

# FAMILY MATTERS

A WEEKLY FEATURE FOR CALGARY FAMILIES

QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, IDEAS, INQUIRIES — CALL CHRIS HUESTIS AT 235-7552 • E-MAIL: chuestis@theherald.canwest.com

## Online group help mothers to connect

KATE TAVENDER  
FOR NEIGHBOURS

Moving to Calgary from Brampton, Ont. five years ago was a struggle for Karen Taillon. Apart from her husband and children, Taillon felt totally alone in this new, strange city.

"I think it's just so hard to meet people," says Taillon describing why making new friends can be such a challenge. "Not everyone lives in the same community... there's not many people on my street with kids that stay at home."

Taillon eventually found help through [www.calgarymoms.com](http://www.calgarymoms.com). "I was just surfing the Internet and I typed in 'moms groups' in Calgary and it popped up," says Taillon who was reaching out for help. The website connected her to other moms dealing with similar problems.

"When I get really low it's hard for me to talk to people so I find it a lot easier to write my feelings down and express how I'm feeling over the computer."

Connecting through a computer is just what [www.calgarymoms.com](http://www.calgarymoms.com) is doing. This online community forum or chat network, the largest one of its kind in the city, brings Calgary moms together.

"Moms can go online with other moms and talk about pregnancy, parenting, relationships, their children. You can ask questions and you'll get answers from moms," explains Britt Raposo, the owner and founder of [www.calgarymoms.com](http://www.calgarymoms.com). "It's more like a support system."

Often the online connections turn into bona fide friendships much like a dating service — except that instead of looking for potential mates, these women are testing out new friends.

"Everyone meets online. That's what is so great about the forum," explains Raposo. "They can meet people on the forum first and get kind of a feel for people."

Once an online friendship has begun, the members of [www.calgarymoms.com](http://www.calgarymoms.com) can then get together in



Britt Raposo, pictured here with her daughters, established [www.calgarymoms.com](http://www.calgarymoms.com) as a forum for mothers to help one another through online discussions about pregnancy, parenting, relationships or children.

Wil Andruschak for Neighbours

one of the many organized activities held around the city including playgroups and coffees, but also at various evening events that take place without the kids.

"We have a slumber party coming up where we reserve hotel rooms and we meet up in one room and chat and talk and then we go off and have one night of sheer bliss... one night of pure sleep," explains Raposo.

"We have book club and we have scrap-booking clubs... and we have mom's night out where we pick a place and meet up."

Moms seem to love it. Since Raposo

started the website in March 2005, it has grown to more than 1,200 members from every quadrant of the city. It's so popular that Raposo has even had membership inquiries from mothers as far away as Australia who want to join the website in order to meet other moms before they themselves move to the city.

Clearly moms want the support of other moms which is why Raposo, who has a background in web design, has gone on to create similar provincial websites.

As of this spring, women living in British Columbia, Alberta,

Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and Newfoundland can get to know each other through websites similar to [www.calgarymoms.com](http://www.calgarymoms.com).

Though Raposo hopes that eventually these endeavours will grow and become profitable, for now this mother of two young girls is just happy to have helped other moms find a way to connect and alleviate the isola-

tion of parenting.

"I just want a place for moms in Calgary to get together and have the support system I know they all need — because I need it," explains Raposo who herself has made some wonderful friends online. "I get awesome feedback. I even get messages every other day telling me how much they appreciate it."

Certainly, Lori Leduc appreciates the website. This single mother was 22 years old when her daughter Starleena was born.

Apart from her own mother, there was no one Leduc could talk to about her parenting struggles since none of her friends had children. The website introduced her to other single parents like herself who could relate to her situation.

"I've made a few really good friends off (the website)," explains Leduc. "It just feels like a huge family and a family that's been there forever... I know without the site I'd just be sitting at home."

Taillon feels the same way about [www.calgarymoms.com](http://www.calgarymoms.com) which she calls a "lifesaver." Though she continues to suffer from depression, just being able to reach out to like-minded women has been a great comfort to this mother of three.

"I don't know what I'd do without these ladies, they're just wonderful," she says. "If I'm having a really bad day and I don't see the light at the end of the tunnel, I just know I can go to them and say 'things aren't looking good right now,' and they just give me words of encouragement and help me through that dark period."

For more information or to register go to [www.calgarymoms.com](http://www.calgarymoms.com).

**P. & C. TREE SERVICES**

City & Guilds, NVQ Forestry, NCHA, Fully insured

**TREE FELLING, PRUNING & REMOVAL.**

**LANDSCAPING - Bob Cat Work - Earth & Gravel Moving, Ground Clearance, Digging & Sod Removal, Grading**

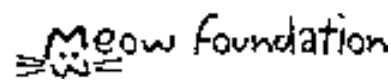
PHONE CELL: (403) 809-2926

## Balconies unsafe for cats



Courtesy, MEOW Foundation

Juno is a ladies man. The female cats at the shelter adore him and like to groom him. Juno needs a quiet home where he can lay in the sun and relax. Visit him at [meow-foundation.com](http://meow-foundation.com) or phone 230-6033.



Dear MEOW Foundation. I live in an apartment and my cat wants to go out on the balcony. How can I make sure she is safe?

— Martin

Every year MEOW hears of cats that have jumped or fallen from balconies.

Cats are easily spooked by loud noises and distracted by birds or other wildlife. Therefore, your cat should be in a fully enclosed environment when out on your balcony. This means there should be a floor, ceiling and four "walls."

Your easiest and simplest option would be to purchase a large collapsible metal cage (available at some pet supply stores) and set it up on your balcony.

It needs to be large enough for her food, water, litter and bedding if you plan to leave her out there for extended periods.

You need to make sure there is shade and weather protection throughout the day, remembering the sun will move across the sky throughout the course of a day, and the weather can change very quickly.

### PET OF THE WEEK



Rosco is a one-year-old German Shepherd cross. He is a young dog who has lots of love to give. This great dog is outgoing but calms down quickly to focus on treats and training. During his time here at the Calgary Humane Society, Rosco has learned many commands including shake a paw, leave it and sit. He is an intelligent boy and is looking for a new family that will be patient and willing to help him learn more. For information on adopting Rosco, you can visit him the Calgary Humane Society's new shelter at 4455 110th Ave. S.E. or call us at (403) 205-4455, and quote reference No. 72887. You can also visit our website at [calgary-humane.ca](http://calgary-humane.ca).

**Gifts Unique as the Individual**

• Individual hand-Crafted Products  
• All Natural Body Care Products  
• Crystals • Books • Jewellery

907 Heritage Drive SW • 301-0961 • [www.replenishingshoppe.ca](http://www.replenishingshoppe.ca)

**Strawberries**

**Raspberries**

**Saskatoons**

**Bumble Berry ORCHARDS**  
*"Grown in Harmony with Nature"*

Located just 30 minutes from Calgary city limits on highway #817:  
• 10 km South of Strathmore • 3.3 km South of Glenmore Tr.  
• 5.5 km North of Highway 22x

**U-PICK AND PRE-PICKED BERRIES**  
**(403) 934-2749**

**FIELD STONE**  
FRUIT WINES

Our new **CHERRY FRUIT WINE** available only at the winery this summer.

**TASTING & SALES**  
Tuesday to Sunday  
10 am to 6 pm

**Alberta's First Cottage Winery**  
Located 10.5 km south of Strathmore, Alberta on Hwy 817  
403-934-2749  
[www.fieldstonefruitwines.com](http://www.fieldstonefruitwines.com)

**Spring/Summer Collection**  
**INVENTORY BLOWOUT!**  
TIMELESS EUROPEAN FASHIONS

**Save 60% or more**  
ON SELECTED ITEMS

**KIMBERLY'S FASHIONS**  
GEIGER • LUCIA • GERRY WEBER • MANY OTHERS

SIZES 4 TO 22

Mayfair Place: 6707 Elbow Dr. S.W. 253-4646 • West Market Square: #529 - 1851 Sirocco Dr. S.W. 685-1133

**CLIP!**

**SCRAPBOOKER'S PARADISE**

**15% OFF**

Loose Cardstock  
Valid form  
July 20th - 29th, 2006

**Scrapbooker's Paradise North**  
45 Crowfoot Terrace NW (near the theatres)  
547-8522

**Scrapbooker's Paradise South**  
#20 - 9250 Macleod Tr. S. (same parking lot as Santa Fe Grill)  
253-4799

Limited to regular priced merchandise only. Valid on in-stock items only. Coupon must be presented at time of purchase. Limit one coupon per customer for the entire event. No cash value. Not valid with any other coupon or offer. No merchandise on hold will be eligible for this coupon event.

**MIDNIGHT MADNESS SALE!**  
**TONIGHT ONLY**  
Great Bargains from 8 pm - Midnight

**L O L L I P O P**

WHAT'S YOUR FASHION FLAVOUR?

**Pick Up Sweet Deals On:**

- Name Brand Teen Fashions,
- Quality Children's Clothing,
- Baby Equipment,
- Dancewear, Accessories,
- And so much more!

**WE BUY & CONSIGN**

**220-0154** 763 Northmount Drive NW  
(On the corner of 14th St & Northmount Drive)