



Outlook

The Garth Homer Society Newsletter



Tony Moncur in the CAT room at the Garth Homer Centre.

A New Room For The CAT Program

On February 11, the Community Access Team (CAT) moved upstairs to a bright, second floor room at the Garth Homer Centre. The 40-person team, including staff and clients, is now housed in the space formerly occupied by the Victoria Epilepsy and Parkinson's Centre. The opening of the new CAT space is the first in a number of renovations that GHS will be making to accommodate program and services growth.

The new CAT room features a full wall of west-facing windows, a welcome feature for CAT members. CAT staff have noticed a marked change in

program participants since moving into the new space; clients are now much more calm and relaxed.

The number of GHS clients is growing, spurring the Society to look at how to use space in the centre more efficiently. For this move, GHS Team Coordinators worked together to identify which GHS program would be most suitable for the upstairs space, and ultimately decided on the CAT program as the best candidate. GHS Facility Coordinator Russ Vincent then helped out with room renovations and coordinated the move of CAT program materials upstairs.

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The Computer Resource Centre has moved to a new location, and program space for the STARR and Pathways programs will be expanded in the coming months.

"I like the new room. It is really cool and has windows."

— CAT participant, Laurie Fairweather

With the CAT program now on the second floor and new space available downstairs, other GHS programs will become better able to serve and accommodate new and current clients.

PROGRAM NEWS

Employment Services Report from CFB Esquimalt

In the past year, five GHS Employment Services clients were hired on contract with Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services (CFMWS) at CFB Esquimalt. At CFB Esquimalt and across the country, CFMWS delivers public morale and welfare programs, services, and activities to eligible Canadian Forces members and their families.

The GHS hires highlighted the success of the Employment Services program's renewed focus on coordinating job placements that meet the operational needs of businesses and organizations across Greater Victoria. GHS job coaches were able to work with CFB Esquimalt Human Resources Manager, Nicole Bennett, to identify the organization's operational needs and then support Employment Services clients in applying for posted positions.

Employment Services clients, Brittany Scruton, Jen Deakin, Dev Percy, Matt Dignan and Sarah Greencorn, now work as casual cooks and food service attendants with CFMWS and have fit in well at the base. All five of them have had their initial six-month contracts extended into 2014, and GHS job coaches continue to offer them employment support and advice.

Nicole Bennett reports on the success of working with the GHS Employment Services program:

CFMWS's success working with the Garth Homer Society is largely attributed to the Society's ongoing ability to work with the employer and employee in training and support. The approach that the Society has always taken has been to meet an outside organization's operational

needs, not change them. The placements have been geared to respond to operational needs and to identify ways to accommodate them without taking away from service delivery.

GHS job coaches have made themselves available and have always brought forward concerns or issues in a collaborative way while allowing us to do the same.

We have not yet encountered a concern that we have not been able to resolve through open and honest discussion.

Through management of, and focus on, the ongoing success of employees with developmental disabilities, GHS has identified previously unknown operational challenges. The knowledge and experience we have gained in working with GHS has been invaluable, and the issues raised with regards to our own operations have been beneficial to our continued growth.

GHS staff have been regarded as energetic, passionate, committed, and keen. Overall, it is clear that our clients are happy to be gainfully employed in positions that support our military partner. The small challenges presented in working with persons having developmental disabilities are issues that can be overcome with simple communication and patience. The job coaches and team as a whole are committed to helping our clients integrate into the organization, rather than the organization changing its operations to create placements for them.

Congratulations to the GHS clients and job coaches on establishing a strong working relationship with CMFWS!

Needle Felting Workshop at GVPL

GHS clients, Ritchie, Dolores and Jack, led a community needle felting workshop at the Nellie McClung Library on Thursday, May 15. The three GHS Pathways team members have been needle felting for 10 years and recently started to offer workshops through the Greater Victoria Public Library (GVPL). The workshops are a great chance for the GHS clients to interact with their local community and share their knowledge and skills.

CHAIR'S MESSAGE

Alan Moyes Chair, Garth Homer Society

I am pleased to have this opportunity to introduce myself as the new Chair of the Garth Homer Society's Board of Directors.

Before anything else, however, I would like to say thank you and pay tribute to my predecessor, Bruce Homer, who stepped down at the end of 2013 to be able to assume a new role as Chair of the Garth Homer Foundation. Bruce has been committed to the work of Garth Homer for a very long time, including serving on the GHS Board since 2008. In 2009, Bruce took on the role of Chair. We are very grateful for all of his contributions and we're delighted to know that, through his capacity on the Foundation Board, Bruce will continue to participate on the Society Board in an ex officio capacity.

This is my fourth year as a member of the GHS Board. For those who don't know me, I retired from a career in the provincial government, where my experience included more than 20 years in the Ministry of Health as well as time in the Office of the Ombudsperson working on a major investigation into care for seniors.

An important element of our strategy at GHS is to work hard at service innovation. I believe that in these times of continuing fiscal restraint, innovation is essential if we are going to continue to improve outcomes for our clients within existing budgets. Innovation is the single best way to

do more for our clients with the dollars we have.

There are many examples at GHS of innovative new approaches. In our high school transition program, for instance, we are helping special needs students in local high schools get a better start on adult life with pre-graduation supported employment apprenticeships. Elsewhere in this issue, our CEO Mitchell Temkin describes our highly innovative LifeStreams

Learning program. And we are also making great strides in the development of our new geriatrics services.

My personal commitment as Chair is to do everything I can to continue this process of innovation. The Garth Homer Society is a wonderful organization, with a progressive history and a very promising future. I'm proud to be a part of it and look forward to working with my colleagues on the Board to support all the great work being done.



Meet Our Clients – Robert Egli

Robert Egli, 23, is a busy, independent young man. The GHS Employment Services client is enrolled at Camosun College in the food and customer service program. He works at the Goldstream Starbucks and, in his spare time, bowls and plays right wing for a hockey team.

At Camosun, Robert has learned valuable customer service skills and gained hands-on experience through a work term at the college's Interurban Diner. Since February 2014, Robert has been working two days a week at the Goldstream Starbucks, helping with dishes and cleaning. "The customers are nice and I like it here a lot," says Robert about working at Starbucks.



Robert Egli works at the Goldstream Starbucks two days a week.

PROGRAM NEWS

Keeping GHS Programs Rolling

GHS signs new leasing agreement with Budget Victoria

Transportation is critical to the delivery of GHS's community inclusion programming. Every day, GHS clients and staff travel to community centres and program locations across Greater Victoria using public transit, HandyDART, and the Society's fleet of vans.

In order to provide transportation options for GHS's growing number of clients, the Society recently coordinated a leasing agreement with Budget Victoria. The new agreement allows GHS to lease gently used vans – three to four years old, with low mileage and in good repair – and add to its fleet quickly. The Society previously purchased and maintained older used vehicles, but the new leasing agreement will allow the Society to afford higher quality vehicles and lower lifetime vehicle ownership costs by spreading the purchase and maintenance costs over the lease term.

"We understand that funds are limited for an organization such as Garth Homer and we see this as a great opportunity to use some of our vehicles in a worthwhile manner," explains Budget Victoria President, Judith Scott.

The leasing agreement will enable GHS to grow its fleet quickly and cost-effectively. Soon, GHS will lease five



GHS clients (l-r) Lynne Hiback, Melissa Lougheed, Laurie Fairweather with one of the Society's new vans leased from Budget Victoria.

minivans from Budget, for a total fleet of 15 vehicles ranging from minivans to a pickup truck and a EuroVan equipped for wheelchair transport.

"We have been a long time supporter of the Garth Homer Society and we are pleased to be able to help them meet their ongoing transportation requirements with the addition of these five minivans," says Judith.

ArtWorks Exhibits In Scotland

The GHS ArtWorks program participated in an international group art show in Glasgow, Scotland in March 2014. The exhibition, *Hybrid Making - New Work from Australia, Canada & Scotland*, was presented by the Scottish organization, Project Ability. Like the GHS ArtWorks program, Project Ability provides opportunities for people with disabilities to express themselves and achieve artistic excellence.

ArtWorks has a strong history of partnering with Project Ability and, since 1999, GHS artists have exhibited in numerous international exhibitions presented by the Scottish organization. In 2014, 12 GHS ArtWorks artists contributed work to *Hybrid Making* that featured scenes from B.C.'s Great Bear Rainforest and represented a unique view of Canadian landscapes and imagery. For more information about the exhibition visit the Project Ability website at www.project-ability.co.uk or the GHS ArtWorks gallery at the Garth Homer Centre.



ArtWorks artist, Josefina Mena's, *Underwater Silver Sockeye Salmon*, was featured as artwork of the week during the Project Ability exhibition.

PROGRAM NEWS

Building A Learning Garden

A space for hands-on learning at the Garth Homer Centre

It's been a busy spring for the GHS STARR team. Program participants have been hard at work collecting materials, planting seeds and building raised beds for a new vegetable, herb, and flower garden at the Garth Homer Centre.

The learning garden, as project coordinator, Natalie Hunt, and the STARR team refer to it, will provide hands-on gardening experience for both the STARR team and GHS clients. Team members have already constructed raised beds from wood pallets, added soil to all of the raised beds and started seedlings and completed the spring planting.

In the past, GHS clients have managed offsite garden plots, but the establishment of an onsite garden will provide better and more learning opportunities. Vegetables and herbs harvested from the garden will be incorporated into GHS hot lunch program and donated to community



STARR team participants help to plant seedlings.

programs that accept locally harvested fruits and vegetables, such as the Single Parent Resource Centre.

A generous outpouring of support from the community has funded the learning garden. Thank you to the LifeCycles Project Society, Victoria Compost Education Centre, District of Saanich for their in-kind support, as well as the volunteer efforts of many community members.

Stop by the Garth Homer Centre this spring and summer to check out the learning garden!

New Software Supports Clients With Dementia

GHS Pathways staff now have a new tool at their fingertips to support clients with dementia. The Behavioural and Psychological Symptoms of Dementia (BPSD) mobile tool is a new interactive application that provides staff with evidence-based tips and tools to deliver best practice, non-pharmacological approaches to person-centred dementia care. It is a computer program that provides on-the-spot advice to staff on how to best support clients with dementia.

BPSD was developed by a collaborative group that includes BC health authorities, the BC Ministry of Health, general and specialist physician partners, community pharmacists, and the BC Patient Safety and Quality Council. The tool provides health care workers with a comprehensive guide to understanding behaviours

and suggests appropriate responses for clients with dementia. When using the tool, GHS staff answer a series of questions in relation to specific client behaviours. The tool then recommends non-pharmaceutical supports and, if necessary, pharmaceuticals, to meet the client's needs.

Phemie Guttin, RN, Director of Geriatric Services, appreciates how the BPSD mobile tool focuses on the needs and behaviours of the individual client. "Staff use the tool with a specific client in mind and can identify potential supports or interventions tailored to a client's behavioural history and abilities," says Phemie. "It's a great opportunity to enhance GHS's focus on serving the needs of the individual client and not taking a blanket approach to care."

In December 2013, GHS was

asked to be one of two organizations in BC to have staff beta-test the BPSD tool while working with clients. For the next three months, GHS staff tested the application on the Society's iPads, smart phones and desktop computers. Based on staff feedback, BPSD developers are now working on refining the tool to better reflect the needs of people with developmental disabilities. In the meantime, GHS staff continue to use the tool on a regular basis.

More information on the BPSD tool is available online at the BC Patient and Safety Council website at <http://bcpsqc.ca/knowledge-centre/bpsd-algorithm-mobile-tool/>.



FOUNDATION REPORT

Vancity

Garth Homer Foundation Report

By Bruce Homer
Chair, Garth Homer Foundation



It is a time of change at the Garth Homer Foundation (GHF), both personally and organizationally.

On the personal side, I am pleased to be taking on a new role as Chair of the Garth Homer Foundation Board. It has been my conviction that a strong and effective GHF is essential to the sustainability and relevancy of the Garth Homer Society (GHS) and to the services it provides. The cornerstone of my term as

Chair will be to ensure that GHF thrives and advances in this role.

I would like to thank our outgoing Chair, Judith Scott, for her dedication and long service to the Foundation. Judith has played a key role in building GHF to its current strength and we are privileged that she will be continuing as a Director. Her ongoing wise counsel and steady hand are much appreciated.

Organizationally speaking, we are entering a period of growth. As you may know, the Garth Homer Foundation is the owner of the Garth Homer Centre and the site on which it is located at 813 Darwin Avenue. Last fall, working with CitySpaces Consulting, we developed a new vision document for the future development of the

site. It encompasses renovation of the existing facility and development of new buildings as well as ideas for the broader renewal of the social services precinct within which we are located. The inclusive, accessible community model we envision is crucial to the expanding services model and purpose of the Society.

Working with the Society, the Foundation has been busy presenting the vision document to planners and politicians in the Municipality of Saanich, to our neighbouring organizations, to local community associations and to our funders and other government groups. We are happy to report that it has met an enthusiastic reception and we are now able to move forward with confidence.

In February of this year, the Foundation received a grant of \$25,000 from the Vancity Community Foundation for the next stages of development planning. This is in addition to the funding Vancity provided to facilitate the original vision document. We thank Vancity and are grateful for their continued encouragement and support.

Finally, I would like to thank all of you who contributed so generously to our Christmas mail appeal. Funds raised helped expand our fleet of vans, which in turn enabled growth in the number of clients at GHS and increased client participation in more than fifty community placements. Your gifts make all this possible.

Bruce Homer

Thank you to all the generous donors who supported the Garth Homer Foundation's fall 2013 fundraising campaign.

New Managers at GHS

This spring, GHS welcomed two new managers to its team. Jeanine Reemst brings 10 years experience in vocational counseling with adults with developmental disabilities to the Employment Services team as the new Employment Services Manager. The new Client Services Manager, Kevin Steeple, is a long-time GHS staff person and for the last eight years was the Coordinator of the Community Access Team. In his new role, Kevin will provide support for client intake and ongoing client needs. Congratulations Jeanine and Kevin!



New GHS Managers, Jeanine Reemst and Kevin Steeple.

CEO REPORT

Capturing Intuition – CEO Report

By Mitchell Temkin
CEO, Garth Homer Society

A colleague recently sent me a dispiriting research report on the topic of high school transition. Entitled “Improving Post-High School Outcomes for Transition-Age Students with Disabilities: An Evidence Review,” the report was prepared for the Institute for Education Sciences in the U.S. by the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance and was published by the U.S. Department of Education in August 2013.*

The report reviewed studies of programs aimed at improving transition outcomes. It reviewed only those that met rigorous research standards. At best, from all the top studies reviewed, the benefits of these programs were mixed to slightly positive in improving transition outcomes. Even when outcomes were positive, the report says, “the extent of evidence was small.”

In short, according to the researchers, not many of the transition programs seem to be working very well.

However, this is not consistent with much of our own day-to-day experience as service providers. Time and again at GHS, we see even the most challenged individuals learn, grow, and change. I think often of a severely autistic young man who came to Garth Homer a number of years ago. On arrival at GHS, he was barely able to communicate. In fact, he was barely able to be among people at all, and you could often find him in frozen immobility, leaning face first into a wall.

Since then, he has blossomed. Just the other day I encountered him in a busy, crowded hallway. It took me a moment to realize it, but he was actually carrying on three cheerful conversations at once with folks passing by, a veritable chatterbox in his own way. That is a remarkable achievement for the client, one that would have been almost unimaginable just a few years ago.

Again and again, we see evidence of how much learning potential our clients really have. However, when you ask staff what it is they actually do to help our young clients learn and grow, they often find it hard to describe. They speak a lot about “seeing past the disability,” or “addressing the whole person,” or “engaging with real friendship,” but much less about the very specific things they are noticing and doing that help our clients to learn and grow,

To my mind this suggests that our front line staff, like so many others in social services, are highly competent

and capable, but on balance much more intuitive than procedural in their work. And that tells me that if we really want to understand in detail how learning happens for our clients, then we need to find a way to capture and build upon the remarkably empathic, intuitive abilities of our staff, so that we can take what they do so well intuitively and turn it into a systematic approach to learning.

That is precisely what we are trying to do in our LifeStreams Learning program. Funded by the Victoria Foundation, the TELUS Victoria Community Board, and Coast Capital, LifeStreams Learning will provide a comprehensive, post-secondary learning path for young adults with autism and other developmental disabilities, so they can maximize their potential for both employment and inclusion.

To launch LifeStreams we are working with Edudata, a research unit from the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia. Edudata has built online learning management software currently used in public schools to assist teachers in more effectively tailoring learning to individual student needs through capturing the workings of their professional judgment. The software is designed to help teachers better understand how specific actions they take in supporting individual students are connected to specific learning outcomes. We are working with Edudata to adapt this system for use with our special population, and in a learning environment without a fixed curriculum.

“Capturing intuition” to enable learning for a group of young people whose opportunities are far too few — it’s a bold idea and a bit of a gamble, but maybe, just maybe, we can make it work.

Mitchell



*<http://ies.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=NCEE20134011>

ANNOUNCEMENTS & EVENTS

GARTH HOMER SOCIETY ARTWORKS EVENTS

Look Regional Exhibition

April 27 – May 24

Opening reception May 3, 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Uptown main level, next to Forever 21

The annual Look Exhibition, hosted by the Community Arts Council of

Greater Victoria, features more than

500 artists. For more information visit

www.cacgv.ca.

Cara Johnson Solo Exhibition

June 26 – July 18

Opening reception June 26,

6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Garth Homer Centre

ArtWorks Summer Exhibition

August – September

Karin Koerner Gallery

Garth Homer Centre

Moss Street Paint-in

Saturday July 19, 11:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Moss Street (Fort Street to Dallas Road)



Garth Homer
SOCIETY

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

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