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February 6, 2023

Dear <Salutation>,

I hugged my daughter, said goodbye and told her I'd be back later that day to pick her up.

I was smiling, but inside, my heart was pounding, and a million thoughts raced through my mind. Did I make the right decision? Will they take good care of her?

It was hard leaving my child to be cared for by strangers, but I didn't have a choice. I was a young mother going through some really rough times. I needed help.

This was many years ago, and I can wholeheartedly say that enrolling my daughter and later my son, in the Bissell Child Care Centre has been such a blessing. For more than two decades, Bissell Centre has been part of my family's life.

Today, the amazing people at the Bissell Child Care Centre are taking care for my five-year-old adoptive granddaughter, Riley.

I can't imagine what life would be like without a place like Bissell Centre in our community. Their child care program is a safety net for many parents and caregivers like me who struggle to afford child care. This past year has been especially hard.

I was struggling to make ends meet even before the prices started skyrocketing. But now it is really bad. It's outrageous how much everything has gone up – food, gas, rent. I feel like I'm constantly running just to stay in place.

[VARIABLE] FirstName, would you give today to ensure that Bissell Centre can continue to provide quality child care for Edmontonians in need during these tough times? Your support has helped keep the doors of Bissell Centre and their child care program open to hundreds of families like mine who can't afford any other means of child care.

Bissell Centre has helped me more times than I can count. I can't say enough about how caring and kind everyone at Bissell is. They treat you with respect and dignity, no matter who you are, where you come from or what situation you are in.

I can tell you this is *not* something you come across every day.

As a native person, I've been discriminated against many times in my life. The stares, the rejections, the snide remarks...I've experienced it all.

But never at Bissell. It didn't matter if I had a bad day or a good day. They would just say, "*Hello, have a great day!*" They are always friendly and have a smile on their face.

So, when Riley was born, I knew I could count on Bissell for help.

At the time, I was not in a good place in my life. I was homeless. No job. No roof over my head. No idea how I would care for a baby. But I knew I had to get my life together for my granddaughter.

I was her only hope. The only family member who could raise her.

Riley's birth mom used drugs throughout pregnancy, so she wasn't able to care for her newborn. Because of her mother's drug use, Riley was born with a drug dependency and developmental issues.

She spent the first month of her life in the hospital going through withdrawal pains. It was heartbreaking to watch. She would cry for hours. Her tiny body was trying to cope with the excruciating pain. Nothing could calm her down.

From the day my little girl came into the world, she had a tough battle ahead of her. What kind of life would she have? I couldn't bear the thought of Riley ending up in a foster home.

That's why I made the decision to adopt Riley and give her the best life she could have.

I reached out to Bissell for help. If there was anyone I could count on, it was them. Right away, they connected me to their housing program and Child Care Centre. From there, the amazing people at Bissell have supported Riley and me every step of the way.

I first brought Riley to the Bissell Child Care Center when she was only two months old. I have to say, even though I had the utmost trust in Bissell and their caregivers, a part of me was worried.

Riley was so tiny and helpless. As a special needs child, she needed a lot of extra care. I wasn't sure I knew how to properly take care of her and give her everything she needed to thrive.

I needed help taking care of her so I could work on rebuilding my life. That's why the child care program at Bissell is so great.

It gives parents, especially single moms and caregivers like me, the opportunity to get important things done during the day – attend school, employment training, medical appointments, search for work or housing or just have a little break from taking care of children.

When you can count on affordable child care at a place that you trust will take good care of your little one, a huge burden is lifted off you.

I really think Bissell Centre bent over backward helping my granddaughter and me. They are really good about taking the time to understand each child's unique needs. The caregivers know about Riley's special needs and do everything they can to help her reach her milestones.

For example, there is another program that works alongside Bissell called the Grip Program. They have a worker that comes in the morning to help with Riley. On most days, when I come to pick her up, she is happy to see me, but at the same time doesn't want to leave daycare.

I feel at peace knowing that Riley loves going to daycare and is comfortable there. I know she's in good hands while I focus on what I need to do to provide for our family.

Bissell Centre is such a valuable resource to Edmontonians. To families living in the grips of poverty, they are a place of hope. A safe haven. A desperately needed lifeline to stop them from sinking further into a poverty trap.

Your support helps to keep the doors of Bissell Centre open to hundreds of families and their children in our community. It ensures that every Edmontonian can access essential services to help them live a decent life.

The cost of living is painfully high for many people in our city right now.

Low-income families and those living in poverty are struggling to make ends meet. Baby formula is still hard to find, and it comes at a high cost. Putting food on the table, buying diapers and paying for child care can be financially crippling.

Access to affordable child care is one way to ease the burden on the families who are living hand-to-mouth.

[VARIABLE] **FirstName**, I know these are hard times for many Edmontonians. But I'd like to ask you to please send a gift – in any amount that you can – to help ensure families in need in our city can continue to count on Bissell Centre and affordable child care services. Your support has made a world of difference for so many of your neighbours. Please, will you give today?

The Bissell Child Care Centre is incredibly important to families in our community. It's a place where kids can be kids. It's a warm and safe home away from home where they can play, learn and thrive. And their families can have peace of mind knowing their little ones are well taken care of and have everything they need.

When there is so much to worry about – putting food on the table, paying the bills, keeping a roof over your head – not having to worry about the cost of child care is a huge relief for someone struggling financially.

Because of your kindness and generosity, Bissell Centre is a place of hope for so many Edmontonians. Thank you for caring about the people in our community, and please, give today.

Your gift will help a family like mine.

With my deepest thanks,

Vivian

P.S. Included with this letter is a reply coupon. On the back, you can read about how your gift will help families who rely on the Bissell Child Care Centre. And please, give today so more people in our city can get the support they need during their hardest times. Thank you.