



Outlook

The Garth Homer Society Newsletter

New Pathways Rooms Fit Client Needs

In the past year, the Pathways program expanded its space at the Garth Homer Centre. The program, which serves older adults with developmental disabilities, now has three rooms for almost 30 individuals.

In the past, the Pathways program was split between two rooms – Pearls, a quiet room for independent activities like reading or knitting, and Pals, a group activity room that was more interactive and social.

In recognition of the growing size of the program, Pathways staff worked with program participants to come up with a vision (and names!) for the new program rooms. The new vision recognizes the range of individual needs and will help the program better meet these needs as they evolve over time.

As the Society's participants grow

older, many need more medical and health supports. The new rooms are oriented to meet these needs – from a quiet space to sit and rest, to an activity space that can accommodate numerous walkers or wheelchairs.

Cheryl V. and Ron M. have already benefitted significantly from the new Pathways room configurations. Both are normally averse to change, but have embraced the new rooms with excitement, as they can now choose which room best fits their needs when they want to be with their peers and participate in activities.

“Supporting successful aging addresses age-related issues and encourages everyone to engage in daily life,” says Andrea Youson, Manager of Geriatric Programs. “The new rooms let people choose what type of environment works best for

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them. We're helping our participants be part of a community and maintain their independence.”



The new Pathways rooms have space for group and independent activities.

THE NEW PATHWAYS PROGRAM ROOMS

OAK ROOM

A quiet environment with minimal flow, for those who prefer a slower pace and less distraction. Activities are scheduled weekly and participants can choose to participate how they wish.

ARBUTUS ROOM

A room with a mid-level flow of activities, suited for clients who prefer a busier environment with more interaction and socialization.

WILLOW ROOM

A space for constant flow, where a variety of activities and programming will be available as part of a group or independently. This room is a transitional space that will host scheduled activities, but where participants can also come and go, as they prefer.

PROGRAM NEWS

A New Executive Director of Service Operations – Phemie Guttin

In December 2014, Phemie Guttin took on a new role at GHS as the Executive Director of Service Operations. Phemie joined the Society in 2012 as Director of Geriatrics. Now, as Executive Director of Service Operations, Phemie will oversee all service operations - such as managing program teams, facilities and health and safety. Thanks to the insight and support of the Society's long-time managers, namely Colina Titus and the recently retired, Mary Ann Snowden, Phemie, in her three years at the Society has been able to quickly get up to speed on all things GHS. She is now hard at work improving service delivery and operations at the Centre, including the introduction of a new client and staff database this spring (see sidebar article).

The new role builds on Phemie's past experience as a director of operations for residential care homes in Ottawa, as well as from her time managing a group

home. As Phemie says, "I have a good understanding of all the levels of community living care and support from the ground up." Looking ahead, Phemie's excited about her new role and the opportunity to work with the strong staff team at GHS to make a difference in the lives of adults with developmental disabilities.

"It's an exciting time to be at GHS," says Phemie. "There are lots of new projects on the go and lots of ways we're looking to improve our programs and services."



Phemie Guttin
Executive Director of Service Operations

STARR Team Helps Out With the Christmas Hampers Program

For the past 18 years, the Garth Homer Society has collected donations, food and housewares for Victoria families in need, as part of its Christmas Hamper program.

In recent years, the STARR team has led efforts to fundraise for and coordinate the hampers. This includes everything from coordinating and staffing a hot lunch program once a month at the Garth Homer Centre, to collecting recyclable bottles and even managing the vending machine at Kiwanis Pavilion.

"Each STARR participant plays a part in the Christmas Hamper program," says Program Coordinator, BJ Webb. "Whether it's helping out with the vending machine each week, wrapping presents in December or delivering the hampers, everybody has a hand in it in some way."

At the end of the year, STARR team staff work with the selected families to compile a wish list of food, housewares and clothing to include in the hampers. GHS staff and participants then purchase the gifts using funds raised during the year, topped up with donations from community members and businesses like Thrifty Foods, Country Grocer and Bolen Books. Finally, on delivery day, STARR team staff and participants use a donated

one-tonne truck from Budget Rent a Car to deliver the hampers across Victoria.

This year, the STARR program delivered three Christmas hampers to local families, including two families from the nearby Cloverdale Elementary School.

"Our team members really see the impact of their volunteer efforts when they meet the families," says BJ. "It shows them how they can make a difference in other peoples' lives."



The STARR team helps load the delivery truck for the Christmas Hampers program.

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

PROGRAM NEWS

Meet Our Clients – Fadel DaWood

Fadel DaWood is one of the Garth Homer Society's most boisterous and social participants. The 23-year-old joined the Society in 2013, after immigrating to Canada with his family from Palestine, via Syria.

Though he knew very little English when he first joined GHS, Fadel can now understand most English conversations and his speaking vocabulary is growing rapidly. In the short time Fadel has been with the Society, he's quickly made new friends. You can often find him playing Wii bowling on a weekday morning in the STARR room. Later this spring, Fadel may also start to learn sign language along with other members of the GHS STARR team.

Fadel loves to be around his friends and the staff at the Garth Homer Centre, and participates in community walks and swimming at the local pool. Fadel is also a regular volunteer with the Quadra Village Community Centre. Each week, Fadel helps out at the Centre by moving and stacking chairs, and is increasingly taking on more independent tasks

to help prepare food for the Centre's hot lunch program.

As he further develops his communication and social skills, Fadel is growing into a fun, friendly and outgoing young adult. Thanks for bringing a smile and a laugh to the Garth Homer Centre each day, Fadel!



Fadel volunteers with the Quadra Village Community Centre.

Leaving A Flaherty Family Legacy

How do you build a legacy of supporting people with developmental disabilities? One can look to the late Jim Flaherty to see how a lifetime of work can better the lives of thousands of people with disabilities across Canada.

The former finance minister helped people with disabilities save for the future through the introduction of the Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP) in 2011. This innovative program was the first of its kind in the world. It aims to improve the financial security later in life of people with disabilities. Described by many as a kind and generous man, Jim Flaherty often met with disability organizations to discuss their challenges and opportunities. He supported the Special Olympics, was involved in the opening of the Ontario-based Abilities Centre and championed a study that identified the benefits of private businesses employing people with developmental disabilities.

In December, David Flaherty, Jim's brother, carried on his brother's legacy of support by making a \$10,000 donation to the Garth Homer Society. David's gift was made in memory of his brother and will directly support the Society's programs and services for adults with developmental disabilities.

For the late Jim Flaherty, his work with people with



David and Jim Flaherty have built a legacy of supporting people with developmental disabilities.

disabilities had very personal connections – one of his three sons has a mental disability. His personal commitment to making a difference in the lives of those living with developmental disabilities will have a lasting impact, as will David's donation to the Society. Together, this family legacy will continue to support the inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in Victoria and in other communities across Canada.

www.garthhomersociety.org

CHAIR'S REPORT

GHS Board Chair Report – April 2015



Alan Moyes
Chair, Garth Homer Society

The Society has been growing steadily in recent years – in fact, 61 new participants have joined us since 2012. This represents a 26 percentage increase in participants, which has implications for all of our operations.

This pace of growth has pushed us to review various aspects of our service delivery as we confront the challenges of space and capacity.

How we deliver our programs and services is one area in particular where we have devoted considerable

attention. Today, our programs are grouped into three streams – Community Inclusion, Geriatrics, and Learning and Employment – to better align with the needs of the individuals we serve.

We have also taken on the challenge of increasing our capacity by rethinking how we use our home, the Garth Homer Centre.

The Society is fortunate to operate out of the Garth Homer Centre. Since its opening in 1977, the Centre has been a key part of our successful program delivery, in addition to being a wonderful community asset. However, in the past, not all of the building was put to

use in support of community services for adults with developmental disabilities. Over the last year, we have worked to reverse this.

Through small renovations and the reduction of administrative space over the past year, the Society is using more of the Garth Homer Centre for our programs. Elsewhere in this edition of Outlook, you can read about the recent expansion of the Pathways program into three rooms on the ground floor of the Centre. This follows last year's move of the Community Access Team upstairs, the relocation of the Computer Resource Centre and the expansion of the STARR program space.

We are working to get more out of our building and are very pleased with the progress we have made so far.

We want to use our space efficiently, so we can deliver the best services for our participants. Yet, at our current rate of growth, capacity will continue to be a challenge. In the coming months and years, we'll be looking at a range of innovative options to house and deliver our services. Possibilities include renovations to our existing building, the construction of a new building, portable buildings on our site, or even satellite sites.

We are committed to providing modern spaces that best meet our participants' needs. You will see evidence of this in the future, as Garth Homer continues to work on our physical space requirements.

Alan Moyes



Recent upgrades and renovations to the Garth Homer Centre have resulted in new rooms for the (l-r) Pathways, STARR and CAT programs.

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

GARTH HOMER FOUNDATION REPORT

GHF Board Chair Report – April 2015

In 1977, with support from generous individual donors, other foundations and the government, the Garth Homer Centre was opened as a centre for sheltered workshops. It was considered a state-of-the-art facility; a vibrant expression of its founder's vision. Over the years, the expectations of clients and their families have changed. Today, the Centre is a busy community hub serving more than 175 individuals in seven different community-focused day and employment programs.

Just as the services and clients have changed, so must the building. The Garth Homer Foundation has embarked on a long-term redevelopment vision for both the Centre and the larger site encompassing it, and we are confident the new design and configuration will expand, invigorate and better help those we serve.

But there are other challenges facing us. A generation of adults with developmental disabilities is living into old age, thereby creating more demand for facilities. Increasingly, there is a need for services specific to older adults experiencing functional decline and mounting health problems at a rate far greater than the general population. By 2017, nearly 50 per cent of the Society's participants will be over the age of fifty, with many in their sixties, seventies and even eighties. It is essential to meet their evolving medical, social and housing requirements. Regrettably, often because there are few alternatives providing specialized residential services for this population, such individuals are many times shunted into long-term care, where they typically do not fare well.

To address these complex but interrelated matters, the Foundation will fund and build the Garth Homer Community Residence, offering older adults with developmental disabilities a residential option in a supportive community. Residents will age with dignity and choice in a stable, secure home where they can stay to the end of life. Please view the drawings and floor plans on our renewed website at www.garthhomerfoundation.org and click on "Facility Development."

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge those who donated to the Foundation in 2014. It was a successful year – \$640,000 was disbursed to the Society for services and special projects. Most of you know, that as part of our ongoing effort to make fundraising more efficient, we transferred responsibility for fundraising from the Society to the Foundation several years ago.

Doing so has allowed the Foundation to concentrate on the single purpose of raising funds, leaving the Board and staff of the Society free to focus on their important work.

Finally, for ease of donation, we encourage you to look at our new donation page on the Foundation's website. It's simple and easy, and as the Community Residence becomes a reality, I assure you that every donation counts and will be gratefully received.

Thank you for your steadfast support.

Bruce Homer



Bruce Homer
Chair, Garth Homer Foundation

www.garthhomersociety.org

PROGRAM NEWS

Mama Mia

It's hard to watch a movie like Mamma Mia without humming, singing or dancing along. But, in a traditional cinema setting, it's usually not appropriate – or encouraged – to stand up and dance to your favourite song.

After visiting the Vic Theatre in downtown Victoria, however, Pathways staff person Dawn MacLeod saw the opportunity to make it possible for GHS program participants to do just that – sing, dance and enjoy a musical like Mamma Mia alongside their peers. Dawn took the initiative to inquire about theatre rentals and liaise with GHS management to coordinate an independent screening.

In December, GHS rented the Vic Theatre for the afternoon and Dawn worked with GHS staff to coordinate transport of almost 100 participants and staff to the theatre. With the whole theatre to themselves, everybody could sit – and dance – wherever they wanted. In addition to GHS staff and participants, 30 members of Community Living Victoria attended the event, along with their caregivers.

On the day of the screening, all the folks from GHS and Community Living Victoria filled the aisles dancing and singing along to the film's songs. The event was a big dance party.

"Everybody really enjoyed it," said Dawn. "People could sit with their best buddies and get up and dance in a movie theatre. It was a chance to be totally extroverted and for everybody to have total freedom to be who they are."

The screening was a success and reflected the time and effort Dawn committed to organizing it.

For GHS staff, it was a great opportunity to work together on a special outing for those they support. On



Dawn (top, second from left) along with participants in the Pathways program (top, left to right) Dolores W., Anne Louise C., David L., (bottom, left to right) Cheryl V., and Cheryl M.

the day of the screening, staff from across GHS programs pitched in to help coordinate transportation to the theatre and supported people as they entered the theatre to find their seats. Through working together, staff were able to pull off the theatre event seamlessly.

Going to a movie at the Vic Theatre will now be an annual winter event. "Although Mamma Mia will not be on the screen next December," says Dawn, "we're open to suggestions for catchy, popular singalong films – so send us your ideas!"

WOW! Employment Services Are Widening Our World

With help from the Employment Services team, more GHS participants than ever are finding employment opportunities – and Community Living BC (CLBC) has taken notice. The team was nominated for a CLBC WOW Award, a Widening Our World Award that recognizes organizations working to make people with developmental disabilities feel included.

In 2014, the ES team created 18 new employment placements for adults with developmental disabilities, at local businesses like Alpine Disposal, Floyd's Diner and Home Depot. In working with adults with developmental disabilities to identify their employment goals and supporting their learning and development in pursuit of meaningful employment, the ES team embodies the WOW Award

criteria. The team prides itself in not letting an individual's disability be a barrier to success in the workplace – by seeing the skills an employee can bring to an organization, and believing that everyone who wants to work has the right to be employed.

Congratulations to the Employment Services team for your WOW Award nomination – keep up the great work!

CEO Report – April 2015

It is a reality, and sometimes a hard one, that in the current environment of tight money and fiscal restraint, only those individuals with higher needs receive funding to participate in community inclusion day programs.

As we pointed out in our 2013 report to community, Faces of the Future*, this means that changes are coming to the way we deliver services at the Garth Homer Society (GHS). When our founders created GHS, they built a facility and a society whose purpose was to provide employment in sheltered workshops for adults with developmental disabilities. In the 1990s, as the needs and interests of our participants and their families changed, so did our programs. GHS closed the sheltered workshops and launched the programs we have today.

But now, with needs and interests changing again, we need once more to be thinking about how our programs work.

Our current practice is to organize our community inclusion programs around groups of participants with somewhat similar issues — people with behavioral problems, for example, or those with communication challenges, or folks with dementia, or those who need one-to-one support. This works well for people with more moderate support needs.

But for higher needs participants, this may not be the best way of organizing things. Our individuals with higher needs often have multiple disabilities and complicating health issues. And because of this, they are more diverse in their support needs than were the people coming to us for support in the past.

This means a couple of things.

First, more than ever, our services must be individualized. Even though we have group programs, it has always been part of the service model at GHS that those programs serve as the foundation and springboard for personal plans. Increasingly, we tend to see our programs simply as "home rooms" — the places where participants come every day to hang their coats, meet their friends, and check their schedules before heading out on their individual activities. Doing this well becomes even more important with higher needs individuals.

And second, it means that defining and organizing programs around common issues or shared activities may not be the best approach, simply because the increasing diversity of needs, interests, challenges and capabilities that comes with higher needs individuals makes defining

a common thread more problematic.

Because of this, we have been thinking about a new approach. One possible way of looking at it is through the lens of "capacity for independent social engagement."

What does this mean? Well, our program participants fall roughly into three groups. The first comprises those who are able to independently engage and form social

attachments with their peers.

The second group can engage socially with their peers only with

support from others, such as staff or individuals in their support networks. And the third is made up of individuals who will always find it exceedingly difficult to engage socially with their peers and who relate primarily to those who support them.

With more and more high needs individuals being supported at GHS, these are the primary distinctions we take into account when designing personal plans and assigning individuals to program activities. It is early days yet, but our current program structure may move to one based on capacity for independent social engagement as the organizing principle for all of our community inclusion programming.

Mitchell

*Read Faces of the Future at www.garthhomersociety.org/about-us/publications.



Mitchell Temkin
CEO, Garth Homer Society

ANNOUNCEMENTS & EVENTS

GARTH HOMER SOCIETY ARTWORKS EVENTS

ArtWorks Open Studio Tour*April 30*

ArtWorks Jennie Butchart Studio

Jaron Gavilan - Solo Exhibition*June 25 - July 24**Opening reception, June 25 - 6:30pm*

Karin Koerner Gallery

Garth Homer Centre

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Garth Homer
SOCIETY

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