

## HIGHLIGHTS

FamilySmart™ CEO  
Keli Anderson Says Partnership  
With CASA Has Been  
a Big Success ..... 3

Alberta Health Services CEO  
Dr. Verna Yiu & Mark Snaterse,  
Executive Director for  
Addiction and Mental Health,  
Edmonton Zone ..... 4

CASA's Partnership with the  
Edmonton and Area Fetal  
Alcohol Network (EFAN) Goes  
Back More Than a Decade ..... 6

*In conversation with:*  
Marlene Hanson, Director,  
Diversity Education and  
Comprehensive School Health,  
Edmonton Public Schools ..... 7

CASA'S Partnership with the  
Dept. of Psychiatry Takes a Big  
Step Forward with the Launch of  
the new CASA Research Chair ..... 9



# CASA chronicles

Summer 2020



## IN CONVERSATION WITH:

### Dr. Denise Milne, CEO of CASA and CASA Foundation

**Q** *CASA has many key partnerships, as profiled in this issue of the newsletter. Why are CASA's partnerships so important?*

**A** Forming partnerships is one of our key strategic pillars at CASA, along with access, sustainability and quality. CASA wouldn't have the reach it does without our many valuable partners.

**Q** *For example?*

**A** The CASA Research Chair in Child and Adolescent Mental Health, in partnership with the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Alberta, is a great example of strong partnerships. Other examples are FamilySmart™, Alberta Health Services (AHS), Head Start agencies, Children's Services, and Edmonton Public Schools (EPS). These connections, and many others, are huge for CASA.



**Q** *How does CASA go about forming new partnerships?*

**A** Some partnerships are developed quite deliberately with partners who we already have built good relationships with, while others happen serendipitously. Other partnerships are a result of our colleagues at CASA who provide incredible input, including the members of the CASA Youth Council (CYC) and the Family Advisory Council (FAC). One such partnership is the FAC Photovoice Research Project with Dr. Dorothy Badry, Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary. This has been a significant undertaking. Her colleague Dr. David Nicholas, who is also with the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Calgary, is conducting research on the FamilySmart™ Parents-in-Residence (PiR) Program. As well, each program at CASA has numerous partnerships. All these pieces make us whole. I'm not sure people are really aware of the breadth of these partnerships. That's why I wanted to focus on them in this issue of the *CASA Chronicles*.

Forming partnerships is one of our key strategic pillars at CASA, along with access, sustainability and quality.

*continued on page 2*

**Q** *The events of the past few months have been unprecedented, with the COVID-19 pandemic forcing the shutdown of virtually the entire economy. How has CASA adapted to these challenges?*

**A** COVID has had a huge impact on CASA, but since we are an essential service, we've been carrying on much of our work through virtual platforms. For the most part we've managed really well, but it's a huge shift in practice when you suddenly go from face-to-face meetings to telephone or Webex meetings.

**Q** *Did CASA operate with a skeletal staff throughout the lockdown?*

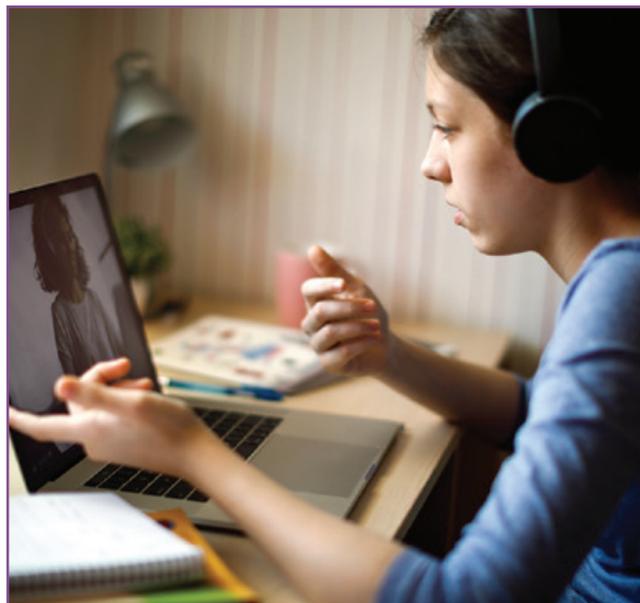
**A** No. All of CASA's services continued for the most part; we just delivered them differently. Some administrative staff in areas like finance or evaluation and research worked from home, but our clinical staff were here working at CASA. CASA House did shut down temporarily and nine of the 19 beds are now filled with youth who were in the program prior to COVID or with new admissions.

**Q** *As CEO, did you initiate any other special measures during the lockdown?*

**A** I prepared an essential services document for staff, explaining all the public health measures CASA had to implement to be in alignment with AHS, the Public Health Orders from Alberta Health, and the guidance of the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC). To do that, we were constantly in touch with AHS to ensure we were current in our practices under COVID. The COVID situation is fluid with a lot of uncertainty, and the staff and physicians are working at their highest level based on the information we all have. They're doing the best they can, so we just need to be a bit adaptable and very respectful of staff and patient needs. We also established an internal COVID Emergency Response Team who meet daily to discuss any pertinent updates and they keep staff apprised of any changes.

**Q** *The cancellation of CASA Carnival left a big hole in your fundraising activities, obviously. How successful was the CASA Virtual Gala?*

**A** Due to the pandemic, we had to change our fundraising strategy. We thought it was important to try a Virtual Gala and that effort raised just over \$27,000. But CASA Carnival usually raises over half a million dollars. We rely on it and other CASA Foundation events to help us fund three specific areas – research, infrastructure, and program needs – so the cancellation of the live gala had a huge impact on us.



**Q** *What kind of feedback did you get from CASA's Impact of the Pandemic on Mental Health webcast series?*

**A** The feedback was very good, so I submitted a proposal to Alberta Health for their Phase One funding under the Pandemic to continue it, and we did, in fact, receive funding to continue the webinar series.

**Q** *What about the status of CASA's provincial funding grant. Anything new in that regard?*

**A** No, our funding has been stable so far this year, and it's too early to look ahead to 2021 at this point. Everyone is still very focused on the COVID issue.

**Q** *As discussed elsewhere in this issue of the newsletter, a lead candidate for the CASA Research Chair has been identified. Is there anything else you can tell us about this individual?*

**A** Well, I can tell you the candidate is a she, and she is really excited about coming here. Our staff have met her and she did a presentation for them. She is a top research scientist in children's mental health, she is known internationally, and we are now in the final stages of processing all of her related paperwork. We are hoping she will be in place by January.

All of CASA's services continued for the most part; we just delivered them differently.



## FamilySmart™ CEO Keli Anderson Says Partnership With CASA Has Been a Big Success

More than a year after forming a new partnership with CASA aimed at fostering a more family-centred approach to mental health services for children and youth, Keli Anderson calls it a success.

The founder and CEO of FamilySmart – a B.C.-based organization that provides trained Parents-in-Residence (PiRs) to support and mentor other parents or family members struggling to help kids with mental health or substance use challenges – says CASA’s openness and flexibility helped the partnership get off on the right foot.

“Compared to some other organizations we’ve partnered with, our experience with CASA has been refreshingly novel. Denise (CASA and CASA Foundation CEO) listened to the families on CASA’s Family Advisory Council (FAC) who had heard what FamilySmart is doing in B.C., and she took action. She didn’t decide that CASA was going to create its own parallel peer support program,” Anderson says.

“I give Denise credit for that. That is how partnering is supposed to work. We have seen that Denise looks to see who has expertise and she invites those with expertise to partner with CASA. By contrast, FamilySmart has seen others try to replicate our expertise in-house, rather than partner to bring our expertise in. That’s the difference.”

Under terms of the partnership, CASA Foundation provided funding to hire two FamilySmart PiRs, starting April 1, 2019. The two are Lori Erickson and Krista Nystrom.

Prior to the launch of the partnership, Anderson and her team led FamilySmart training sessions in Edmonton, attended by about 60 participants.

“We can tell the people who keep funding us and who want more from us. They’re people who absolutely have their eye on the people they are serving. That’s their top priority. Denise clearly knows who she is in service to, so as leaders we have a lot in common,” says Anderson.

Besides its two Parents-in-Residence (PiRs) at CASA, FamilySmart has a network of some 40 part-time PiRs and Youths-in-Residence (YiRs) across B.C.

Anderson established FamilySmart in 2015, when the two organizations she co-founded – the FORCE Society for Kids Mental Health (Families Organized for Recognition and Care Equality) and the National Institute of Families for Child & Youth Mental Health – merged. Anderson co-founded the FORCE in 2000 and the Institute of Families in 2010.



Early this year, Anderson and Dr. David Nicholas, a University of Calgary Faculty of Social Work Professor, launched a research study to evaluate the PiR initiative with CASA.

The study has three basic aims: (1) to examine the experience of the FamilySmart PiR program from the perspective of both service recipients and PiRs; (2) to explore the experiences of new PiRs as well as more experienced PiRs; and (3) to contrast the family support needs and experiences of parents whose children have a coexisting neurodevelopmental disability with those who do not.

Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, progress on the study has been somewhat delayed, but Anderson says the research should be completed this fall. Findings will be based on interviews with roughly 20 families who have been involved with the PiR program.



Compared to some other organizations we’ve partnered with, our experience with CASA has been refreshingly novel.





IN CONVERSATION WITH:

## Alberta Health Services CEO Dr. Verna Yiu & Mark Snaterse, Executive Director for Addiction and Mental Health, Edmonton Zone

**Q** *What impact has the pandemic had on AHS, and how disruptive has it been to your management team?*

**A** *Dr. Yiu:* How much time do you have? (laughs) You know, this is our fifth major disaster in 11 years. We started off with H1N1 in 2009, when AHS was formed. Then we had the Slave Lake wildfire in 2011, followed by the floods in Calgary and southern Alberta in 2013, the Fort McMurray wildfire in 2016, and in 2020, COVID-19. It almost seems for AHS, every two to three years we have a disaster.

The first time we (AHS) had to deal with an emergency disaster back in 2009, it wasn't exactly smooth sailing, but with each of these disasters we've compiled hundreds of learnings. Our Business Continuity Emergency Disaster Management Team has been excellent at ensuring that we've got a strong incident command structure in place, so when we are confronted with a disaster we get into action right away. The Fort McMurray wildfire was the largest evacuation ever in Canada, with over 80,000 people evacuated. We were able to evacuate the Northern Lights Regional Hospital in two hours, so it really was incredible.

**Q** *How does COVID-19 compare to previous disasters?*

**A** *Dr. Yiu:* The pandemic has been all-consuming for everyone. In previous crises we've had a focal point or a localized disaster. But the pandemic affected and involved everyone, so we've had to adapt our emergency management system to address it across all portfolios in all five zones.

**Q** *Has AHS also seen a spike in demand for mental health services?*

*Dr. Yiu:* Not during COVID-19, no. When we looked at our statistics from March to June, it was actually comparable to the same months last year, so the numbers weren't higher. But we expect the numbers to be significantly worse in about six months out. That's what we saw in Fort McMurray.



**Q** *Can you tell me about AHS's relationship with CASA, and how far back it goes?*

**A** *Dr. Yiu:* In my old life when I was at the University of Alberta, and in my clinical practice, we connected with CASA repeatedly for my patients. I knew about the great work that CASA does supporting child and youth mental health in Edmonton, and was always very aware of the organization. When I joined AHS in 2012, Dr. Chris Eagle was the CEO. He was a strong supporter of CASA and really made us aware of the strong partnership we have.

*Mark Snaterse:* Capital Health (AHS's predecessor) started its relationship with CASA in the early to mid-1990s. Government funding that would previously go directly to CASA began to flow through Capital Health, and as more investments were made in children's mental health we started to develop funding relationships with CASA as well. Today we're not just a funder but a partner.

Our organizations both deliver services to kids and families and we're always striving to do it in a way that's as coordinated and integrated as possible. The leadership of CASA and the leadership of AHS's Children's Mental Health Programs in the Edmonton Zone are in contact literally on a weekly basis, and kids and families flow relatively seamlessly between our programs.

*continued on page 5*

“ The pandemic has been all-consuming for everyone. ”



**Q** *AHS is a huge organization with many areas of responsibility. How big a priority is child and adolescent mental health?*

**A** *Dr. Yiu:* Mental health is one of our major provincial portfolios at AHS, and Addiction and Mental Health Services is really important to us. We know how prevalent it is in society and the impacts it has on acute care.

The youth and child component of Addiction and Mental Health is also very important. We know that when we don't address issues early on in childhood, we know that's where they will end up, so it's really important for us to make sure that we collaborate with community groups. We can't do it all, and we don't expect to do it all. We consider ourselves key partners with agencies like CASA.

**Q** *As a community-based nonprofit with its own independent board, does that change the way AHS interacts with CASA?*

**A** *Dr. Yiu:* I don't think so. We deal with a lot of other community nonprofits that have their own boards and I think it's great. Having a diverse board that can help steer the direction for the organization is very important. We also respect the fact that there are many Albertans who like to volunteer and give their time to organizations like CASA, which are so important. Mark do you want to add something?

*Mark Snaterse:* Absolutely. We have a lot of contact with the management of CASA, with Denise (CASA CEO Dr. Denise Milne) and her leadership team. Occasionally if we're asked to, we'll come in and support Denise and her leadership team if they're presenting to CASA's board, and we always try to have a presence at CASA's Annual General Meeting, so we're recognized as a strong and supportive partner.

“ I think we've got the opportunity to have a real world-class, internationally-recognized researcher, leading children's mental health research in our zone and provincially actually, so this is an excellent opportunity. ”

**Q** *CASA is in the late stages of recruiting a top candidate for the new Research Chair in Child and Adolescent Mental Health, a joint initiative with the Department of Psychiatry. How important is this?*

**A** *Dr. Yiu:* We get really excited when there are partnerships through the universities, because universities are really critical partners for AHS. I thought this was a very strategic move by CASA. We need strong research in this area, and if you look at children's health in general, research is not as strong obviously as for adults. So anytime we can actually get additional support for research and innovation in child and adolescent mental health, we're definitely at the table.

*Mark Snaterse:* We've been involved in partnership with CASA on that recruitment effort and we're equally excited. I think we've got the opportunity to have a real world-class, internationally-recognized researcher, leading children's mental health research in our zone and provincially actually, so this is an excellent opportunity.



“ I got involved in 2005, coordinating what this network was going to look like. In 2007 the province approached us – specifically Denise, who was in government then. ”

Today, EFAN is one of 12 FASD Networks in the province.

“Even if we added up all the other neurodevelopmental disabilities, such as autism or cerebral palsy, there are still more people with FASD,” says Rogozinsky.

Roughly 52,000 residents of the Edmonton region and 174,000 people in Alberta have FASD, or about 4% of the general population.

“EFAN’s role is about service, support and education, and we’re structured around pillars. Assessment and diagnosis is one of them. We completely fund our adult clinic at the Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital and we contribute to the Glenrose pediatric clinic, along with AHS.”

EFAN’s second pillar is aimed at supporting individuals and caregivers, and a third is focused on FASD prevention through education and training, as well as support for women at risk of having children with FASD.

“EFAN currently receives just over \$5 million a year from the province, and we fund 19 different projects. Some community agencies have multiple FASD programs. In total there are now about 37 nonprofits and government departments who are part of EFAN.”

CASA has partnered with EFAN for well over a decade, she says.

“We funded CASA’s FASTRACS (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Treatment, Resources, and Community Supports) Program right from the start. Originally the program worked on a one-on-one basis and offered sensory and behavioural assessments for children, and developed strategies connecting the home and school, involving educators, parents and caregivers,” she explains.

“Today there is an FASD-trained parent who also does group work with parents in the program, providing education and support. FASTRACS also still has a sensory and behavioural component as well.”

More recently, EFAN partnered with CASA to launch a First Nations FASD program. “Denise really took the time to figure out what the program should look like, coming from an agency in the city working on the reserve, and being respectful of those communities.”

Although public awareness of FASD has grown significantly since EFAN was initially formed, Rogozinsky says there is still a long way to go.

“When we look at our social service agencies it is safe to assume that children with FASD are over-represented in the child welfare system in Alberta, so we need to make sure that support staff have the education and training needed to support someone with FASD effectively.”



## CASA’s Partnership with the Edmonton and Area Fetal Alcohol Network (EFAN) Goes Back More Than a Decade

Like CASA, Lisa Rogozinsky has long had a keen interest in raising public awareness around fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD).

As coordinator of the Edmonton and Area Fetal Alcohol Network (EFAN), Rogozinsky has worked closely with Dr. Denise Milne, CEO of CASA and CASA Foundation, for more than a decade.

“EFAN originated with a group of nonprofits in 1998, when there wasn’t a lot of discussion about FASD, so the programs that started in Edmonton were among the first in Alberta,” she explains.

“I got involved in 2005, coordinating what this network was going to look like. In 2007 the province approached us – specifically Denise, who was in government then,” she adds.

“Denise is a mover and shaker. For those of us working in the FASD world, it was really Denise who got the province to partner with us on the prevention, assessment, diagnosis and creation of supports for those with FASD and their caregivers.”



IN CONVERSATION WITH:

## Marlene Hanson, Director, Diversity Education and Comprehensive School Health, Edmonton Public Schools



**Q** Tell me about Edmonton Public Schools (EPS's) relationship with CASA.

**A** I don't know the full history, but I'm struck by how long CASA has been providing critical mental health supports for children, youth and families in our city. I am really awestruck that they've been in existence for roughly 30 years. That really speaks to their leadership. Most of us weren't even talking about mental health 30 years ago!

**Q** How does the EPS work with CASA?

**A** The children and youth who attend CASA's Day Programs or the Trauma and Attachment Group (TAG) Program or the Pre-Kindergarten Program are our kids. They come from our schools, they get the treatment and support they need at CASA and come back to us, so it's really important to have a positive working relationship with CASA.

**Q** Tell me about your role with the EPS.

**A** The Diversity Education and Comprehensive School Health unit is one of three units within Inclusive Learning Services, working alongside Early Years and Specialized Supports and Services. Just as CASA functions with multi-disciplinary teams so do our School-Linked Teams, which include speech language therapists, occupational therapists, psychologists, social workers, and emotional behaviour specialists, among other disciplines.

“ The children and youth who attend CASA's Day Programs or the Trauma and Attachment Group (TAG) Program or the Pre-Kindergarten Program are our kids. ”

**Q** How do these units fit within the overall EPS then?

**A** Our role centrally is supporting schools and building capacity in our staff, so while we talk about mental health supports for students the work in our unit is also about supporting our staff, to ensure they have the tools they need to support students.

**Q** What is the EPS's involvement with the Dr. Roger Bland Community Lecture Series on Improving Child and Youth Mental Health?

**A** We promote the lecture series across our entire school division. We've also provided panelists for some of the sessions. One session featured Dr. Michael Marshall, from the U of A, on Transgender Mental Health, and one of our consultants sat on the panel for that, for instance. Some of our teachers have also been part of those panels and we also supported the videotaping of last year's sessions.

**Q** What other initiatives have you supported at CASA?

**A** Our Board of Trustees has supported a contribution towards the CASA Research Chair in Child and Adolescent Mental Health, for which an appointment is still pending, I believe. It underlines the importance of this work being grounded in research and evidence.

*continued on page 8*

**Q** *Has the EPS's view of mental health evolved over the years?*

**A** Definitely, yes. About four years ago when we started creating our mental health framework, we wanted to make sure it was evidence-based, so we started working with Dr. Stan Kutcher. He's a psychiatrist from Dalhousie University and is now a Senator. We introduced the Go-To Educator Training Program, which is an opportunity for every school to have a 'go-to' person who understands the language of mental health. In the past year we've also created a Mental Health Literacy flip book for school professionals. It complements the Go-To Educator Training and looks at mental health from the perspective of supporting healthy brain development in children and youth.

**Q** *Tell me more about the work your unit does.*

**A** There are two components I'll focus on. One is the Comprehensive School Health Model. It is a holistic way of creating a healthy school community. Secondly, our Mental Health Framework aligns with what we call the Pyramid of Interventions in looking at universal, targeted, and specialized supports. We're really trying to promote the idea that we all have mental health, and depending on what is going on in our lives, we can be in any one of these parts of the pyramid at one time.



**Q** *Can you elaborate on that?*

**A** Sure, at the top of the pyramid, I may be someone with a diagnosed mental illness such as depression or schizophrenia or I may be grieving a death in the family. That's a mental health challenge. We're trying to ensure everyone has this common language about mental health. We have specialized services at the top of the pyramid, and that's where our partnership with CASA kicks in. What's important is for educators to know the pathways to, through and from care, when supports are needed.

**Q** *Is there much support from the EPS's trustees?*

**A** Absolutely. We've had strong advocacy from the EPSB's Board of Trustees. They have a committee that advocates for mental health supports in schools. There is a real emphasis here on student well-being, student citizenship and providing supports for the whole child. All of that supports our shared vision, which is ensuring the success of our students, one student at a time.



“ We've had strong advocacy from the EPSB's Board of Trustees. ”



“We’re all extremely impressed with this candidate, but since the individual doesn’t currently live in Canada, we also need to complete a Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA).”

(left) Scott Philips



## CASA’S Partnership with the Dept. of Psychiatry Takes a Big Step Forward with the Launch of the new CASA Research Chair

More than two years after CASA and the University of Alberta Department of Psychiatry unveiled plans to launch the new CASA Research Chair in Child and Adolescent Mental Health, a top candidate has been recruited.

The individual can’t be identified just yet. There are still regulatory requirements to meet, including obtaining clinical accreditation from the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta (CPSA).

But the process is going smoothly, confirms Dr. Andy Greenshaw, Associate Chair – Research in the Department of Psychiatry, and a member of the CASA Research Chair recruitment team.

“We’re all extremely impressed with this candidate, but since the individual doesn’t currently live in Canada, we also need to complete a Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA),” adds Scott Phillips, the department’s Assistant Chair – Administration.

“That is required by the federal government whenever a position is open that a Canadian could fill. But if things unfold as we expect, we hope this person will be in place by January.”

An intense global recruitment effort to identify the ideal candidate began in September 2018, several months after CASA announced a 10-year, \$5 million commitment to the Department of Psychiatry

to help fund the CASA Research Chair and two clinician-scientist associates. Once hired, they’ll be based at CASA.

“Under our partnership with CASA, the department is providing a professorship and CASA is providing an envelope of research money over 10 years. We believe the research will be much more effectively served through this integrated approach,” says Dr. Greenshaw.

“There are currently a limited number of specialized staff – particularly for child psychiatrists – so there hasn’t been a significant amount of research in child and youth mental health. There has been a lot of focus on conditions like FASD (fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, autism and ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder), but not on the full range of mental disorders. So we had a lot of discussion about the need for it, and with the launch of the Research Chair, CASA will become a prominent partner for the department.”

The Department is also a co-sponsor of CASA’s Dr. Roger Bland Lecture Series on Improving Child and Youth Mental Health, named in honour of a former Chair of the Department of Psychiatry.

On the academic side, psychiatry residents have undergone rotations in child and adolescent psychiatry at CASA for many years. CASA is also a preferred training site for residents who wish to pursue additional sub-specialty training in child and adolescent psychiatry.

“CASA has been an invaluable partner for this Department, on both the research side and the educational side. CASA is a vital community voice that both informs us what is needed and gives us an outlet in which to work with the community in a much more aligned manner,” says Phillips.

“CASA has trained our residents for years, and the launch of the new CASA Research Chair will give us the ability to enhance an area of research that we want to strengthen. It has been a very productive relationship and we’ve always been able to support each other.”



## Family Advisory Council's Photovoice Research Project is Moving Ahead Under Principle Research Investigator, Dr. Dorothy Badry

Dr. Dorothy Badry first crossed paths with Dr. Denise Milne, CEO of CASA and CASA Foundation, decades ago. At the time, both were working to support Albertans struggling with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD).

"Denise and I go back to the days when she was the manager of the Alberta government's FASD strategic initiative and I was working in child protection in Calgary," says Dr. Badry.

"I did that for 16 years, from 1986 to 2002. That's where I learned about FASD and the related challenges families face. Denise is quite the mover and shaker. She brings new ideas to the table all the time, and really raised awareness around FASD."

Dr. Badry joined the University of Calgary's Faculty of Social Work in 2002. Now a Professor, she continues to research FASD and other issues.

"I belong to the CanFASD (Canadian Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder) Research Network, which has several research leads. I'm the CanFASD child welfare research lead, so it definitely remains a passion for me," she says.

Dr. Badry is also passionate about using Photovoice – a visual research methodology – as a way to explore, and give visual expression to, key questions around difficult social and health issues.

The Photovoice pre-release video on Canada's Mental Health Pandemic, posted May 29, 2020 was inspired by family experience and a loss of services during the COVID-19 lockdown are reflected in this work.

About 3 minutes

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DwQunIA5xQU>

Short version – about 5 minutes – Am I Enough?

Released June 17, 2020 on YouTube and Facebook

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HF4Kbx\\_GWko](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HF4Kbx_GWko)

Long version – about 16 minutes - Am I Enough?

Released June 17, 2020 on YouTube and Facebook

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YSoKQxHOlhk>

"We did an FASD prevention project using Photovoice in the Northwest Territories in 2014, involving women from four communities. The research question we asked was: What does health and healing look like for me and my community? It gave us some real insights into Indigenous women's perspectives on health and healing in their communities."

A photo essay by one of Dr. Badry's colleagues emerged from that research, and a related 2015 conference at the University of Alberta, called Wisdom Engaged, in turn led to a chapter contribution in a forthcoming book.

Given that, it's no surprise that when CASA's Family Advisory Council (FAC) decided last year to pursue a Photovoice project of its own, Dr. Milne sought out her old friend and colleague, Dr. Badry.

Those involved in the FAC's Photovoice Research project offered a glimpse of their work via a four-minute 'teaser' video at CASA's May 29th Virtual Gala. The Research project aims to address a simple but profound question many mental health caregivers face: Am I Enough?

"Denise had wanted to get this project off the ground for a few years, and when the FAC looked at it last fall, they decided it was the right time to proceed," says Dr. Badry.

"I then obtained ethical approval through the CFREB (Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board) at the University of Calgary, and we conducted a Photovoice workshop with the FAC in March. By the time we completed it people were well trained and ready to go."

Barely a week later, the COVID-19 pandemic hit with full force, prompting a province-wide lockdown. But Dr. Badry and the Photovoice project team forged ahead, holding a series of weekly virtual meetings to mark their progress.

"Members of the FAC really took up the challenge and produced photos that definitely respond to that question. It's a remarkable group of parents and they worked very hard on this project. Despite the pandemic, it's definitely still moving forward and we're trying to figure out the best way to completely roll it out."



IN CONVERSATION WITH:

## Dr. Christopher McCabe, CEO, Institute of Health Economics



**Q** *What is the Institute of Health Economics (IHE)?*

**A** We are a not-for-profit that was founded by the Alberta government, the Universities of Alberta and Calgary, with the broader health ecosystem as partners. Our *raison d'être* is to support evidence-informed policymaking, whether it's at the clinical practice level, the health system level or government funding level.

**Q** *When was IHE formed?*

**A** We've been around for 25 years. I took over as CEO in June 2017.

**Q** *What is your professional background?*

**A** I'm a health economist and I have been around for about 28 years. I was in the U.K. working in academic health economics and policy from about 1994 to 2011, when we emigrated here and I took up a research chair at the University of Alberta. I'm still on faculty at the University of Alberta. I was seconded to take up this position with IHE in 2017.

**Q** *Tell me about IHE's relationship with CASA.*

**A** We have a long history of collaboration with CASA. Under IHE's previous CEO, we had a very big interest in fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) and its mental health implications, so IHE partnered with CASA on that agenda. More recently we co-sponsored CASA's Dr. Roger Bland Lecture Series on Improving Child and Youth Mental Health. We've also been a consistent partner with CASA and its funders whenever they needed an economic lens around an issue. If CASA needed to add an economic component to an argument for some initiative, or to evaluate a program they invested in, we've been their go-to partner.

**Q** *What priorities has IHE focused on since you became CEO?*

**A** I've been trying to do a certain amount of revitalizing of the organization. That's really about revitalizing our partnerships. The external world in health has changed greatly over the last decade.

“ We have a long history of collaboration with CASA. ”

**Q** *How so?*

**A** We continue to work directly for the government, and we have an increasing amount of work with Alberta Health Services (AHS). We're also seeing a big increase in the volume of collaborations with the universities, working as partners in their research, while trying to spin out ideas from the lab and into companies.

**Q** *In view of the provincial budget cuts and the impact of the COVID-19 lockdown, are you confident about IHE's future?*

**A** I am confident that IHE will continue to be an important partner to the government. We've worked hard to diversify our funding sources over the last three years, and we've had a certain amount of success. I expect between 30% and 45% of our revenue will continue to come from our work with the government, for the next three years at least.

**Q** *What is the level now?*

**A** We're currently around 55%, and I think we'll push it below 50% over the next six months. It was about 85% when I joined IHE in 2017, so reducing that became job one, and the IHE management team has been fantastic in responding to that challenge.

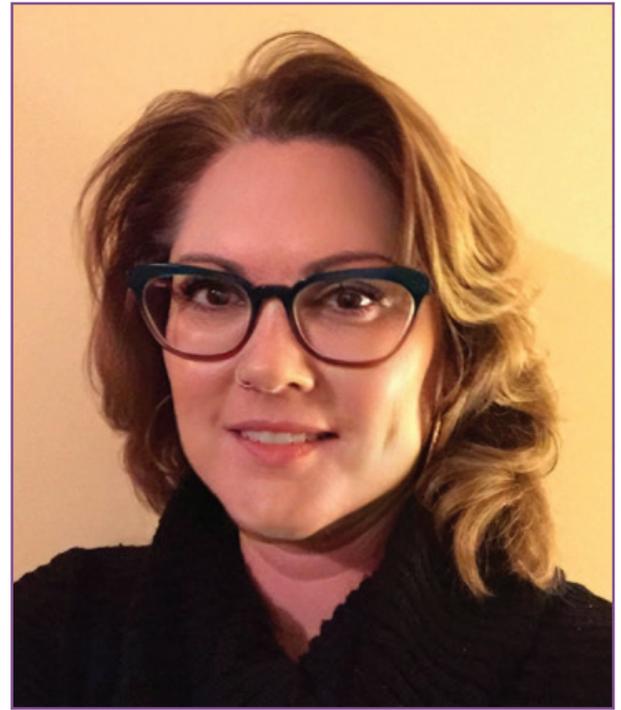
**Q** *Do you see funding for mental health improving?*

**A** The need for good mental health support across the community, in the wake of COVID-19, is going to be evident to everyone. Many people have had personal exposure to mental health challenges that they never had before, so I think there will be quite strong community support for investing in mental health services, particularly the sort of services that CASA provides to families and young people.



IN CONVERSATION WITH:

## Dr. Judi Malone, CEO, Psychologists' Association of Alberta and Chair of the Alberta Alliance for Mental Health



**Q** *Who does the Psychologists' Association of Alberta represent?*

**A** We represent Alberta's 3,800 Psychologists, but we have a two-part mandate. The first is to advance the science-based profession of psychology, and the second is to promote the well-being and the potential of all Albertans, by advocating for the psychological health and wellness of everyone in the province.

**Q** *What does that mean in practice?*

**A** We are the voice of and for psychology in Alberta. We inform the public and the media, we do a lot of public education on psychology and psychological health, and we also do advocacy for consumers of psychotherapy, psychological services and mental health.

**Q** *What is your relationship with CASA?*

**A** Our relationship with CASA is a very natural fit, based on CASA's mission and mandate to provide community-based mental health services for children, adolescents and families. I am also connected with CASA through the work of the Alberta Alliance for Mental Health, which unfortunately lost its funding for 2020-2021. I am the current Chair and Denise (Dr. Denise Milne, CEO of CASA and CASA Foundation) is the Past Chair.

“ ... a proper assessment and tailored treatment that addresses what's actually going on and what's best for a person, is absolutely fundamentally required. ”

**Q** *Any other reasons why your partnership with CASA works so well?*

**A** Well of course Denise is a registered Provisional Psychologist, so she is one of our members. That creates some additional affinity. She is someone who sees things through two lenses or frameworks, and recognizes how pieces fit together.

**Q** *Can you elaborate on that?*

**A** Well, we have a real issue with mental health in the province. People sometimes think anyone can do it, that it's just about listening to someone and telling them what to do. But a proper assessment and tailored treatment that addresses what's actually going on and what's best for a person, is absolutely fundamentally required. That requires specific skill sets, not just advice giving or providing support.

**Q** *Does CASA provide that, in your view?*

**A** Yes. CASA has a robust interdisciplinary team including Psychiatrists, Social Workers, Psychologists, Occupational Therapists, Nurses and others, so they're able to identify what a family or child needs. That's the kind of model we talk about when we do advocacy with other agencies or government departments.



IN CONVERSATION WITH:

## Dr. Ibrahim Gedeon, Chief Technology Officer, TELUS

Dr. Ibrahim Gedeon is Chief Technology Officer for TELUS, one of Canada's largest telecom firms. He is a longtime CASA supporter, a former member of the CASA Board and the CASA Foundation Board, and he played a key role in overseeing the design and launch of CASA's Electronic Medical Records system in 2019. Below is a condensed version of a recent interview with Dr. Gedeon.

**Q** *How did you first get involved with CASA?*

**A** I joined CASA after I came to TELUS in 2003. It was before I became a parent. As I learned more about this organization I thought, what a great mission, dealing with kids' mental health issues early in life, and providing education and support to parents. There is a soft spot in my heart for CASA as my son has ADHD. While he doesn't qualify for CASA's programs, what CASA provides to their clients is invaluable.

**Q** *How would you describe the relationship between TELUS and CASA?*

**A** With TELUS, CASA has a partner that's willing to co-invest in solving their problems. Our intellectual wealth is their intellectual wealth, so we try to provide joint solutions. In terms of our products and services, we subsidize them heavily so they can use them. Our shared intent is to put all that innovation into creating a world-class organization. That's one of the things that will encourage people to keep supporting CASA.

**Q** *So TELUS is also helping to enhance the CASA brand?*

**A** Our first consideration is what is important for the children in the short and long-term. By helping CASA create world-class facilities we can help the government of Alberta realize the impact and importance of the work that CASA is doing.

**Q** *How does TELUS bill CASA for its services?*

**A** We approach it on a subsidized cost-plus basis, as we would with Alberta Health Services. We also make significant charitable donations to CASA to the tune of a couple of hundred thousand dollars a year and we make other kinds of donations as well.



**Q** *Does TELUS's technology help CASA reach remote communities?*

**A** Yes, and it's critical to help our remote communities. In Alberta, there are many towns with just 5,000 or 10,000 people that are three or four hours from any major city. Without CASA these remote communities may not receive the support they need.

**Q** *How would you describe CASA's profile today. Has it grown?*

**A** I have to say Dr. Milne's leadership has been amazing. She has made CASA more relevant to Albertans and Edmontonians. She has done a very good job raising awareness for something that I believe is really strategic and fundamental in our society. We all live here. These are our brothers, our sisters, mothers, daughters, sons and cousins. It's way more valuable for me to donate our engineering skills to CASA than to just write a cheque. Anybody can write a cheque.

As I learned more about this organization I thought, what a great mission, dealing with kids' mental health issues early in life, and providing education and support to parents.



IN CONVERSATION WITH:

## Bob McColl, Treasurer, CASA Board of Directors

**Q** Tell me about your background, Bob.

**A** I'm a CPA (Chartered Professional Accountant) and I worked in public accounting during my entire career. I articulated for Ernst & Young and later became a partner. In 1999 I left to work for a local firm and in 2002 I joined BDO Canada. I retired in 2016.

**Q** What brought you to CASA?

**A** I had served on the Board of Governors at Athabasca University for six years, and CASA had been a client of mine when I was at Ernst & Young. When a former partner at BDO told me CASA's Treasurer was about to resign, I approached CASA and told them I was interested. I went through a series of interviews and joined CASA's board last fall.

**Q** Describe your role as treasurer.

**A** The Treasurer monitors the financial activities of CASA. As Treasurer, I chair the Finance and Audit Committee meetings every two months. In this role, I provide highlights to the CASA Board on the financial position of the organization. The Treasurer also ensures that an annual audit is completed and the results are presented at CASA's Annual General Meeting.

**Q** How much of CASA's funding comes from government?

**A** The Government of Alberta, along with Alberta Health Services grants about \$11 million to CASA per year and CASA Foundation's grants have averaged about \$1 million over the last couple of years. Other sources of community and foundation support also total about \$1 million a year.

**Q** What was your view of CASA's financial situation before COVID-19 hit?

**A** CASA's finances were in good shape. We were healthy and able to meet our needs. Of course, CASA wanted to expand, evolve and do more, so there was a desire to raise additional funds.

I got involved with CASA because I believe in their cause. I think mental health is very important, especially among children.



**Q** How would you characterize the situation now?

**A** The biggest impact of the pandemic was on the CASA Foundation, which raises a lot of funds from the CASA Carnival annual gala and other events. Everything was cancelled once the pandemic hit, so now, I'd simply say we expect our revenues to be lower, like every nonprofit. But I don't want to be too negative. With a bit of creativity maybe we'll come out of this better than we think.

**Q** Is CASA Foundation's Virtual Gala an example of that?

**A** Yes, I would say so. It was a creative way of thanking CASA supporters for their past donations while asking for their continued support. One of the things not-for-profit organizations are striving to do is to maintain their relationships with donors during this difficult time.

**Q** Have you always had an interest in mental health?

**A** I got involved with CASA because I believe in their cause. I think mental health is very important, especially among children.

**Q** What do you like to do for fun and relaxation?

**A** In the summer I like to bike and play golf and in the winter I ski. My wife and I are members of the Rocky Mountain Seniors Ski Club, which organizes trips to the mountains in winter and a lot of bike riding events in summer. I also like to spend time with my three grandsons and our new granddaughter.



## Communications Officer Anna York Played Key Role in Launching CASA's Pandemic Web Series

**It's a quiet spring morning at CASA's Fort Road office.  
Too quiet, in fact.**

With the COVID-19 pandemic raging, Anna York is one of the few CASA staffers here today. But don't be misled. She has plenty to do.

As CASA's Webmaster and Communications Officer, the MacEwan University communications graduate is quarterbacking a special online lecture series.

Titled *CASA Presents: The Impact of the Pandemic on Mental Health Web Series*, the online series includes six segments, each focused on addressing the stresses and mental health challenges facing a society living under a lockdown.

Although her primary job function since she joined CASA in 2017 is Education Research Assistant (ERA) for the Community Geographic Team, the lecture series, running from March 19 to April 14, has suddenly become York's main focus.

"My weeks lately have been a lot heavier on the communications side. Everything is happening online during the lockdown. CASA was one of the first organizations to go with webcasts during this

pandemic, so Dr. Milne and (lecture series host) Lesley MacDonald deserve a lot of credit," she says.

"It's an online adaptation of the Dr. Roger Bland Community Lecture Series that CASA held at the TELUS World of Science, which is now closed due to the pandemic, and it has been very well received."

As CASA's Webmaster, York oversees CASA's intranet – known as CASA Connect – as well as CASA's external website, [casaservices.org](http://casaservices.org), and various social media activities on platforms such as Facebook and YouTube.

"I really enjoy working on the website. I love being on the computer, being creative and clicking around. There is always something that needs to be updated or fixed, whether it's on the external website or internally. That connects me to everyone at CASA so I never feel like I'm stuck in one little corner," she says.

"When I started at CASA I was asked to be part of the website redesign effort, so we used Wix (a website building tool) and built it from the ground up. Our goal was to make it as functional and easy to navigate as possible for children and families. There is a ton of content on it now and it's growing every week."

In her other role as ERA for CASA's Community Geographic Team (CGT), which provides consultation, education, training and coaching for mental health professionals in small communities across northern and east-central Alberta, York organizes education events in places like Hinton, Cold Lake and Camrose.

"If you're a therapist in a place like Peace River, you may have just finished grad school, you might feel a bit isolated and lack local supports. Our CGT consultants will go out and mentor you one-on-one and do group presentations on topics like emotional regulation therapy," she explains.

"There are four CGT consultants on our team, along with the program manager and myself as ERA. When we go to these small communities, we're interacting with mental health professionals for the most part, but there may be occasions where a parent is also in the room."

When she's not working, York likes to listen to music and spend time with her family and friends. She also has a new household companion named Paul, a six-pound Chihuahua. "I call him my tiny husband," she laughs.

*As CASA's Webmaster, York oversees CASA's intranet – known as CASA Connect – as well as CASA's external website, [casaservices.org](http://casaservices.org), and various social media activities on platforms such as Facebook and YouTube.*



## Colby Kalmakoff Outlines His Role as CASA's New Volunteer Coordinator

**Q** Tell me about yourself, Colby.

**A** Sure. I'm 24 years old and recently completed a Bachelor's Degree in Mechanical Engineering at the University of Alberta. I've been working full-time at CASA since November.

**Q** So how did you go from engineering to mental health?

**A** I'm the kind of person who likes to have more meaning in my work rather than just the monetary value of a job, so my dreams and aspirations changed when I was exposed to CASA. I realized that engineering wasn't for me and I loved CASA's mission statement, so I decided I wanted to work here full-time.

**Q** What led you to volunteer at CASA in the first place?

**A** I was part of a fraternity at the University of Alberta that works closely with CASA. It's called Pi Kappa Alpha, or PIKE. I learned about CASA through them, like many other PIKE members.

**Q** Tell me about the kind of activities your job entails.

**A** Sure. On the clinical side it's about getting to know the programs and finding opportunities for volunteers to help, not only to improve CASA's programs and support our hard-working staff but to give valuable experience to the volunteers.

**Q** Are you involved in volunteer recruitment as well?

**A** Yes. In terms of recruitment we do interviews for every new volunteer and complete child intervention and police checks as well as reference checks. CASA's reputation in the mental health field really attracts many psychology students who want to give back and get some experience.



**Q** How many people volunteer at CASA?

**A** Our active volunteer list is just under 200 volunteers. About 70% are students, and the rest are adults looking for opportunities to give back.

**Q** What kinds of activities are volunteers involved in?

**A** Volunteer opportunities are split into three categories. One is the special events side, the second is program support, and the third is child minding, which is taking care of the siblings of those who are coming to CASA's therapy sessions. For many of our families, child care is a barrier to accessing our programs, so we offer help with that.

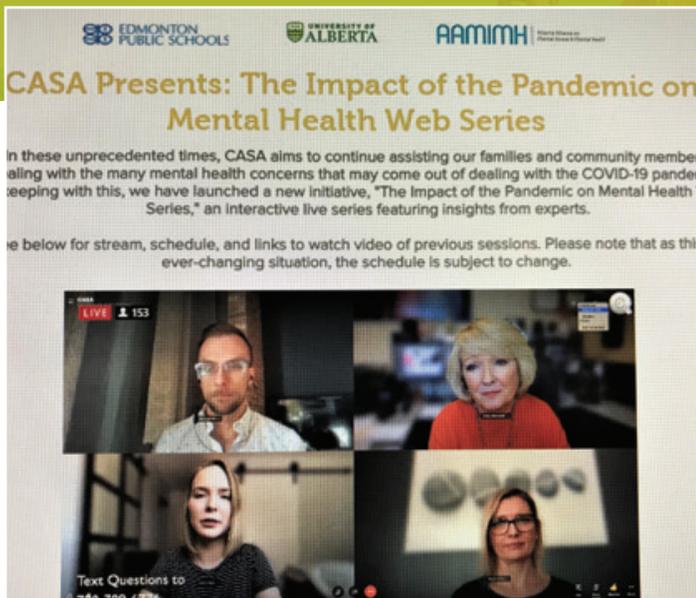
**Q** What about the other two areas, program support and events?

**A** Program support includes opportunities like the monthly pancake breakfast, or helping with the Adolescent Day Program, the Children's Day Program and the Pre-Kindergarten Program. Our volunteers are also involved in our Trauma & Attachment Groups. On the events side, volunteers help out with everything from the Dr. Roger Bland Community Lecture Series to our various fundraisers and silent auctions.

**Q** Sounds like your plate is full. What do you like to do for fun?

**A** I love the outdoors. I like snowboarding and any chance I have I'll drive to the mountains and do a day hike. I'm also a pretty big nerd. I grew up playing World of Warcraft and still play video games. I also go to the gym almost every day so I'm a bit of a gym rat as well. I go to Evolve Strength. I absolutely love that gym.

Program support includes opportunities like the monthly pancake breakfast, or helping with the Adolescent Day Program, the Children's Day Program and the Pre-Kindergarten Program.



## CASA Web Series on Coping With the COVID-19 Pandemic and Related Mental Health Challenges Proves to be a Hit

With the COVID-19 pandemic raging and governments imposing strict lockdown measures to slow its spread, CASA launched a series of webcasts in March in an effort to support those struggling in isolation with mental health issues.

The unique six-part series, titled *Impact of the Pandemic on Mental Health*, was posted online between Mar. 19 and Apr. 14. Co-sponsors included the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Alberta; Edmonton Public Schools; the Institute of Health Economics; and the Alberta Alliance for Mental Health.

Hosted by former Global TV anchor Lesley MacDonald, CEO of Edmonton-based New ViewPoint Communications, the series featured prominent mental health professionals, members of the CASA Youth Council and the CASA Family Advisory Council.

"Today we're in an unprecedented time. All of us are dealing with this uncertainty and trying to understand what's going on in the world," said Dr. Denise Milne, CEO of CASA and CASA Foundation, as she launched the series.

"The outbreak of COVID-19 has caused a lot of fear, anxiety and confusion. We all feel overwhelmed, so we want to take the opportunity through these sessions to reduce the stress. CASA wants to provide accurate and trusted information on what our expertise is, and share that with you in this changing environment."

Here's a brief synopsis of the six webcast episodes and a link to watch any time: <https://www.casaservices.org/web-series>

**March 19: Understanding the Trauma of Our New Reality.** This segment featured leading child psychiatrist Dr. Andrew Bremness, a Clinical Professor in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Alberta and a practicing psychiatrist with CASA's Trauma and Attachment Group (TAG).

**March 20: The Impact of the Pandemic on Youth.** Dr. Mercy Yeboah-Ampadu, a veteran Clinical Social Worker and author of two children's therapeutic story books, was the featured guest in this segment. She discussed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children and youth.

**March 30: CASA Family Advisory Council (FAC): A Parent's Perspective on the Pandemic.** Practicing Social Worker and FAC member Candace Fehr discussed the impact of the pandemic on families.

**April 2: CASA Youth Council (CYC) Members Discuss the Pandemic's Impact on Youth.** This session featured the views of CYC members Victoria Fehr, an undergrad psychology major at the University of Alberta; Kate Puim, also an undergrad psychology student at the University of Alberta; and Sheher-Bano Ahmed, a grade 12 student at Old Scona Academic School.

**April 6: The Pandemic's Impact on Addictions, with Insights from Those with Lived Experience.** Dr. Margot Crane, Clinical Lead, Concurrent Addictions and Mental Health Program (CAMP) at CASA, was among the featured guests in this segment. The other guests were Sasha Chiles, a trauma and addictions survivor and member of the CYC; and Brent Colman, a recovering addict who now works as an analyst for the City of Edmonton.

**April 14: Practicing Self-Care and Hope in a Pandemic and the Time of Social Distancing.** Dr. Ted Jablonski, an award-winning Calgary-based family physician and Medical Director of Jablonski Health and Skipping Stone Foundation, was the featured guest in this segment. Other guests included Nadine Samycia, Executive Director, CASA Foundation; Chris Pullen, Vice-President and General Manager, PCL Industrial; Nick Lees, veteran Edmonton Journal columnist; and grade 12 student Ella LeClaire, a member of the CYC.



## CASA Carnival's Cancellation Paved Way for First-Ever Virtual Gala

When life gives you lemons, make lemonade.

For CASA Foundation, the COVID-19 pandemic forced the cancellation of key fundraising events including CASA Carnival, an annual gala that generates roughly \$500,000 a year to support CASA's various mental health programs.

But as they say on Broadway, the show must go on, so CASA Foundation and its supporters quickly regrouped and came up with a plan to stage the first-ever CASA Virtual Gala.

The May 29th online event brought in just over \$27,000 in donations, says Nadine Samyca, CASA Foundation's Executive Director.

"That's obviously a big drop from the half a million dollars that we typically bring in at the gala, but everyone stepped up to the plate and worked hard to make it happen, so that was a real positive," she says.

"It was a total team effort, involving Adam Fisher, a beautiful Canadian singer, Ariana Whitlow, a favourite Edmonton performer, our Invert720 Productions group, Dave Babcock, Caitlin McElhone from CM Events, and my team at CASA Foundation. We wanted to offer a little taste of what the gala would have looked like this year, and also do a gentle ask from our supporters."

Olympic gold medalist Jamie Sale, Dr. Deena Hinshaw, Chief Medical Officer of Health for Alberta, the Honourable Rebecca Shulz, Minister of Children's Services, and former St. Albert Mayor Nolan Crouse, a longtime CASA supporter, also participated in the Virtual Gala, along with the Victoria School Jazz Choir.

Olympic gold medalist Jamie Sale, Dr. Deena Hinshaw, Chief Medical Officer of Health for Alberta, the Honourable Rebecca Shulz, Minister of Children's Services and former St. Albert Mayor Nolan Crouse, a longtime CASA supporter, also participated in the Virtual Gala, along with the Victoria School Jazz Choir.



(left) Ariana Whitlow



(right) Adam Fisher

"We had the dream team and a group of people who just love working with each other, so in the end we had a lot of fun putting this together, despite the time pressures and the obvious disappointment we all had over having to cancel the live gala this year," she adds.

"CASA Foundation holds three annual fundraising events, including CASA Carnival, the CASA Cycle Tour and the CASA Golf Classic. The Aug. 27th golf tournament at Blackhawk Golf Course is the only event that is not officially cancelled at this point," she adds. "We are still not sure what a golf event will look like come August, but we're hopeful that at least a smaller tournament may take place."

Didn't catch the show? Not to worry. The CASA Virtual Gala can be viewed online at [CASAVirtualGala.org](https://CASAVirtualGala.org). Please watch and share. If you are able to donate, the donation site is still active.

“

We had the dream team and a group of people who just love working with each other, so in the end we had a lot of fun putting this together.

Nadine Samyca,  
CASA Foundation Executive Director

”



# CASA Virtual Gala

Supporting Children's Mental Health



“ We wanted to offer a little taste of what the gala would have looked like this year, and also do a gentle ask from our supporters. ”





**CASA**  
Foundation

These are unprecedented times that call for unprecedented community support and generosity. CASA Foundation thanks our community for their past support and hopes that those who are still able, will consider continuing their support now. More than ever, children's mental health needs everyone's attention.

We need donors to act now to ensure that CASA can get through this crisis and continue to be well-equipped to serve our families into the future. With donors and nonprofits working together, we can lessen the impact of this pandemic on children, families, and our community as a whole. The spring and summer months are typically when the majority of our CASA Foundation funds are raised to support the many programs and services CASA offers. CASA Foundation has had to cancel, postpone or drastically change the fundraising events for 2020. The event sites are still active and we encourage you to visit the sites to find out how you can still support us.

- **CASA Virtual Gala** took place on May 29, 2020. Hosted by Canadian Singer, Adam Fisher with musical guests Ariana Whitlow, Dave Babcock and Victoria School Choir. You can still view the 45 minute event by visiting [www.CASAVirtualGala.org](http://www.CASAVirtualGala.org)
- **Emily's Memorial Motorcycle Ride (Solo Edition)** [www.EmilysMemorialRide.ca](http://www.EmilysMemorialRide.ca)  
This event took place on June 6 to celebrate the life of Emily Taylor and to raise funds for CASA.
- **Breaking the Silence** [www.breakingthesilence.com](http://www.breakingthesilence.com)  
The event took place from June 20-27. CASA collaborated with the Mental Health Foundation on this project which propelled us to an international reach. The event involved over 1000 participants and included people from Alberta, Toronto, Vancouver, the UK, USA, and India.

Donate now!

<http://weblink.donorperfect.com/News>

Challenge yourself to do 2020 km in 2020 for children's mental health!

Join the challenge at  
[www.CASACycleChallenge.org](http://www.CASACycleChallenge.org)

1. **Choose your distance:**  
2020 km, 202.0 km, or 20.20 km
2. **Log your KMs** before World Mental Health Day on October 10, 2020
3. **Challenge three friends** to complete the challenge too!



**CASA CYCLE**  
*Challenge*.org