



# Outlook

The Garth Homer Society Newsletter



Employment Services Team Coordinator, Kristy French, mapping out the program's employment partners.  
Photo: Kate Jones

## Spreading The Word About Employment Services

This spring the GHS Employment Services team moved upstairs to the third floor of the Garth Home Centre, where they have already made the space their own. They have stenciled inspiring quotes on the walls, highlighted local business partners on a giant map and added signage welcoming visitors to the space.

The Employment Services team is also spreading the word about their programs via new outreach materials. The materials speak to families and adults with developmental disabilities who are interested in exploring employment opportunities, as well as to local businesses looking to hire a GHS client. Ultimately, the team

hopes to connect program participants with businesses offering meaningful employment opportunities. This will increase program participants' confidence and independence, as well as achieve employers' business goals.

As part of their recent outreach initiative, the Employment Services team hosted an open house to showcase their new office space and meet with current and potential program participants.

"We believe in the transformational power of employment to bring an increased sense of purpose to the lives of people with developmental disabilities," says Employment Services Manager, Jeanine Reemst. "We're excited about

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meeting with and identifying more opportunities for program participants in the coming months."

Currently, the Employment Services program works with more than 70

**We believe in the transformational power of employment.**

clients and 40 businesses across Greater Victoria. For more information about the Employment Services team visit their space on the third floor of the Garth Homer Centre or call 250-475-2270 and ask to speak with the team.

## PROGRAM NEWS

### Valet Seats Make Vans More Accessible

With welcome support from a generous anonymous funder, GHS recently installed three new valet seats in the Society's vans. The valet seats, which extend out the front passenger side of the van when needed, make the vans much more accessible.

"There's actually a lot of physical maneuvering to sit in the back of a minivan, which is difficult for a lot of people," says Director of Geriatrics, Phemie Guttin. "The valet seats simplify the process and enable more people to use the vans and enjoy community outings."

Overall, GHS has four valet seats installed in minivans that clients use on a daily basis. The valet seats are a great help to those in wheelchairs, as the seats allow them to participate in more community outings and events



Pathways participant, Sheryl, using one of the new valet seats.

without the need of a fully wheelchair accessible vehicle.

"Staff and clients are really enjoying the new seats – they're so easy to use!" says Guttin.

### Saying Goodbye To Old Friends And Welcoming New Staff

The last few months have been a time to say goodbye to some longtime staff and hello to new faces on the GHS team.

Sara Duris, our Accounting Assistant, moved on this summer, followed by Hayley Flood, our Director of Finance and Administration. In her twelve years at GHS, Hayley not only brought remarkable attention to detail to her work, but also her flair for cooking to many GHS events. Her chilies will be missed!

*Thank you to our longtime employees for all their years of service!*

Mary Ann Snowden, our Director of Quality Assurance, is soon retiring after more than 24 years with GHS. Mary Ann, accompanied by her trusty four-legged friend Muggins, has been one of the pillars of services delivery at GHS, with her gentle but relentless focus on client outcomes. For the last 12 years, Mary Ann has been responsible for the Society's accreditation. In addition, she provided senior direction to our Employment Services Program, and was instrumental in launching the High School Transition program.



We say goodbye to Mary Ann Snowden and Hayley Flood. Welcome to Grace Hu and Andrea Youson!

GHS recently welcomed two new staff. Grace Hu took on the role of Accounting Assistant in July, and in August, Andrea Youson started in the new role of Manager of Geriatrics. Andrea is a registered LPN (Licensed Practical Nurse) and most recently opened a 200-bed residential facility in Duncan. She will be a great asset to our geriatrics programs.

## PROGRAM NEWS

### Finding Independence In Self-Employment

Matching adults who have developmental disabilities with local employers is not always a straightforward process. GHS Employment Services Program clients can be the perfect fit for employers' needs, but ultimately they may have trouble adapting to a traditional work environment no matter how well suited they are for a position.

In those instances, the Employment Services team works to coordinate and support self-employment opportunities for GHS clients. Much like any entrepreneur, a client interested in self-employment must be self-motivated, organized and have a high level of discipline.

As part of the supported self-employment process, the Employment Services team assesses the skills and strengths of each client and then identifies potential employers and businesses that could benefit from these qualities. Unlike many traditional self-employment programs, the focus is not purely on revenue generation. A key element of the GHS supported self-employment approach is helping a client create an activity that increases their independence and growth and has potential for some revenue generation.

"We're trying to help clients use what they're good at," says Employment Services Manager, Jeanine Reemst. "Our main goals are increased confidence, communication skills and building a network within the community."

Through the supported self-employment process, Employment Services clients are able to put a value on what they're good at. The Employment Services team recently worked with Employment Services participant Alex on a self-employment opportunity to develop a dog walking business. Alex loves dogs and has worked at dog grooming salons and with dog walking businesses in the past. In 2014, with the support of the GHS Job Coach, Sandy Sifert, Alex established her own dog walking service. Together with Sandy, Alex advertised her dog walking services, screened responses and then negotiated a compensation agreement with a local client. Alex now walks dogs during the afternoon on Tuesday through Saturday. She's been able to make her own schedule and use her love of dogs to create work on her own terms.

Other Employment Services clients involved in the supported self-employment program include Mason, who is building an IT support business, and Charlotte, who knits scarves to sell at local markets.

For Alex, Mason and Charlotte, the supported self-employment process can act as a vaulting stage. Looking



Alex has started her own dog-walking service with the help of the GHS Employment Services team.

ahead, they can take the new knowledge they've learned about marketing, compensation and communication on to future employment opportunities. GHS has recently applied to the Vancouver Foundation for funding to further develop this program and to support self-employment opportunities for other GHS clients.

### Learning Garden Takes Root



STARR team members, Christy Beattie, Kevin Moss and Fadel Dawood are helping to prepare the team's winter vegetable seedlings for the Learning Garden at the Garth Homer Centre.



## GARTH HOMER FOUNDATION REPORT

### Another good year



Bruce Homer  
Chair, Garth Homer Foundation

Since our last newsletter update, the Garth Homer Foundation completed the audit for its 2014 fiscal year. So, this seems an appropriate point to report on how the year went. In all, I am pleased to report that it was a very positive year, with good progress made in both fundraising and in our support for important projects at the Garth Homer Society and beyond.

Before anything else, I must take this opportunity to thank all of you who made donations

in support of our work last year – your gifts could not be more appreciated. In all, we raised almost \$150,000 in the year. Some of that came through our direct mail program, but I am extremely pleased to report that some of it also came through larger legacy gifts from committed, long-term supporters. Such gifts are not only financially significant, but provide affirmation for all we do and for the important work of the Society. Thank you to all who share our vision of a life, home, and a place in the world for every person with developmental disability.

As always, this much needed funding was put to use in a variety of ways. Among other examples in 2014, it provided for the society's fleet expansion, for staff and professional development, for increasing the number of iPads available to clients, and for completing the work of putting a new roof on the Garth Homer Centre. Our task every year is to try to match our funding to the areas of greatest need in the society.



In 2014, GHF supported the expansion of the Society's fleet and putting a new roof on the Garth Homer Centre.

This year the foundation also committed funds to two new areas of community purpose. Consistent with our mission of broader community support for disabilities, we made a small grant in support of the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, and contributed a bursary that will allow a candidate from the community living sector in Victoria to participate in Leadership Victoria's community leadership development program. Our view is that a stronger community means a stronger Garth Homer Society.

As we look to the year ahead, the biggest project looming is the pending redevelopment of the Garth Homer site. With grant support from the Vancity Community Foundation and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, we have already completed the first stages of feasibility planning for this project. Currently, we are engaged in conversations with BC Housing about our site plans. Many thanks again to Vancity, who have provided a second grant to support this important work.

And finally, keep an eye out in the months ahead for a new Garth Homer Foundation website. Work is proceeding on the site, and it should be ready soon.

Bruce

### ArtWorks in the Community



ArtWorks participant, Ashley Haagensen, will have a solo show at the Emily Carr House this September.

## PROGRAM NEWS

### STARR Expands Into New Space

It's important for GHS clients to have their own space throughout the day at the Garth Homer Centre — room to draw, read, or just relax. This is particularly important for clients in GHS programs like STARR, which supports those with significant emotional, communication, and behavioral support needs.

In recent months, the STARR program has created independent quiet space for clients through the renovation of a former staff lunchroom. The new room's lilac walls and lighting make it a calming space for participants to relax or work independently.

The program now has three main rooms for clients at the Garth Homer Centre. The added space allows for both quiet and noisy program activities, giving clients a choice between the two environments and helping them to feel more balanced throughout the day. As soon as renovations were completed in early July, STARR participants began to use the new spaces on a daily basis for art activities, to use iPads or for other independent activities.

"We were outgrowing our room," says Program Co-ordinator BJ Webb. "The new space has allowed us to accept



The new STARR program space is a quiet space for clients to work independently.

more participants and give everybody the space they need."

Re-envisioning spaces within the Garth Homer Centre has been a key focus for GHS over the last year, to ensure clients have the space they need to grow and develop. As our programs have expanded, we've reconfigured rooms and moved program spaces to make better use of space within the building. In addition to the STARR program renovations, the spaces for the geriatrics programs Pals and Pearls are also undergoing a transformation. Stay tuned for updates!

### Meet Our Clients – Neil Mavridis

In the year Neil Mavridis has participated in GHS programming, he's transitioned from a teenager to an increasingly independent young adult. Neil, who turns 21 in September, joined GHS's Discovery program with his twin brother, Scott, in July 2013. He's quickly grown up at GHS, but has become well known at the Garth Homer Centre for his friendly laugh and cheeky jokes.

Neil's daily schedule is filled with volunteer and recreation activities that have helped to boost his confidence and independence. Each week he participates in recycling activities by picking up empty bottles from local restaurants and used paper from around the Garth Homer Centre. Proceeds from Neil's and other GHS participants' work are donated to Mary's Farm and Sanctuary in Goldstream, which supports rescued horses, goats and llamas. Neil once shied away from participating in the recycling activities, but now ably collects bottles from restaurant owners each Wednesday. He also has access to the centre's paper recycling bins, using a temperamental main key.

When he's not busy supporting recycling efforts, Neil also volunteers with the Military Family Resource Centre

in Esquimalt, where he cleans and washes toys for the children's programs. At the Garth Homer Centre, Neil loves to belt out Michael Jackson tunes during karaoke and music sessions. He also participates in weekly fishing outings to Elk Lake during the summer months and is an accomplished photographer. Many GHS staff have Neil's photography calendars hanging in their offices!



Neil at the Garth Homer Centre, alongside one of his favourite photos.

## CHAIR'S REPORT

### Our New Logo and Mission Statement



Alan Moyes  
Chair, Garth Homer Society

You may have noticed the Garth Homer Society has begun using a new logo — a green and blue motif built out of angular, interlocking hearts. We are very excited about our new look and hope you feel the same way!

We are also about to begin using our new mission statement: to provide services and opportunities that enable people with disabilities to make a life, a home, and a place in the world.

As excited as we are about them, we are not planning to have any sort of formal launch of our new identifiers. Rather, over the next several months, as we renew our website and other communication materials, we will begin replacing the old with the new as the opportunities arise. By this time next year, everything should be up to date.



**Garth Homer**  
SOCIETY

It is quite normal for organizations to change their identifiers from time to time. Indeed, I believe this is an essential part of organizational renewal for mission-driven organizations that aim to stay responsive to the needs of those they serve. To this end, it is important for boards to step back from month-to-month operating concerns now and then in order to think long-term and big picture. In doing so, boards are better able to understand not just what the organization is doing right now, but what it ought to be doing to meet the needs of the future, and how to express that for staff, clients, and the community.

#### Mission Statement

**To provide services and opportunities that enable people with disabilities to make a life, a home and a place in the world.**

Most often, boards do this by holding some sort of planning retreat, complete with facilitators, flip charts, and diagrams with lots of colours and arrows. However, this time around, the board of GHS didn't go at it in quite this way. In fact, we didn't go at it at all! Rather, everything grew organically from the graphic motif and language used in *Faces of the Future*, the long-term vision report we published last fall. (You can read this report on our website, although if you are on the distribution list for this newsletter, you should have already received a copy.)

*Faces of the Future* met with a tremendously enthusiastic reception when it appeared, which helped us to see it in a new light. In the graphic on the cover, we were suddenly finding all sorts of images – interlocking hearts, clasped hands, and a group of houses with gable roofs, to name just a few. In the phrase “a life, home, and a place in the world” we began to perceive a vigorous new expression of the core concept of inclusion, one deeply connected to the idea of full citizenship.

It didn't hurt either, given our strategic intent at Garth Homer to begin developing innovative residential services, that both the graphic motif and the phrase made reference to house and home.

Over several meetings, the board worked with staff and our designers, tweaking the design of the motif and the language of the report until we felt the two worked together to give complete expression to our future purpose. The new logo and mission statement are the result.

As I have indicated, we are very excited by these new representations and, more importantly, we are excited by what they promise for the future! We will continue to keep you informed about developments at Garth Homer as they occur.

Alan

A life, a home, and a place in the world



## CEO REPORT

## Using our Space to Improve Services

One of the great advantages of being in a somewhat larger facility like the Garth Homer Centre is the flexibility we have in using our space creatively for person-centered planning and to meet individual client needs.

Consider our STARR program. Elsewhere in this edition of Outlook, you can read about the recent expansion of the program space for the STARR team. STARR serves clients with behavioural challenges, many of whom require time away from the group. The expansion of STARR gave us the chance to create quiet, softly lighted nooks within the program area that allow folks to be by themselves in a calm environment when they need to be, but to join the group if they choose to.

We similarly customized the program space for our Community Action Team (CAT). The clients in CAT are very different from those in STARR – generally they are gregarious and engaged, and do best when they are in a group. The new big bright open space with its wall of windows is perfectly suited to group activities and as the home base for CAT's daily volunteer activities in the community. When CAT clients need a break from the bustle, they can simply take a stroll through the building or spend some time in the garden.

Different clients with different needs need different spaces. It makes sense.

The work we've completed to add space for our clients in STARR and CAT is just one part of a larger effort we are making to expand and reorganize to serve our clients more effectively. The work began more than a year ago when we moved the Dreams team into the old CAT space in order to provide more room for Dreams clients in wheelchairs. Eventually CAT moved upstairs, which started a big game of musical chairs in which all the program areas on the first floor either moved or were expanded. Our final move was to shift Employment Services into a small new office area on the third floor.

In total, we have made more than 2,000 square feet of new space available for client services. In order to do this, two of our three tenants – the Independent Living Housing Society and the Victoria Epilepsy and Parkinson's Centre – had to move out. Even though we lost the income from their leases, it makes good financial sense, and is more sustainable to use our space for service delivery rather than rentals. And it serves our mission better, too.

In part, these changes have been about simple expansion. We face many pressures to serve more clients

with higher needs and there is no way we can do that without increasing program space. But there is more to it than that.

Having ample space gives us increased flexibility and more scope for individualized programming. Ultimately, we are working towards a service model in which our program areas will simply be the gathering area from which clients start their diverse daily activities. They will be the accustomed place for clients to arrive each day to hang their coats, keep their lunches, meet their friends, and check their daily schedules. However, their daily activities could be anywhere in the facility or in the community, based on their needs, abilities, desires, and individual plans.

Programs in a larger centre are not for everyone, of course. But for those for whom they work, they work very well. As we progress with our strategy to serve a more diverse group of clients with higher needs, we have come to see the Garth Homer Centre for what it really is – not just a big building, but a flexible space of possibilities that gives clients the maximum support for individual growth and personal development.

Mitchell



Mitchell Temkin  
CEO, Garth Homer Society

## ANNOUNCEMENTS & EVENTS

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### GARTH HOMER SOCIETY ARTWORKS EVENTS

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**Ashley Haagensen Solo Exhibition**

*September 25 - 29*

*Opening reception September 25,  
1:00-2:30pm.*

Emily Carr House

**ArtWorks Group Show**

*November - December*

Carole James Constituency office at  
1084 Fort St., Victoria

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813 DARWIN AVE.  
VICTORIA, BC  
V8X 2X7

PHONE 250.475.2270  
FAX 250.475.2279  
EMAIL [GHSINQUIRIES@GARTHOMERSOCIETY.ORG](mailto:GHSINQUIRIES@GARTHOMERSOCIETY.ORG)  
WEB [WWW.GARTHOMER.COM](http://WWW.GARTHOMER.COM)