

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 9, 2018

Princess Salimah Aga Khan Presents Award to Metro Vancouver Foster Mother

Vancouver, British Columbia SOS Children's Village B.C. is thrilled to announce the presentation of an exceptional award to Metro Vancouver's Debbie Madden by Princess Salimah Aga Khan, in recognition of a lifetime of service as a foster parent who believes and exudes the qualities of an SOS Mom.

Debbie Madden was pleased to accept the award from the Princess – known as an 'International Ambassador for the Children' – at the Fairmont Hotel Vancouver during an SOS Children's Village B.C. fundraising banquet. Representatives from SOS Children's Villages International were present, including **Richard Pichler**, Special Representative for External Affairs and Resources, and **Thomas Bauer**, SOS Children's Villages Canada CEO and President.

"Hermann Gmeiner, Founder of SOS Children's Villages, is quoted as saying 'Nothing in the world is more important than to care for a child'. **However, I believe society is failing in this department,**" said Farah Collier, case manager at SOS Children's Village B.C.

"Children in foster care face extraordinary challenges. Many have witnessed their loved ones become dependent on drugs, alcohol, or both. They may have been physically abused, sexually abused, and mentally abused. These children have not felt safe. They may have been scared, and felt truly alone. We all know that children should feel safe, wanted, loved, and celebrated. They should grow up in a home where the caregivers express to the children that there are no hidden limits to what they can achieve."

"Today we are celebrating and honouring Debbie Madden, who truly embodies the four pillars of SOS Children's Villages: siblings, the foster home, the SOS Mom, and permanency," Farah Collier continued. "We are celebrating her today because she has always advocated for children in her care to stay in her care. We praise Debbie because the type of support she provides to the kids in her care is not just what is required by the Ministry, but above and beyond in every capacity. We have seen her love and care for the foster children as if they were her own. **The love that she provides is truly unconditional.**"

Debbie Madden was recognized as a deserving recipient of the award in the way she gives all of herself to every single child in her home, no matter what physical, emotional, or mental health challenges they may have. The children who have passed through her home have continued to see Debbie as their mom, even after they have left her care and moved on to lead rich and successful lives. **Her remarkable advocacy skills, while working within a system that presents so many challenges and is not easily accessible for resources, was highlighted** – an innate ability to maneuver around barriers in the system. She has always fought for the children in her care, to

protect their rights. She knows they are entitled to a loving home, a caring family, and just getting their basic needs met, but that is not enough for Debbie.

Debbie Madden has served the foster community for over 20 years. She previously work for the school district, giving her knowledge and experience that other caregivers have not had the opportunity to receive. She eagerly continues to receive caregiver training from SOS Children's Village B.C. to ensure her children are well equipped to tackle the everyday challenges of living independently. Additionally, in her life she surrounds herself with people that support her journey of being a foster mom, and she is not afraid or too proud to ask for help when she may be struggling with one of her children. This is another quality that SOS B.C. admired, when deciding to give the award – truly a mark of an exceptional caregiver.

“Sadly, most caregivers in our province do not have the capacity, education, or training to be the type of caregiver that Debbie is,” said Douglas Dunn, executive director of SOS Children's Village B.C. “She is a model of what we want our caregivers to be at the Village, because she embodies so many aspects of a professional caregiver, and in this system she is not being honoured as somebody that is professional, but just somebody doing their job. **Our kids deserve the highest level of care from people like Debbie, and this is one of the reasons why we strongly believe it is important to professionalize caregivers.**”

Presenter Princess Salimah Aga Khan has visited SOS Children's Villages facilities around the globe – Cambodia, Nepal, Pakistan, and India to name a few – and has met with many SOS Moms and Dads. She graciously and humbly helps SOS Children's Villages raise funds for their cause. The Princess was appointed as an International Ambassador back in 2002.

About SOS Children's Village BC

SOS Children's Villages is the world's largest non-governmental, non-denominational child development organization and cares for fostered, orphaned, or abandoned children. It has existed for over 65 years with presence in 135 countries and 572 Villages. British Columbia is home to the only SOS Children's Village in Canada. SOS Children's Village BC provides homes, a supportive community, and programs to help foster children and youth in need grow into caring, self-reliant adults.

-30-

For more information please contact:

William Brennan, Manager of Communications
SOS Children's Village BC
T: (604) 574-2964 ext. 104
E: williambrennan@sosbc.org Web: www.sosbc.org

Please visit our Media Room: <https://www.sosbc.org/the-village/media-room/>