



nelson
CARES
society



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Parent Support Services Society of BC
204-5623 Imperial St.
Burnaby, BC
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Attention: Bill McFarland Award

Further to our email, we would like to formally nominate Marsha Early for the Bill McFarland award.

Marsha Early has her Bachelors and Masters degrees in Social Work. She began working with the Ministry for Children and Families (then the Ministry of Social Services) in 1979. She provided support to children and families in many capacities during her time with the Ministry, and served as a child protection worker from 1986-1997. She was, and continues to be, one of the finest advocates for children and families in the Kootenays and a social worker with the highest of ethical standards.

She worked collaboratively and respectfully with community based family advocates at a time when the Ministry did not always welcome advocate involvement. Marsha always championed children yet remembered that parents were varied in their skills as well as in the obstacles and realities they faced. She knew that by supporting parents, helping them set realistic goals and connecting them with appropriate programs, the results for the entire family were more positive. She was able to see parents as experts of their own family reality and could look for the best in each family member. She also was very brave in standing up for what she believed was right and ethical even when that risked personal professional harm.

In 2002, she took the position of Specialized Victim Services Worker at The Advocacy Centre providing advocacy and support for women and children who came from abusive relationships. During her time here, she has thrown all her skills and knowledge of Ministry mandate and process into the work of supporting women and children. In her role, she works within many systems – family law, criminal law, child welfare, income security and housing to name a few – to advocate for the continued safety of women and their children. Marsha confronts injustice no matter the source or system.

Marsha was also a member of a regional collective that created the Safe Haven Project. This project involved recruiting local businesses to put a sticker in their window indicating that they

are a safe place that women and children at risk of harm can come to use a phone and wait for help. Marsha supervised summer students for several years as they monitored and maintained Safe Havens across the region. She provided training on how businesses could play a valuable role in promoting safety for women and children. In addition, she was part of developing a manual that communities across the province could use to create their own Safe Haven. This work has played a valuable role in involving the greater community in ensuring safety for children and women.

Marsha is a staunch feminist committed to ethical social work practice. She is a long time active member of the West Kootenay Branch of the BC Association of Social Workers and sits on the board of the Kootenay Art Therapy Society. She has served as the West Kootenay Representative on the Board of the Ending Violence Association of BC (EVA) for many years, most recently as Co-Chair. We understand that Tracey Porteous, Executive Director of EVA, also supports this nomination.

Marsha takes risks and is willing to do what is hard for all the right reasons. As her co-workers, we feel privileged to have worked with her and have been inspired by her passion and commitment to the work. There are many children and families in our community who have benefited from Marsha's dedication, skill, determination and caring. Marsha Early is poised to retire, and this award would be a fitting recognition of her many years of service. We respectfully submit her nomination.

Sincerely,

The staff of The Advocacy Centre
Janet Sawyer, Becky Quirk, Sarah Bolton, Amy Taylor