



LOL

Magazine

Issue #1
**MARCH
2019**

Transitioning to happiness

Kiersten Mohr shares
her story of self-discovery

“Giving a hand up”

The passionate
women running
Airdrie’s non-profits

Inspired by grief

Cree artist Delree Dumont
speaks to finding
creativity in tragedy

Knowing your limits

Steena Holmes on
how she’s learned it’s
okay not to be okay



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Let me introduce myself: My name is Karen MacDonald, owner of Ladies Out Loud, and founder of LOL Magazine.

Why create a magazine? A magazine has always been on my list of things I'd like to do... and I always say if you can, then why not!

As a born gatherer with a genuine interest in people, I often find myself in awe of the people I meet, especially women and their stories of resilience. Bringing women together and giving them a platform to share their stories has always been a part of what Ladies Out Loud offers. A magazine is the perfect addition to do this.

Launching LOL Magazine on International Women's Day couldn't be more fitting a day for this special edition. It is also a day we bring awareness of the injustices towards women and girls in our community and around the world through our VDAY events: The Vagina Monologues and One Billion Rising. It is also a day to celebrate the survivors of women affected by domestic violence and sexual assault or abuse. We take every opportunity to raise our voices and today we celebrate all the amazing women in our lives, and in our community.

Inspiration: Ladies Out Loud

Publisher: Karen MacDonald

Editor: Olivia Condon

Contributors: April Bouchard, Brenda Crompton, Olivia Condon, Kiersten Mohr, Steena Holmes, Karen Lee

Layout/Design: Olivia Condon, Levi Bulloch

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Our hope moving forward is to publish our 2nd issue of LOL Magazine and one that will still include fact and fiction feature stories. Content would include health & wellness, style & home, décor, recipes, tips, etc. To do this we need your feedback and hope you will take the time to let us know what you would like to see included in the magazine. You are our audience and without an engaged audience and input then we are just doing it for our own personal ego.

I want to thank my partner in crime, editor and designer Olivia Condon, without Olivia and her journalism and editor experience this would not have been possible. Shout out to all the amazing supporters of this issue; Kim, Laurie, Lily, Levi & April and to all contributors, advertisers and sponsors.

If you are interested in seeing this project move forward and would like to share your stories (fiction or real life), you are a professional who has pertinent information to share that would benefit our readership, or you wish to promote your business... please contact me at karen@ladiesoutloud.ca

~ Karen, LOL Magazine



Olivia is a communications expert with a keen journalistic eye. Most recently, Olivia was managing editor for the Fort McMurray Today newspaper from 2015 through to 2018, winning a National Newspaper Award for coverage of the Horse River wildfire in 2016. She is currently a freelancer and consultant who loves telling other's stories in a colourful and intriguing way.

Her writing and photography have appeared in magazines such as New Tribe, AirdrieLife, and Opitemisiwak.

Olivia continues working for Postmedia, freelancing for the Calgary Herald and for various community newspapers.

Olivia has a passion for travel and exploration and hopes to continue to see the world with her soon-to-be-husband and best friend, Nathan.

Maybe you don't need to do that anymore

By Brenda Crompton

Vera is a little dog who lost her mom in a tragic accident right before her eyes. Vera had never been alone before and she was scared. She didn't know what happened, she didn't understand.

When I first saw her after the accident all I felt coming from her was fear. Her little body trembling, she barely recognized me and didn't acknowledge me even though she normally visited me regularly with kisses.

With some quiet meditation together, my husband was able to help her understand that it was an accident, that she is now OK and that she doesn't have to be afraid any longer. After a time her trembling stopped and her real personality came through again. Her human mom saw the difference immediately. Still, Vera needed to be reminded that she doesn't have to tremble any longer. The trembling doesn't serve her anymore.

This situation made me think about how many times I've had something that helped me get through a situation but then later I kept doing it when it no longer served me. How can I remind myself that I don't need that anymore?

Think about it, have you considered that you may still be doing things that no longer serve you? You don't need to do that anymore, it's time to come up with a better response. Sometimes we end up with reactions to situations that were

created in the moment of panic or survival that really don't work for us in regular life.

These things are easier to see in others. My dog Eunomia was very badly starved beaten and abused before 12 weeks of age and had developed poor behaviours that would be very bad in the larger dog that she was to become. Once she learned that she was now safe, she was able to learn better ways to respond to situations. She had a wonderful life and when situations were difficult (like a dog attacked her) she looked at me for guidance and knew I had her back. It was so easy to tell people about her story for the 13 years she was part of my family.



She died three days before the first time I spoke publicly about my personal story of overcoming growing up very badly overfed, beaten and abused. I realized that part of why Eunomia was in my life was so I could practice telling my story, so that I could help others with it.

Life doesn't come to us in a straight line. Life has ups and downs, highs and lows. With all highs come low points. If you have ever been completely devastated by the loss of a loved one, it's a reflection of the deep and loving relationship that you had and how they touched your soul.

A life of mediocrity -- of not showing up -- is not as intense but has less rewards too. I watched my mother descend into mental illness when I was three years old, and then decide to blame and beat me for whatever her mind decided was my misdeed. On my eighth birthday I was taken from my home and put into the psychiatric ward of Sick Children's Hospital for evaluation before being sent to a foster home that told me I was ugly, stupid and unworthy everyday until I was 13. Lots of beatings from lots of different people.

My mother floated from mental hospital to group home over those years, most of the time I didn't know where she was and that was fine with me. She was numb to the world and we didn't have a relationship of caring or love. A few years ago after my mother regained consciousness from a coma, she said the most profound thing she has ever said to me.

"I know I was a bad mother, when you were little I thought you were trying to do my job

and so I was angry, but I realize now that you were just trying to learn.”

I did what I had to do to create the amazing life that I have now. I have a husband of 25.5 years who is completely devoted to me. Plus, I travel to Baja California, Mexico every year for weeks, sometimes months at a time. I love the culture, the community, the beach, the waves, water and wind where I play like a child. It's my sanctuary.

Sometimes even when I'm in my sanctuary I feel down, sad, depressed even. It's not that I'm thinking about the past or something specific. It's more like there is a part of me that was unhappy for the whole of growing up so it's a chore to get out of it. Still.

It's a pattern.

Have you ever had a pattern that was self destructive and yet just so hard to get out of it?

It could be eating, or drinking, or smoking, or being around people that put you down, or putting yourself down, or stopping doing something just before it's successful. It could be feeling down.

Get out of it you must if you want more of life. It's a simple formula. It's not easy, but it's very much worth it.

Step 1: Awareness

The first step to eliminating a behaviour that doesn't serve you anymore is to become aware of the behaviour. This can be very difficult. Try explaining water to a fish! When something is so embedded in everyday it's very difficult to see it as an optional behaviour. Here's the trick: everything is optional!



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Step 2: Acceptance

It's OK that you've done this thing. You did the best you could with what you knew! Love yourself in your ability to cope with the situation and survive it. Give yourself the empathy that this behaviour was needed before, and now it is no longer serving any purpose. Send it off thanking it for what it did for you. There is no room for blame or condemnation in this exercise, please don't do that to yourself. Acceptance and gratitude for how it served you at the time is the path to a better life.

Step 3: Incremental Change

Sometimes it is possible to change quickly and sometimes we need to give ourselves permission to feel okay if we fall back on old habits. When that happens, start again right away. Life is a series of moments, we get to choose who we are and how we want to respond in each moment as it comes. In my own journey of discovery, I've learned a variety of techniques that really shift our unconscious mind in deep, lasting and profound ways that eliminated the need for decades of therapy. I'm still imperfect, and sometimes I respond in ways that I'm not happy about. That's life too, take

the time to repair the situation and move on.

Life is imperfect. Stop trembling from what happened in the past. Let go of anything that's not giving you the life you want.

Keep moving forward and let the glory of nature engulf you in her love.



Brenda Crompton is a Master Business Strategist and Professional Speaker. Brenda's presentations take business owners on a journey to see how their website and marketing processes are hurting more than they help, with case studies from many industries. Brenda Crompton shows business owners and Entrepreneurs that are struggling, how they can get all the customers and transactions they want to meet their goals and more! Brenda also shows clients how to navigate all the rapid change going on with respect to how people decide and buy. How well your company is dealing with all the outside change associated with technology and marketing convergence, as well as interconnectedness is a major factor in whether the company grows or shrinks.

www.brendacrompton.com



The Gift

Q&A with artist Delree Dumont

Q: What was the inspiration for The Gift?

A: This painting is very sentimental to me. It was the one I was painting while

I admitted my husband, Sheldon into the Tom Baker Cancer Clinic. At this point, he had done 2 months of chemo for Leukemia. At the same time I was given an opportunity of a lifetime through the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada to paint live at the Canadian Embassy in Berlin. My husband said 'go'. He passed away on May 29th, 2018. So helping to raise funds for a good cause would make him proud.

Q: Your style in The Gift is pointillism. Can you tell us a little more about this technique?

A: My early work was in the realist style. I changed my style in 2014 and more recent work is primarily in the style of pointillism. My primary medium is acrylic, but some of my earlier works also include

Delree Dumont is an International Cree artist from Crossfield, AB She offers Pointillism Paint Nights/ Days teaching her style of pointillism. She is a Woman's Traditional pow wow dancer and also performs at local events.

For more information visit www.delreesnativeartgallery.com

Look out for upcoming Ladies Out Loud pointillism paint night facilitated by Delree Dumont.

oil and watercolour work. Much of my artistic work draws on my experience as an Indigenous person. I also dabble in beadwork, leatherwork and making smudge fans.

Q: What inspired you to become an artist?

A: I have always excelled in art since a child. I am self taught mostly but have taken many university and college level art classes throughout as a hobby. It was July 2014 when I picked up my paintbrushes to paint fulltime.

Q: What artist/s inspire you?

A: Christie Belcourt is one of my idols and she inspires me to reach her level of expertise in pointillism.

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Our Story:
Lise Blanchette,
Candice Kutyn &
Jenny Pyykonen

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Trigger warning: This show contains mature subject matter related to sexual assault and abuse

If you or someone you care for has been affected by domestic violence or sexual assault, please reach out.

Contact your local RCMP or Victim Services. In Airdrie call, Airdrie and District Victims Assistance Society at (403) 945 7290.

Our Cast



Sarah Rivard

I decided to participate in The Vagina Monologues because I wanted to do something that scares me. This script brings topics that we do not talk about out in the open and I wanted to empower more woman to know that their worth comes from within.



Candice Kutyn

I am rising because 1 in 3 women will experience sexual assault over their lifetime. I am 1 in 3. 82% of perpetrators are known to their victim. It's an issue of a society that normalizes violence against women and blames victims. I want others to know that they are not alone.



Miranda Christin

I decided to participate because I have a voice and a lot of privilege as a white woman living in a country where I can, for the most part, trust that I am physically safe. We must always fight to empower and to lift those whose voices can't be heard.



Debbie Martin

Empowerment comes in many forms - for me - it comes from being saucy and confident, especially in controlling my life, my wishes and claiming my rights as a daughter, a sister, a wife, a mother and now as a grandmother.



I am participating in The Vagina Monologues because every year I do something out of my comfort zone and downright terrifying to test my openness, willingness and freedom factors! I am definitely out of my comfort zone and having a blast.



Jenny Pyykonen

I am rising because I love to see women support and love each other. It is amazing to see women embracing each other, celebrating their differences, encouraging and helping each other.



Kaley Vandenberg

I decided to participate in The Vagina Monologues as it was an opportunity to stand up, in my community, and own my story while supporting an amazing group of women and they did the same. When we can honestly find comfort in the uncertainty of the future.



Kiersten Mohr

I decided to participate to step out of my comfort zone, to become more aware and informed. I have spent too many years hiding. I am a survivor of horrific childhood abuse and being empowered means that I don't have to hide.



Leanne Roberts

Eve Ensler is a Tony award-winning playwright, performer and activist. She is the author of the international phenomenon, The Vagina Monologues, which won an Obie and has been published in 48 languages and performed in over 140 countries. She is the founder of V-Day, the global movement to end violence against women and girls, which has raised over \$100 million for grassroots organization around the world.



I believe sexual abuse should not be shamed nor should it be hidden. We are responsible for making our world what it could be. When you are empowered you are aligned to your truth and you are not afraid to shine.



Debbie Gibbs



Lorraine
Pachal

I decided to participate because I thought it was a good thing to do for the community to help bring awareness to the dilemma of rape and abuse on children and women.



Shari Rodriguez

Being a part of The Vagina Monologues has touched me deeply and when I hear the other women's stories, I feel stronger and not as alone. Being empowered helps me to step into who I authentically am.



Nancy Roberts

I am participating in The Vagina Monologues because I wanted to prove to myself and others that physical age is NOT a deterrent to trying new things and exploring more creative ways to express yourself.



Lise Blanchette

I am rising in support of all women who have fought, given, suffered and stood up to make changes for respect, equality, individuality and the independence of Women. I am participating as a tribute to my Sister Danielle Simard.



Toni Doel

I am rising so that violence against women can't be swept under the rug. I want to show my teenaged daughter how to be a strong woman who is not afraid to talk about the hard stuff. I never want her to feel that she is less than!



Karalee Braun

I read the script for The Vagina Monologues and realized that these powerful stories needed to be told. It has been incredibly humbling to go on this journey with all these women, and share in their stories, their tears and so much laughter. It has been absolutely amazing.

Our Directors

Michelle Dean

For me, being empowered means no longer feeling like a 'victim', held hostage by my abusive past. Empowered, means knowing I am a survivor and being able to speak about my experiences to help others. I believe that a small ripple of kindness can become a tidal wave of change.



Monologues

Introduction - Toni, Debbie G, Sarah, Leanne, Nancy, Kiersten, Lise, Jenny, Debbie M

Hair - Jenny

The Lists - Debbie G, Kiersten, Nancy, Sarah

The Flood - Debbie M

The Vagina Workshop - Toni, Shari, Leanne, Lise, Candice

They Beat the Girl out of my Boy...or so They Tried - Kiersten, Kaley, Miranda, Candice, Toni

Not-So-Happy Fact - Leanne

Because He Liked to Look At It - Miranda, Kaley

My Angry Vagina - Kaley, Shari, Lise, Debbie M, Nancy

My Vagina was My Village - Miranda, Candice

The Little Coochi Snorcher That Could - Debbie G, Toni, Shari, Lise, Jenny, Sarah

My Short Skirt - Jenny, Candice

Reclaiming Cunt - Miranda

Six-Year-Old Girl - Leanne

The Woman Who Loved to Make Vaginas Happy - Kaley, Toni

I Was There in the Room - Debbie M, Shari

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Being human: my journey towards authenticity

By Kiersten Mohr

Announcing my gender change to family, friends and colleagues was, without question, one of the scariest chances I have ever taken in my life. When I made my declaration, I chose to take something remarkably personal and in an extremely vulnerable way, make it public. Up until that moment, I had spent my entire life behind a facade, privately navigating the seemingly impossible path that would lead to my moment of truth. Many metaphorical dark rooms confined me as I made my journey towards authenticity and for much of that time I felt alone and resentful of all I had to deal with, in what I believed, was an incredibly unique and impossible struggle.

It was in March of 2017 that I stepped out of the closet. I was stunned by the incredible amount of support I was given but was even more surprised to find that so many people in my life responded by sharing their own difficult truths with me. In the act of being vulnerable and open about my struggles, it was like a door had instantly opened and I could suddenly see more clearly how many people were privately dealing with their own incredibly challenging adversities. This epiphany helped me recognize a fundamental connection between us all: that at our core we all share the same need for self-actualization and we are all in a transition towards a more authentic version of

ourselves. Even though my gender transformation has been quite public, with a considerable amount of potential for gossip and intrigue. I realize now that my challenges have been merely a public version of what so many people are working on in their own lives - a journey to fulfill personal potential and be authentic to themselves.

The biggest lesson I learned through my transition was that my challenges were never about being transgender, they were about being human. I was learning to find comfort in the unknown, honestly accepting that I couldn't control the future, and unearthing the courage to be vulnerable while bravely taking what I needed from the world which allowed me to start giving the most of myself back. By doing all of this, I was able to reach my version of self-actualization and finally appreciate that I had been surrounded by people struggling with exactly the same challenge all along.

I don't want to tell the world a story about how difficult it is to come out as a transgender person. Instead, I hope that my narrative reminds people how important it is to have the courage to be vulnerable and prioritize self-care. And perhaps more importantly, to remember that we are all facing the same challenge of putting ourselves out there - taking off the mask and living authentically. I hope that my story provides

an example to others that their truth is possible. And lastly, I hope to show that if we are all facing a comparable challenge then maybe we can find courage in supporting those around us as we find our own way. If we are cheering each other on, then together we create a world where each of us will have the freedom to be true.



My name is Kiersten Mohr, and I have lived in Airdrie for fifteen years. I am a thirty-eight-year-old transgender woman, spouse to an inspiring woman I have shared my entire adult life with and an incredibly proud 'DeeDee' to my beautiful nine and eleven-year-old children. I am a professional geologist in the Oil and Gas Industry and currently the proud president of the Airdrie Pride Society which is focused on providing an accepting and safe place for anyone in the LGBTQ2S+ community.

It's okay not to be okay



By Steena Holmes

today. Thank God, not today.

For our family, mental health isn't just an issue, it was a crisis and as a mom/wife/woman - I wish I could say I knew what to do, how to react, what to say/not say... but I didn't. I'm still not sure I do. While my one daughter went through a mental health crisis that involved multiple trips to the hospital and lengthy stays, I learned one important lesson: It's okay to not be okay. It's a lesson that was more than thirty years in the making. I'm over forty and I've coming to grips with the fact that I don't handle stress well, that I'm not as strong as I thought I was and that all of the crap I went through growing up (rape, eating disorder, depression, suicide thoughts), all the things I learned about myself through those times can be used to help my children as they faced their own emotional issues.

It's okay to not be okay.

While my daughter was in the hospital for attempted suicide, I kept telling myself that I needed to be strong, that I needed to find a way to hold it all together...but I think the truth of the matter was that I didn't have to be all that strong. I didn't have to always hold it together. It was okay to show my daughters that not always being okay was in fact okay.

Looking back, that time in our lives, three long years, where I pulled back and prayed for help, for peace and for guidance, it was a time of growth for me. I wasn't okay and I accepted that. I found different things to make me smile, I'd eaten way too much cake and drank more than my

share of coffee. But through it all...I looked deep into my heart and accepted that I didn't have to be all the stuff I thought I had to be...strong, stoic, serene. Now, I can say that life is about moments. Moments to cherish. Moments to remember. Moments that make a difference. I could look back on all the moments that I should have noticed, all those moments that I had been a better mother I might have caught the signs...but there is nothing gained by doing that. All I can do is celebrate all the moments I have now, on a go forward basis and be the best mom/wife/woman I can be... in this moment. Even if I'm not okay. Because, that is also okay. PS...my daughter is now okay. She is thriving, loving life and I marvel at how amazing she is.

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Finding the courage to write about my abusive marriages

By Karen Lee

When people think of courage, mountain peaks and raging rivers usually come to mind. But memoir writing can be one of the most courageous acts anyone ever does. I began to write my memoir after years of keeping silent about the abuse in my two marriages. Compulsive journal writing netted me a stack of notebooks fourteen high but no peace – no answer to my questions about my past decisions and how I’d come to choose two angry, controlling and eventually violent, men. I still didn’t know, when I read these carefully preserved memories, how a well-educated, intelligent woman ended up in two very unhappy marriages. In the beginning of writing my own story I couldn’t even say the word abuse or relate it to myself. Nor could I make sense of the fact that I had, indeed, crawled through the emotional battle ground of my life to come out the other side and create a whole new life for myself with a loving husband who is my best friend. Every once in a while, I would question my life and cry in frustration and pain, but then I would pack up all the feelings and shove them down out of awareness again. When I started to write, I looked on it as just a writing project, so I bought memoir “how to” books, signed up for writing courses and conferences. I learned to find my story arc, write dialogue and scenes. I was safe. But as soon as I dipped into my journals, the preserved chronicles of my past, the words came out of hibernation and were alive again. They had been there all along, waiting. Once I opened

this Pandora’s box of my life, sharp images bombarded me and the need to make sense of it all wouldn’t let go. Good memoir writing can never be just a literary project. It is part of an emotional process in which I had to summon the willingness, persistence and courage needed to look at all I had stored in my memory. It became a mission I couldn’t turn away from. I needed to write, to remember, to persist. To crawl through the pain once again but this time do it with a difference. When I lived it all the first time I was numb, shut down, unable to cope – and I had no idea what the future would bring. But now, as I wrote, I already knew the ending and I just needed to see how it had all happened – to finally connect the dots of my life. Initially as I began to write, hot anger would bubble to the surface – anger at myself for the choices I had made, for what I saw as my weakness and outrage at those I saw as my oppressors, including my parents and my two husbands. Sometimes I was overwhelmed with pain at the mistakes I had made and my lost hopes and dreams for my own life and those of my children. At times, I was afraid I would get lost in the past and not be able to find my way back. Eventually I began to realize that experiences I had as a child had left me vulnerable. I was told to put up with an intolerable situation, so in time my feelings were numbed. Because of this, though I sometimes knew my own mind, I wasn’t strong enough to assert myself with people more aggressive than me. I simply fell in line with what my two husbands said about me and wanted me to do. Seeing my own role in my life decisions

began to empower me – I wasn’t a complete victim. If I were to become more aware of the protective power of my feelings and if my actions were more in tune with those feelings, I could live a life with more integrity. The feeling of empowerment gave me the courage necessary to finally experience the emotions and reactions I had buried so long ago. I was in awe at what I had been able to accomplish even while I endured so much hurt and pain. In the process of discovering and uncovering what I had pushed into my unconscious, I knew more about how I ended up at that particular point. I could now integrate all the “new” information into my identity, my picture of who I am. I could forgive myself and accept what had happened. And in doing so, I changed. I was no longer the person I was when I began the memoir project. I climbed out of the limited, personal view I’d had of my life and achieved a much larger perspective. There is the kind of courage you exhibit in a moment’s decision to rescue a child from drowning. But there is also courage that persists over time. If your memoir is to be deeply truthful, you must have the determination to look within the dark corners of yourself, to shine a light on those aspects of your life that have been hidden away, denied and disowned. Facing what you fear the most in yourself and reintegrating and accepting those parts requires a different kind of courage than climbing Mt. Everest, but by doing so, you can change yourself and, change your potential future.

www.karenelee-author.com



A pillar of the community: How Airdrie and District Victims Assistance Society are working to support the region

By Olivia Condon

In the minutes and hours after a crisis occurs in the region, members of the Airdrie and District Victims Assistance Society (ADVAS) are hard at work.

As the only 24-hour crisis response organization in the area, the team at ADVAS work closely with police and the RCMP to offer support, safety and resource referral to residents who have been the victims of crime or tragedy.

The non-profit organization's volunteer advocates work on-call to offer additional support for victims to address and work through traumatic situations ranging from sudden death and suicide to domestic violence and sexual assault.

The ADVAS team, who operate in Airdrie, Bieseker, Acme, Irricana, Crossfield, Carstairs, and other communities in Rockyview County, then follow up with clients to refer them to other community organizations and programs to offer longer term support such as counselling or food bank access.

Executive Director Michelle Wagner said ADVAS also offers support for clients who are going through the court system.

"We offer help for court prep; filling out those forms to make sure they understand and feel supported during that process," she said. "We can accompany them to court to make sure they feel fully-informed because it can be a very overwhelming process." Wagner took on the new role of Executive Director in August 2018 after serving on the Society's board since 2013, leaving a decade-long career in the oil and gas industry to focus

solely on her passion to make a difference in the community.

"With changes in the economy, the environment of the oil and gas sector didn't have the same positivity for me; I wasn't as invested as I had been," Wagner said, speaking to her various roles in community relations departments. "When the chance became available [to serve as Executive Director] I thought 'what an amazing opportunity to make an impact on an individual person's life but also to our community in a capacity I'd never done before.'"

Wagner studied social work in university and said when she was in her 20s and 30s she told herself she would get back into the field in her 50s.

"It's happening a bit sooner than I thought," Wagner joked. "But I have to say the transition has brought such incredible fulfillment and passion that now I can't imagine not being here."

When reflecting on the impact she's made in the community, Wagner's hope is that she can continue to make positive change in the city she calls home.

"I want this city to continue to be a great place to live," she said. "When I think about ADVAS and the impact I make there I try to think bigger picture- how can we really make a difference and help more people, help them know that we're there? I don't want anyone to have to suffer in silence."

"There's nothing wrong with breaking down some of those barriers and just saying 'we're here together.'"



As an avid supporter of inspiring women, and having performed in the Vagina Monologues production in 2016, Wagner said it was a no-brainer to partner with Ladies out Loud for this year's Monologues.

"Everyone is coming from the same space, driving toward the same end goal of empowerment, resilience and building knowledge and awareness," she said. "We were just individuals working together with strangers but at the end we were all friends. It completely changed my life to be able to have those relationships still and to have been part of the Monologues."

Moving forward, Wagner's personal and professional goals within the community are to continue drawing on her passion for impact and change.

"I've always come from the perspective that knowledge is power," she said. "Whether it's bolstering someones self-esteem or offering that helping hand to allow them to realize their own power, it's so important to support one another."





Community Links - enhancing Airdrie through support

By April Bouchard

North Rocky View Community Links has been supporting Airdrie and area residents for over 30 years through their extensive offering of programs. From counselling to daycare and family violence prevention outreach, Community Links serves to promote citizens' health and well-being and enhance the quality of life for residents.

As their mission statement, "Strong Individuals, Strong Families, Strong Communities," says, the non-profit strives to strengthen and support individuals and families through community connections to supports, services and resource referrals.

Executive director Brenda Hume said Community Links serves approximately 11,000 people in the region yearly, adding that number speaks to the need of such supports.

"My passion has always been working with children and families, especially for those who are going through family violence," Hume said. "My background is early childhood, so that's also my passion, and I enjoy it very, very much."

As of November, Hume has been with the organization for 14 years. Prior to that, she was in a

similar position at the Resource Center in Cochrane.

Since Hume had her own children over 40 years ago she said she's wanted to help make a difference in the lives of not only her children but also that of other families and is heavily involved in other commitments such as respite, family violence support and early intervention as well as special needs support.

Hume adds they are very fortunate to have many partners in the community, including Ladies Out Loud, "whose strong partnership, dedication and passion contribute to the essential efforts of the support to the community. We all work together to ensure that people are safe, they have the access to resources and supports..." she said. "We want to ensure there's good integration and collaboration among our community partners."

Hume said fundraising proceeds from the Vagina Monologues this year will go toward

counselling services to support clients who are experiencing family violence.

Community Links offers most of their family violence programming at no costs, making donations crucial to continuing to offer these services to individuals and families. They also serve basic needs for clients, which can include housing, employment and connecting to longer term support for finances, such as social assistance.

www.nrvcl.ab.ca



*A Rose can never be a Sunflower, and
A sunflower can never be a rose.
All flowers are beautiful in their own way,
And that's like Women too.*

~Miranda Kerr

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LADIES OUT LOUD

We all have days when we feel unwell, and days where we feel lost, lonely, sad, anxious or stressed. You are not alone, as these are common feelings that most of us experience. Everyday life contributes to a lot of these feelings and this can impact our physical and emotional health. It seems that loneliness is a growing epidemic in all age groups. It's not surprising with social media being "the" social outlet for some. Fact of the matter is; connecting with others socially is much needed to maintain good health and happiness. Not that we didn't already know this right? But sometimes we need a little encouragement to heed it. So I hope you take this little kick in the butt and come and join us this year.

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