

Colleen Corder

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven
Eccl. 3:1

When I began my journey into the world of congenital heart disease almost 20 years ago, little did I know where this path would lead me. I had no idea of the people I would meet and of the experiences that I would come to have. I am a deeper person and a better person because of my journey. Now the time has come for the next season in my journey.

My involvement with the Children's Heart Network (CHN) dates back to its inception in 1992 when the group was known as *Heart to Heart*. As a heart parent, I attended monthly support and education meetings in room 3D16 at BC Children's Hospital (BCCH) and quickly came to recognize and appreciate the unique support that families could offer to each other. As one of the original members I was excited to take the CHN Resource Parent training course and to be able to come along side other families who were on a similar heart journey to mine. I joined the CHN Board as a director and then as a treasurer serving until 1996.

One of my most enduring memories of the support group was attending the Langley meeting after the death of my son Ross to tell the families that this would be my last meeting as I was concerned that my presence as a bereaved parent might be upsetting to others. The parents were quick to express to me that evening that they wanted me to continue coming to the meetings and that we still had so much to share with each other. I was reminded again of the amazing capacity for compassion and encouragement that heart families develop through their trials and how CHN provided the opportunity for families to share these gifts with each other.

In December of 1996 I was asked by the CHN board to consider applying for the then vacant position of Coordinator. I agreed and began the next phase of my heart journey. As I look back over the last twelve years with CHN I am so proud of the many things we have accomplished. As the co-chair of seven Growing Up With Heart Disease conferences I have seen collaboration in action with parents and professionals coming together to create educational events that produced benefits that far exceeded our goals. As the Provincial Coordinator I have been involved in the development and implementation of the Hearts of Gold and V.I. Hearts of Gold youth programs, the Heart Beats Children's program, Camp Summit and Zajac Ranch, the CHN Family Liaison position, the Critter Cove Kid's Weekend, the Heart Matters newsletter, the CHN website, and the many services that CHN provides. I have witnessed CHN grow into an organization that is making a positive difference in the lives of children, youth and their families who are living with congenital heart disease. Achieving this growth has come from the commitment of the many volunteer heart parents and BCCH staff who have generously given of their time and talents as committee members, Resource Parents,

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Group Coordinators, Event Coordinators, and Board of Directors. I am honoured to have had a part in this outstanding organization and count it as a privilege to have worked along side such truly amazing people.

It is with joy that I look back over my journey and with sadness that I bid my farewell. To the many families that I have met and the friends that I have made, this is not “goodbye” just “see you later!”

Take care,
Colleen

