desperate calls in the middle of the night, and can sometimes be heart wrenching as they attempt to step into very complex situations to ensure the safety and well-being of children. But it can also be deeply rewarding.

During National Social Worker’s Week, we tip our hat to great social workers like Charles who cooked turkey with all the trimmings so the youth in his care could have Christmas dinner. Social workers like Kurt who, rather than meeting his new young client in an office, arranged to meet him at the rink so they could go skating and chat in a friendlier environment. Social workers like Garry who threw a party to celebrate with a foster child who was returning home to his family. Social workers like those who always make a point of attending the ceremony when a youth in care graduates from high school. And countless other social workers who are dedicated to the children and families who are so much more than names on a file. Their great work often goes unrecognized and uncelebrated because it’s so very important to protect the identity of children in care.

During National Social Worker’s Week in March, we are pleased to recognize such workers across Alberta— those whose mission is to help the vulnerable members of our society become stronger. Theirs is a valuable, often behind-the-scenes role that deserves to be celebrated, even if you never have occasion to meet a social worker in person. So please join me in offering a heartfelt thanks to these caring individuals who are making a profound difference in people’s lives.

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Feedback or comments are welcome and can be sent via email to david.rideout@gov.ab.ca