



Garth Homer
SOCIETY

REPORT FROM THE CHAIR
REPORT FROM THE CEO
TREASURER'S REPORT
OUR FUNDERS

16/17

Annual Review

40 Years and Counting!

With our AGM this year, the Garth Homer Society is celebrating its 40th anniversary!

In 1977, we opened our doors for the first time at the shiny new building on Darwin Ave. that we still call home.

We've grown and evolved constantly since then to keep pace with the changing needs of the individuals and families we support. The Centre was built as a facility for sheltered workshops. It was an innovative idea at the time, and some of our older clients fondly remember the days when they made Christmas crackers that were sold in stores all over Victoria. By the 1990s, the needs and interests of people with developmental disabilities were changing, and our focus shifted from sheltered workshops to community inclusion.

*We are still serving clients
who came to GHS when
we first opened the doors at
813 Darwin Ave.
40 years ago*

We continue to see changes today. Our clients are aging, acuity is rising, and autism is replacing Down syndrome as the most common diagnosis among our clients. People with developmental disabilities are demanding to be fully included in the life of our communities, asserting their right to make for themselves a life, a home, and a place in the world. The

demand for services is outpacing the growth of funding, which has barely been able to keep up with rising costs.

In 2016, GHS responded to these increasingly urgent pressures and resulting organizational challenges by launching a new strategic plan to guide our growth and development for the next five years. We made significant progress in 2017 against all the major objectives of this new strategy. A number of successes stand out for me.

First, in a remarkably short period, we established GHS as a leading provider of support and services to clients with very high needs. Medically fragile individuals who require complex health supports are served primarily through our residential program at our Haida House group home in Colwood and smaller locations around town. Those who require a high level of behaviour support are also supported in COSMOS, a new community inclusion program that is just a year old but is already growing faster than we ever imagined. With the establishment of these programs, we have positioned GHS to help meet the area of fastest growing need.

Second, we continue to innovate so we can offer opportunities for individuals with moderate impairments where traditional day programs are no longer an option due to a lack of funding. Our LifeStreams Learning program more than doubled in size last year. It provides highly individualized continuing education, primarily for young adults who have recently graduated from special needs programs in high school, with the goal of increasing their personal potential for independence and employment. We are very proud that last year some of the very first LifeStreams participants began moving into the working

world, establishing the value of a learning-based approach to employment. Also last year, we began the planned integration of LifeStreams with our supported employment and community volunteering programs, the aim of which is to establish a comprehensive learning and employment service. We are expecting great things in learning and employment in the years ahead.

And, finally, we made great strides toward the radical individualization of services across all of our community inclusion programs. Somewhat anomalously, we have been able to do this because we have a large facility. Some people worry that a large centre limits individualization. But we've found that bringing people together at a large centre actually supports individualization since program participants can choose activities from more options.

Together, these successes exemplify the diversification of services and supports that is central to our new strategic plan. The question we need to ask now is how we build this model into the future. One of the keys is the development of a new facility specifically designed to support belonging and inclusion.

In 2017, as part of our participation in the Nigel Valley Project, we launched the design process for a new building to replace our current home. We have reached the limits of our current facility and are out of space for both participants and staff. The Nigel Valley Project gives us the opportunity to plan our building within the context of an inclusive, accessible neighbourhood. We can integrate a new centre for day services with community amenities and an extensive mix of universally accessible housing for people with and without support needs. This way, we can create

real neighbourhood belonging for all who live and spend their days there.

We are still serving clients who came to GHS when we first opened the doors at 813 Darwin Ave. 40 years ago. I know that some of these original clients will join us when we open the door of our new "centre for belonging," as I like to think of it, not that many years from now.

As Chair, it is my pleasure to lead today's organization and to hold in trust and honour the contributions and stories of all those who came before us. In recognition of the important stage we have reached in our growth and development, I would like to thank all the staff, management, and volunteers – both present and past – who have contributed so much toward making The Garth Homer Society what it is today. In particular I would like to thank the members of the Board who have so ably guided GHS in the past year, and all of the staff who have worked so hard, conscientiously and capably over the last 12 months in serving the most vulnerable among us.

Barbara Asser



Report from the CEO

The year just ended was the most significantly transformative at the Garth Homer Society since I took on the leadership role in the summer of 2011.

We have experienced accelerating growth throughout these six years, culminating in the very rapid fiscal expansion of 2017, as outlined in our Treasurer's report. Notwithstanding the growth, for five years our operations remained fairly consistent from year to year. In many ways, the Garth Homer of 2016 looked very like the Garth Homer of 2011, with systems, processes, and programs working as they had for years to keep the organization running smoothly.

But 2017 was different. This year we reached a tipping point of sorts. It is perhaps odd to say it after 40 years, but Garth Homer is starting to reach a new level of maturity as an organization. This is a transformation that is likely to continue to play out for some years to come.

While the impact was felt in many ways throughout the organization, the following are the key points.

MULTI-SITE OPERATIONS

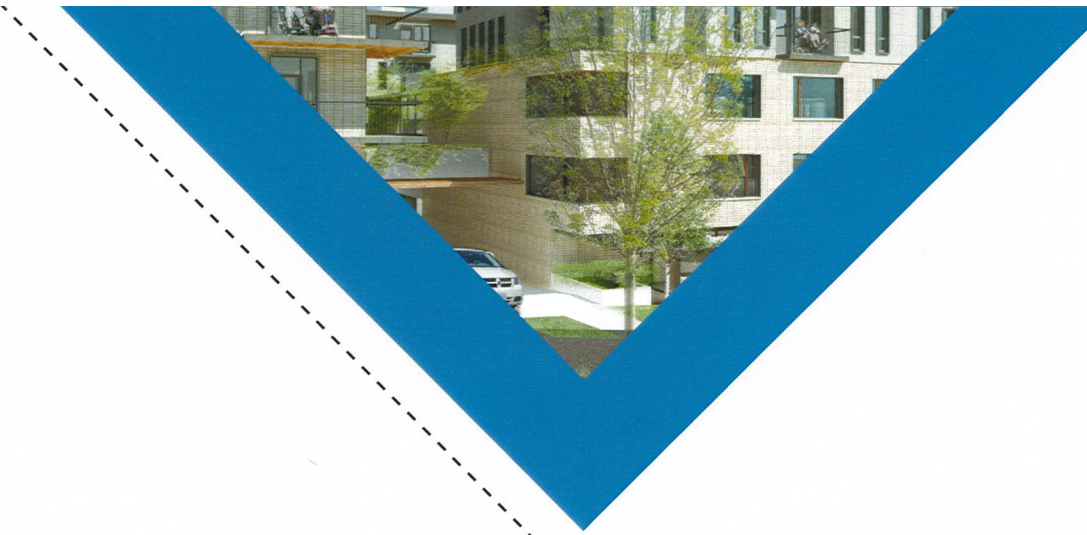
In 2017, for the first time, GHS functioned truly as a fully-fledged, multi-site organization. Our Learning and Employment offices on Tennyson Ave. and our Haida House group home for medically fragile young adults are now both fully utilized, as are a number of smaller residential units around town. This was driven by our diversification into residential services and the steady increase in the number of community inclusion clients and the level of their support needs. We finally exhausted our capacity to squeeze more useful space for staff and clients out of our main centre at 813 Darwin. For the next few years, building transitional multi-site capacity will remain an urgent priority as we work toward re-development of our main site as part of the Nigel Valley Project.

There are challenges in multi-site operations – we need to ensure adequate supervisory and management presence at all locations, allow for more travel time, build effective internal communications across all locations, expand our maintenance and provisioning systems, and accommodate the needs and concerns of a very mixed staff working on divergent schedules. This was new to us, and I am happy to say that although there is still much to do, we have managed the transition fairly smoothly. Thanks to everyone whose patience and care have made it work so far.

SUPPORT FOR HIGHER NEEDS

As noted in the Chair's report, our programs continued to develop overall in 2017, with good progress made toward strategic service priorities, including the integration of our learning and employment services and the increasing individualization of community inclusion services. The most dramatic service development was the rapid expansion of our programs for very high needs. We are now supporting many individuals who are medically fragile with complex health support needs, who have complex behaviour support needs, or who simply need one-to-one support because of their acute and multiple disabilities. The numbers are telling. There is a general increase in acuity among our clients, and this requires a much higher level of support. As a result, the average client-to-staff ratio in our community inclusion services dropped to 1.4 clients per staff member in January 2017 from 1.6 just two years earlier. That's a drop of 12.5%.

At this point, our burgeoning residential services are 100% focused on high needs. It is tremendously gratifying that we have been able to build the capacity to provide these difficult-to-deliver services so quickly, and are accumulating the body of knowledge and expertise that will allow us to continue to do so in the future. It is even more gratifying that we are able to provide support in the community to people who might otherwise be spending their days in long-term or complex care. It has taken an extraordinary effort from the residential



staff and management to pull this all together, for which they have my admiration and thanks.

The trend toward higher needs affects community inclusion services as well. At Darwin, it is seen primarily in the very rapid growth of COSMOS, our new program for individuals needing a high level of one-to-one behavioural support, but it is also evident in the intake to all of our other community inclusion programs – DREAMS, STARR, and Discovery. Also in 2017, we saw some of the long-expected growth in our Pathways program for older individuals, which came with higher individual support needs.

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Although COSMOs is a still less than two years old, demand is so high and its growth so rapid that we are already considering dividing it in two. This is not entirely a surprise. While this has historically not been the focus of Garth Homer, in our new strategy we considered the demographic changes we were seeing and determined to focus on what we thought would be rapidly increasing demand for high-needs supports. The emerging pattern from 2017 suggests that our decision to focus future service this way makes good sense, and that it will help us continue to meet growing and changing community needs.

STAFF GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

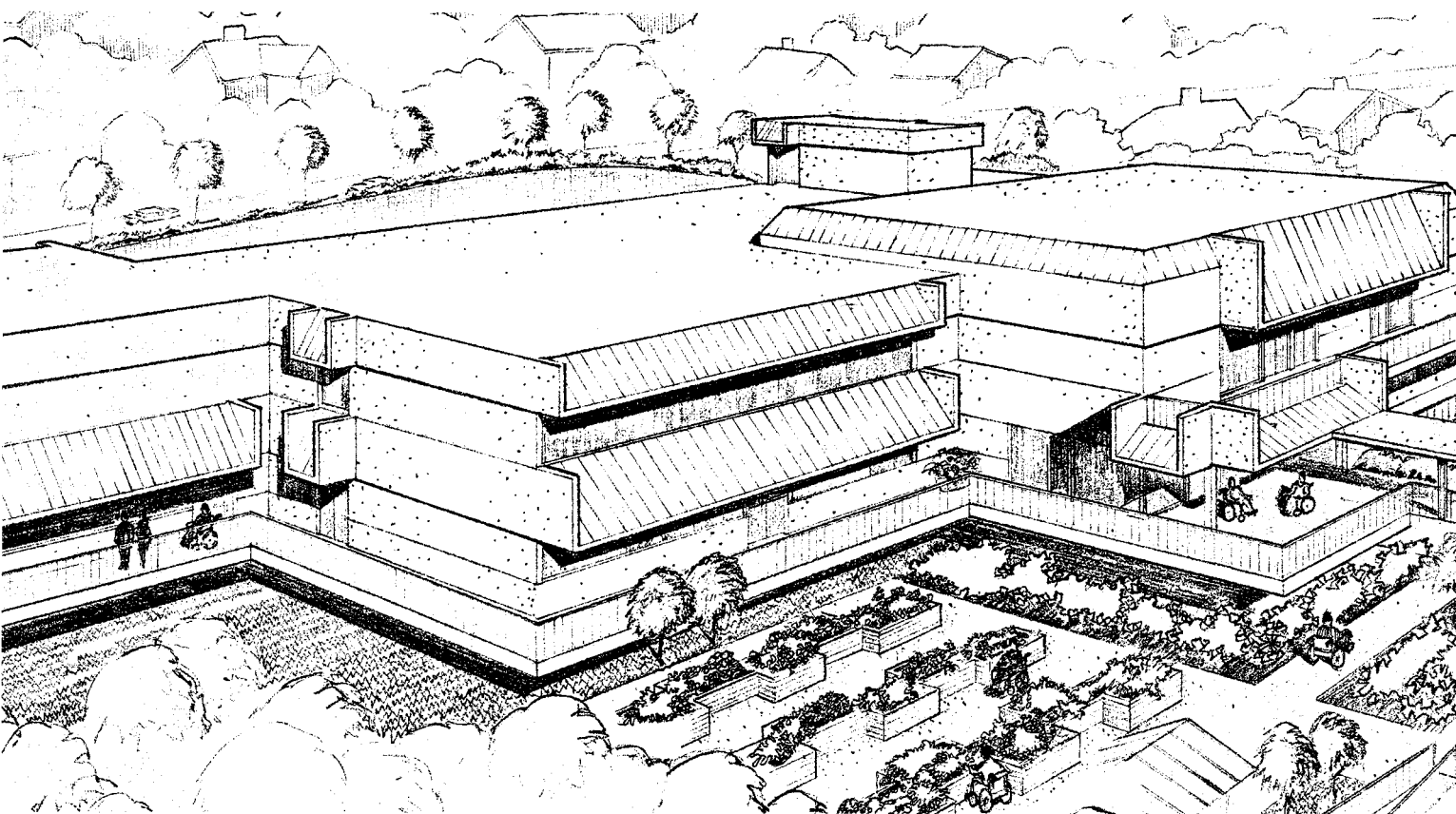
With growth, developing programs, and proliferating locations, it is no surprise that in 2017 the GHS staff grew as well. Overall, our number of employees was up by about 32% in the year. There was some growth in management and supervisory positions, especially in residential services, but most were front-line employees for residential services, including credentialed health care staff such as nurses and personal care providers. Another area of staff growth was in front-line positions for higher-needs individuals in community inclusion programs.

The impact of all this growth was substantial. On the upside, our staff is more diverse, more skilled, and I would have to say more energetic and innovative than ever. I am truly amazed some days by the level of purposeful energy and client focus in our hallways, and the magic moments created by a truly extraordinary level of caring. On the downside, it has become more difficult to communicate effectively with everyone, and our HR systems and scheduling have been tested by the expansion. Hiring has become a full-time process for us, as has orientation and training. In some areas, maintaining an adequate pool of appropriately skilled staff has been difficult, leading to more overtime costs. And with the growth of our residential services, we have for the first time been grappling with the staffing challenges of 24-7 operations.

SYSTEMS AND ADMINISTRATION

An interesting management lesson we learned this year is that when an organization grows quickly, the number of administrative tasks and transactions needed to keep it running grows even more quickly. For our small but very focused administration staff, 2017 was a bit of a tsunami in that respect. I am happy to report that they stayed afloat! For the first time in a number of years, our admin staff was stable for the whole year, and that made an enormous and essential difference as the complexities of payroll, benefits,

REPORT FROM THE CEO



timesheets, banking, leasing, facilities, systems, purchasing and vacations mounted.

So much of what goes on in admin and accounting is frankly invisible to the rest of the organization and can feel remote from our core purpose. Admin changes and challenges can seem both finicky and incidental. But in my mind's eye, I can trace a bright, direct line from capable administration to quality services. It is typical that when admin is most successful, it is least noticeable. That we came through a year of such intense change with so few conspicuous administrative issues speaks volumes.

FLEET

And finally, though it is no small thing, by the end of 2017 we had 30 vehicles in our fleet, double what we were operating just a few short years ago. Maybe you have seen one of our Garth Homer-branded bright red Kia Souls running around town, ferrying clients here and there. The expansion of the fleet has been driven by a number of factors – general client growth, increasing individualization of services, and the need for more specialized vehicles for wheelchair trans-

port. Our old standbys, the sturdy, general purpose mini-vans that served for many years to carry groups of ambulatory clients out to shared activities, are less and less relevant to our evolving services and more individualized programs. Now we are best served by more and smaller vehicles for general use, and larger, specialized vans for wheelchairs. The work that began in 2017 will carry on for several more years as we continue to grow the fleet and slowly transition our older vehicles to ones that better meet client needs.

All in all, it was an extraordinary year, one made extraordinary by people. From the members of the Board to our front-line staff, I could not have more respect or thanks for all the remarkable individuals who bring the best of their heads, hearts and hands to Garth Homer in order to help make a life for all the remarkable individuals we serve. I do not see the years ahead getting any simpler than 2017, but knowing the commitment and capability of our staff and volunteers, I have every confidence that they will be just as successful. Thank you all.

Mitchell Temkin



Treasurer's Report

We experienced major growth in 2016, and 2017 has exceeded this by a wide margin.

As a result of the continued growth in our residential services and expansion of our community inclusion services, revenue increased by 51.7% to \$7,932,860. Residential services accounted for \$3,190,220 or 40.22% of our total revenue; community inclusion services \$4,021,937 or 50.69%; and grant revenue \$720,703 or 9.09%. Revenues exceeded expenses by 2.05%, resulting in a net operating surplus of \$162,581.

Expenses grew by 46.61% to \$7,770,279 for 2017, with investments in technology, vehicles, operations, and talent. Our staff count increased by 32.20% to 197, and our investment in capital assets was up by 10.16% to \$312,339. Our operating surplus resulted in unrestricted

net assets of \$112,044, which we restricted internally to strengthen our balance sheet and further our goal of long-term financial sustainability.

While continued growth is one of our strategic objectives, it also requires close and careful financial management. We want to be sure our investments in capacity stay well ahead of expected revenue. At GHS, we have achieved this and, as a result, remain stable and resilient even as our operations expand rapidly.

I would like to express my thanks to management and staff for their work in managing our growth so prudently, and to my colleagues on the GHS Board for their support and diligent oversight through the year.

Sandra Sparanese

Our Funders

The success of the Garth Homer Society, and of its programs and services, relies on the continuing support of our funders and donors. We would like to express our appreciation and thanks to all of those whose generosity has helped to make so much possible this year.

Community Living British Columbia
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