



Colleen Hobson, long-time executive director of Saanich Neighbourhood Place, will be leaving the centre for a job with the provincial government.

Long-time director of Saanich Neighbourhood Place leaves behind legacy

Colleen Hobson will leave after 25 years to take new job with provincial government in early 2019

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It is not clear whether the children under the care of Colleen Hobson had fake IDs when she started to work with Saanich Neighbourhood Place (SNP), when it opened in 1993.

But the question is not completely out of place, if you consider that the SNP's executive director Hobson started her career with the organization in what was once a bar.

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Well before SNP had moved into its current space at Pearkes Recreation Centre, it shared space with that building's bar.

“When I started in the morning, I would have to wipe the tables off [and] get the beer stains off the tables,” says Hobson, in recalling her early days.

Much has changed since. The place where locals used to swill beer while watching hockey games has turned into a fitness centre, and SNP now occupies its own space in Pearkes, having served countless parents and children through parenting classes, cooking classes, drop in support sessions, prenatal discussion groups, postpartum groups, drop in playgroups and kinder-gym among others.

Next year, SNP will open 49 additional daycare spaces in a brand new building right next to its current space to solidify its status as one of the most widely used resources of its kind in the region.

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Hobson, who has seen and substantially shaped these developments over a quarter-century in various roles, is moving on though to take a position with the Ministry of Children and Family Development as director of operations for Early Years and Children and Youth with Special Needs.

Hobson said she never thought about leaving SNP, nor was she looking for another job. But it was difficult to pass up this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity with the ministry, which starts on Jan. 2.

Over the years, Hobson has been able to develop deep and lasting relationships with SNP users, as well as staff and others.

“It has been fabulous,” she said.

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Just recently, she bumped into a woman who had come to SNP with her two young children in the 1990s. The occasion gave her chance to catch up and hear that the children — now adults — are doing well. This level of connection has also appeared in other ways. A parent, who first came to SNP as a child herself, is now using SNP with her child, said Hobson.

“Seeing that continuity has been really rewarding for me,” she said.

If SNP has been an asset for countless residents, the same can be said about Hobson’s impact on the surrounding Gorge-Tillicum neighbourhood.

“She has built Saanich Neighbourhood Place to fill specific needs for young families that do not always have the resources or skills to raise young children,” said Rob Wickson, a long-time resident and community organizer.

“Thanks to her she will leave a legacy that makes our community one of the better places to raise a family. Colleen will be missed for her steadfast support and determination to create a better world.”

SNP’s board of director is currently looking for a replacement, but Hobson will remain a presence at SNP, having promised that she will be back for the opening of the new daycare.

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